The Principal
Lakshmibai College
University of Delhi.

S.O./A.O. Admn

LAKSHMIBAI COLLEGE
Diary No. 1688
15 JAN 2016
DELHI-110052

94/51

9.1.2016

SUBJECT: SUBMISSION OF SIX-MONTHLY REPORT WITH SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Madam,

Apropos of my study-leave that commenced w.e.f. 6th August 2013 (Letter No. LBC/616/13), I am duly submitting my six-monthly report.

It may kindly be noted that by way of supporting documents, I am attaching the transcript of chapter Three of my doctoral research. I would also like to mention, that as stated by my supervisor in his report, I have been nominated by JNU as an exchange (Ph.D.) student to King's College, London, under the Study Abroad Post Graduate Research Exchange Programme between JNU and King's, and will be spending the next few months researching as a Ph.D. student at King's, under a supervisor there.

Thanking you,

Yours truly,

Ruchim.
9/1/16

RUCHI MUNDEJA
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
Dept. of English

Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Advanced Study
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067
India

Prof. GJV Prasad
Director

(93)

8 January 2016

Progress Report for Ms Ruchi Mundeja

Ms Ruchi Mundeja is registered for her PhD under my supervision. The topic as approved by the Committee of Advanced Study and Research is "The Politics of the Sneer: Jean Rhys and the Milieu of Modernist Iconoclasm".

She has submitted the first draft of the third chapter of her thesis. She has begun work on the fourth chapter while also continuing to read more around her area of research. She has been nominated by Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) under an Exchange Programme for Ph.D. students between JNU and King's College, London, and will be spending the next few months (Spring Semester) researching at King's College, London, as a part of the Study Abroad Post Graduate Research Exchange Programme.

GJV Prasad
Professor, Centre for English Studies

DIRECTOR
Jawaharlal Nehru Institute
of Advanced Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067, India

RUCHI MUNDEJA

Chapter Three

"Anointed Scoundrels": The Gendered Spaces of Colonial Crossings

Since Edward Said's reflections in *Culture and Imperialism* on how most of the work on European modernism leaves out " the massive infusions of non-European cultures into the metropolitan heartland during the early years of the century" there have been a slew of works that engage with the " voyage in" as seminally as the voyage out. Said wonders in that text whether "the voyage in is retributive". This is an important insight since in focussing on how these artists negotiated their way through the modernist milieu, one can recover an adversarial vision in their work that renders tenuous the chronological wedge between modernist and postcolonial literature. The editors of *Postcolonial Criticism* see postcolonial writing as " a site of radical contestation and contestatory radicalism." This is a vision forged in ideological sync with the more politically oriented anti-colonial movements that emerged in colonized areas as a fierce challenge to colonial authority. But Said is looking at early stirrings of oppositinality that came from émigré writers who voyaged into Europe from the colonial peripheries. To place Rhys within this rubric brings its own set of problems since her vision is forged in the interstices of complicity and revolt. Her affiliation to the plantocratic class would imply a life of privilege but the way the Caribbean haunts her work bespeaks a sensibility tortured by inside knowledge of the inequities and excesses of Caribbean power equations. I wish to argue that beyond the more discussed Caribbean tropes in Rhys's fiction, that of Obeah, for instance, Rhys's writings carry an overall imprint of her place and location, particularly as a space insistently marked by colonial history. Growing up in a milieu that carried a history permeated by the lingering inequities of slavery, she internalized that understanding of an imbalanced power structure, impacted by co-ordinates of race and gender, and that surfaced when she found herself at the receiving end of prejudicial structures in Europe. Many of her protagonists have a Caribbean lineage, explicit in some cases and hinted at in others. The motif of enactments of forced conformism interrupted by dissonant moments of counter-rage, which is how I read the sneer in Rhys, are thus shaped by sedimented layers of her knowledge of the Caribbean.

This chapter looks at the criss-cross of a dynamic colonial circuitry through two texts that exemplify the voyage out and the voyage in, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*. It is interesting to see how Conrad's text both disrupts, flirts with as also recalibrates the essential derring do of the voyage out. As Marlow probes his intense desire to explore the region of the Congo, he simultaneously evokes as also disavows the essential ultra masculine phallicism of the colonial project- " Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps…At that time there were many blank spaces on the map and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map …I would put my finger on it and say: When I grow up I will go there…But there was one yet – the biggest – the most blank, so to speak that I had a hankering after. True by this time it was not a blank space anymore. It had got filled…It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery- a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness." That quintessential impulse to penetrate into untrodden territory is in operation in Marlow's remark, yet the comment also records how colonialist penetration has robbed Marlow of the mantle of the pioneer. This is also a rather curious gesture of disavowal

since Marlow is by virtue of his appointment fully implicated in colonialism's trading practices, as he in fact is quick to mention as a corrective to his aunt's misreading .Yet such is the novella's complex evasiveness that it forges a select space for Marlow and Kurtz in that even as it pictures atleast the latter as a fortune-hunter, also manages to suggest their estrangement from the colonial milieu and posit it as a virtue. In arguing for a voyage out that equates a purely utilitarian colonialism with a demystification of the potential romance of faraway lands, *Heart of Darkness* brings in the exoticising imperative of the imperial imaginary through a side door, surreptitiously present in its critique of mercenary colonialism. Marlow almost hierarchizes darkness here-the pristine sinister mystery of the land is felt to be besmirched by the dark dealings of corrupt colonizers. It is that anterior darkness that Kurtz seems to be plunge into and it this exhumatory daring of Kurtz that leads to Marlow's heroising of him. Conrad's Kurtz takes the lead in the dark rites of modernist truth-telling, and Marlow voyages into these 'extremities' through Kurtz. Both Marlow and Kurtz seek to recover the unmapped Congo, prior to the intrusion by the European colonizers. Marlow's desire to un-write the mapped Congo is an attempt to both recover the pioneering impulse of the colonial odyssey and a simultaneous disavowal of the cartographical imperative .I am suggesting that the modernist drive to un-write the literary map of a tame realism by a proclaimed move towards a more robust aesthetic ideal through a recovery of the subterranean is nascent in Marlow's conflicted response to colonial cartography .For instance there is that oft quoted passage from the text-" Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world...An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest...You thought yourself bewithched and cut off for ever from everything you had known once-somewhere-far away-in another existence perhaps." This can of course be read as one of Marlow's many musings on the intense solitude of the wilderness, but since the text is also about how the landscape was being claimed, apportioned and carved up in however desultory a manner by the colonial grid, this passage seems to almost nostalgically conjure up an un-despoiled, virgin, darkness. This colonial journey celebrates not the taming of the wild by the coming of civilization, but in fact seeks to recover the mysterious otherness of the land anterior to colonization. As against this overpowering sense of untrodden, unclaimed, unmapped otherness , there is that other map that Marlow encounters in the company office, one liberally dotted with red. That map evokes the more predictable heartiness of the proverbial colonialist. But Conrad complicates this stock response by pitting it against Marlow's and Kurtz's penetrative heroism in unsheathing the impenetrable, implacable, spirit of the wilderness, one that is far in excess of the mapped and appropriated. It has been variously argued that Conrad's text resists subsumption into the more retrograde variants of colonialist literature. I am arguing that if, as postcolonial critics point out ,the cartographical was so integral to the colonial project, as alien lands were territorially claimed and mapped onto the colonial grid, then the radicalism of *Heart of Darkness* lies in its rejection of those co-ordinates-noticeably, territories remain unnamed in the text, almost a wish-fulfillment of Marlow's yearning to journey into a white patch, a tabula rasa .Anne McClintock elaborates on how the colonial map is to be understood as a "technology of knowledge that professes to capture the truth about a place in pure, scientific form, operating under the guise of scientific exactitude and promising to retrieve and reproduce nature exactly as it is. As such, it is also a technology of possession...Yet the edges and blank spaces of colonial

maps are typically marked with vivid reminders of the failure of knowledge and hence the tenuousness of possession."(27-28) This impulse to enter into the crevices that exceed the controlling economy of the colonial map animates both Marlow and Kurtz .Robert Hampson talks about how the rational calculus of measuring, surveying ,marking territories claimed scientific validation as a certain disinterested knowledge bank and that it is this claim to 'objectivity' that Conrad contests, by using the rest of the text to underline how mapping was primarily geared towards institutionalising the colonialist project .But I wish to turn the direction of the argument a little by arguing that Conrad's critique of this colonial 'science' is not only an indictment on the basis of a lack of disinterestedness but also meant to make space for an unscientific, subjective, atavistic, de-mapping, by recovering cosmic resonances that transcend scientific territorialism.

On the other hand, Rhys's text configures England in precise latitudinal and longitudinal co-ordinates- the stranglehold of cartography is evoked to underline the long shadow British imperial map-making casts over the Caribbean as also other colonized lands. Tobias Doring addresses this aspect when he points out how the transit circle in London was instated as the centre of the global cartographic grid in 1884, a natural corollary of Britain's then imperial power. He argues further that " an act of conscious self-positioning and of comparative interpretation , to identify one's meridian is to engage with hermeneutic power." As Anna's evocation of the exact geographical templates of her current location bespeaks of the vice-like grip that the imperial core exerts over its peripheries, the reception she receives in England bodes quite the reverse – how the racial registers through which the 'other' is perceived underline the non-specificity of the way the colonized were lumped together. Even as Maudie purportedly expresses sympathy for the way Anna is branded the Hottentot by the other girls in the company, her own lowdown on Anna's background fares no better in terms of its hazy configuration of Anna's antecedents-"She's always cold… She can't help it. She was born in a hot place. She was born in the West Indies or somewhere, weren't you ,kid?"(12) If the voyage out was about the alternately managerial, phobic and prurient colonial gaze, then the voyage in unleashes the metropolitan variant of the colonial gaze. As the influx of colonial wards into the imperial metropolis became an increasing reality, the phobic hysterics of the imperial gaze were turned towards the unplaceable otherness of the colonial progeny.

A lot of recent work on the modernist period studies the influx of émigrés from the colonial borderlands in this period in terms of a fructifying discourse on cosmopolitanism. In fact the finer intricacies of the modernist form are studied as shaped by the opening up of the global circuit .In this narrative, the corridors of the imperial cities came abuzz with the multivoiced 'babble' of immigrants/voyageurs from colonized territories. The malleability, indeterminacy and open-endedness of the modernist form is seen to be directly impacted by the dense , ever expanding imperial vortex. Virginia Woolf commented on how each denizen of London was " linked to his fellows by wires which pass overhead , by waves of sound which pour through the roof and speak aloud to him of battles and murders and strikes and revolutions all over the world."(255,Doyle) Woolf's statement registers both the inter-connectedness and the dissensions of the imperial network. Thus the presence of the empire was marked in the most quotidian as well as in the more dramatic registers of nascent anti-colonialism. Sara Blair in her article on Bloomsbury recasts the radicalism of Bloomsbury by focusing on it as a geographical site rather than only cultural experiment .She notes how the area of Bloomsbury

increasingly became home to progressives, suffragists, foreign students and future anti-colonialists, in order to combat the notion of the privileged detachment of the group. The spectacle of racial alterity was in her argument insistently playing on the edges of Bloomsbury; Blair concedes however that this fetched a somewhat mixed response from Woolf who spoke of "odd characters, sinister, strange" slinking past the windows of their Gordon Square abode. It is this that a writer like Rhys records- how the modernist coterie was drawn to the forms of alterity without engaging with its material, corporeal reality.

Whether one examines the imperial gaze or its phobic metropolitan equivalent, one is ironically by its inability to see. For Achebe the failure of the *Heart of Darkness* rests on this incapacity. I would like to argue that the fact that for Conrad the triumph of the novel is premised on his protagonists' recovery of the truths that underlie the official narrative and that only those with a capacity to daringly peer into and read the dark substratum can bring back provides an interpretative frame to analyse both the racist and modernist power idioms embedded in the text. For Achebe the racism of the novel hinges on the failure of the visual paradigm ,whereas I am suggesting that its racist inflections are inextricably tied to and articulated through that visual rubric.

In *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, Elleke Boehmer, elaborating on the trope of the colonial gaze says: "The gaze was made manifest in the activities of examination, investigation, inspection, peeping, poring over, which were accompaniments to the colonial penetration of a country" (68).

She also points out that the classifying imperative behind the colonial gaze has a voyeuristic subtext to it, thus simultaneously coding it as probing and prurient. Devlin's argument too hinges around this idea of colonialist voyeurism and the critic interprets this along three main axes: first, the assumption that "behind every visual density lies a provocative sight", second "the implied presumption that it is the viewing subject's entitlement to penetrate visual densities, to see beyond 'the veil ," and finally the " ocular relief" that fills the subject when they feel that the veil has been rent and the Other mastered (25). Devlin sums up the thrust of the essay in averring that the novella foregrounds "mutating forms of voyeurism with their secret libidinal pleasures and attendant visual disturbances." (39). I would like to affix to this line of thinking the argument that *Heart of Darkness'* expository agenda is in fact diluted even as the visual triumphalism that Devlin refers to is given an exalted resonance .Conrad cannot entirely break away from the celebratory framework of the adventure genre as Kurtz and Marlow become worthy of the "modernist honorific", to borrow Joshua Esty's phrase, [5] in their ability to gaze down the precipice. I read *Heart of Darkness* as an eccentric take on the dynamics of the gaze. Critics and commentators have always marked Conrad as different from those of his contemporaries who similarly engaged with the imperial topos. His distinctiveness is indeed undeniable and stems from his ability to dive fearlessly into grey areas, shading off into suspect motivations and subtle grotesqueries .What is disturbing about this scenario is that paradoxically this modernist felicity to excavate the sinister subcurrents also becomes the singular gift of his morally compromised protagonist Kurtz, that almost exonerates him from the enacted horrors. In fact, declaiming on that cultic jewel of Kurtz's verbal wizardry, " the horror, the horror" (68) , Marlow's chosen trope is of the unflinching gaze reaching an epiphanic revelatory crescendo: "Since I had *peeped* over the edge myself, I understand better the meaning of his *stare*, that could not see the

flame of the candle but was wide enough to embrace the whole universe, piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in the darkness....After all, this was the expression of some sort of belief. It had candour, it had conviction. It had the appalling face of a *glimpsed truth*" (69, emphasis mine).

It has long been the line of argument in *Heart of Darkness* critical studies that though Conrad was unable to overcome racist topologies and hence unable to delineate natives or native life in a fair manner, Conrad's radicalism lay in his ability to, as Peter Childs says, deidolize atleast one pole of the imperial relationship, by depicting the naked truth about the colonizer.[6] I would like to contend that even the latter argument is rendered suspect. His tale carries vestigial echoes of the classic adventure tale, though in a high-gloss form. The power and magnetism of the colonizer figure though desacralized on one front, is re-constituted along a different axis. There is a compulsive need to overlay the 'absence' of his protagonist Kurtz who may well be seen as a man whose lust and libido get the better of him, by inventing for him a towering persona, as a man who sees and battles visions that ordinary mortals cannot. Hence, by extending to his male protagonists his own far-gazing perspicacity, he resurrects the ambient persona of the colonizer.

Though all the markers, whether from inside the text (the thick blanket of fog, the opacity of the natives) or extraneously related to the text, that is, the critical body of commentary on it (delayed decoding) would point to the impossibility of penetrative insight in those "incomprehensible" surroundings (37), Conrad ultimately locates the 'heroism' of his characters in precisely this feat- that they access the truth that lurks beneath. If modernism was indeed a recovery of the subterranean ,then this could well be the final crowning of his narrator and protagonist- they are instated as modernists *par excellence* .Modernism is often characterized as setting up a hieratic relationship with its audience, in its density and inaccessibility .It demands an intellectual plunge from its readers, their ability to cerebrally synchronize with its exhumation of the hidden and the unplumbed providing them a pathway into its subtleties .Whether it be the terra incognita of Woolf's tunnelling process or Freud's projecting himself as a conquistador, all bespeak a vocabulary of an epistemological treasure-house of the uncharted and buried.[7] To accord that a visuality within the colonial space is the spin that Conrad gives to the colonial gaze.

If the modernists figured themselves as adversarial in spirit, their self-conception often resting on a critical distance from the establishment, then Kurtz and Marlow are again passed on the mantle of modernist impresarios by Conrad. And the problematic is exacerbated in Conrad's gendering of modernism. The recovery of forbidden knowledge can only be shared by the male figures. In fact the bond is sealed by the powers of darkness as Marlow becomes the proxy carrier of truths excoriated from the substratum. The intended is denied admittance into those portals since women are constitutionally debarred from gazing into such murky depths.

Urmila Seshagiri, commenting on *Heart of Darkness*, writes of how "the social implications of race recede in the context of the aesthetic implications, and the fragmented racial identities that expel Marlow and Mr. Kurtz from the master narratives of European imperialism also give rise to startling and explicitly modern art form." [8] Visuality in theorizations such as Mary Louise Pratt's is central to the entrenchment of the colonizer within the narrative of imperialism. Marlow's and Kurtz's, however, is a refracted gaze, reliant upon their willingness to experiment, to transcend set boundaries

rather than remaining within the master narrative of imperialism as Seshagiri points out. This again connects with the modernist expansiveness to experiment with the art forms of the other, to expand its aesthetic horizons; to "make it new" was so compulsive an urge as to inject into it the novelty serum of alien modes.

It is into this self-perpetuating mythos of modernist iconoclasm that Jean Rhys intervenes. Counterpointing her against Conrad, the most obvious juxtaposition is that while the marginality of Rhys' protagonists gives them a perspective askew and acidic enough to offer an exposé of the seedy underbelly of flourishing imperial metropolises, Conrad reserves this achievement of penetrative vision for his male protagonists and that it reaches its acme in the colonies. While Conrad designates the reading of the gothicized substratum a curiously male enterprise, where misreading and misconstrual stand feminized, Rhys reverses this dynamic and in *Voyage in the Dark* subjects the cultural badinage of Europe to often damning scrutiny. Veronica Marie Gregg has pointed out how *Voyage in the Dark* is dotted with contemporary cultural artifacts.[9] I wish to read Rhys's novel as operating within the reading-writing matrix. If post-colonialism is largely configured as a rewriting of blinkered colonialist narratives, thereby foregrounding the dynamics of location, then Rhys achieves the latter objective more through a reading model- where her novel gains a dissectory edge through her protagonist's edgy reading of the sights and visual repertoire of the imperial locale.

Rhys's heroines are above all readers of the urban iconography and it is this that feeds into her exposé of colonialist and patriarchal hegemonies. Again, visuality is a central trope. As Mary Lou Emery observes in *Modernism, the Visual and the Caribbean* "Rhys's and Mckay's novels reveal the haunting of modernism by the transnational and circum-Atlantic subjectivity it suppresses." [10] I would like to connect this invaluable insight with another excellent reading of how Rhys's female characters journey into the *unheimlich* (13), Rhys enacts the reverse pattern, with ferocity .By turning her protagonist Anna's gaze at the visual economy of the metropolitan centre, she renders the familiar unfamiliar for the European audience by foregrounding the suppressed racial and sexual violence in its social and cultural narratives.

The discussion of the gaze necessarily presses into service the figure of the walking individual, the flâneur, who self-assuredly but lingeringly decodes the sights of the city and this model undergirds both the said texts .In the colonial context, the gaze shifted from the domain of idle flânerie to a utilitarian purposiveness. Thus, Marlow's disciplinary gaze is initially directed at the decrepitude of the colonial stations he encounters in the Congo. His attempts to classify are all frustrated. Mary Louise Pratt has argued that the explorer/ colonizer is like a "verbal painter", assembling all verbal resources at his disposal to authentically depict the mysteries of the alien and the unfamiliar.[12] But initially Marlow's attempts to encompass his surroundings within comprehensible parameters are all confounded. It is only when he rejects that rationalistic model in his enthralldom to that partisan of "unsound method", Kurtz, (63) that vision comes to him.

Rhys' flâneuse figures roam the streets of the urban jungle as transit points. The streets in fact 'bring home' their unbelonginess even further, since the streets and the habitations therein seem to emanate a steely hostility. In their transitory mode of existence, they encounter the cultural iconography of the European world and with their often leering asides dissect it to reveal the hegemonic undergirdings. By prising open the imperial /

racial history that lurks in the metropolis, she goes further than only inserting imperial specters into the European milieu but shows how the art of Europe is both founded on "imperial...pillage" as Carole Sweeney terms it and the erasure of the subjecthood of these source elements.[13] It is this simultaneous expansive reach in aesthetic terms and lack of human interest that postcolonial critics like Gikandi have commented upon ,for instance, when Gikandi in his article entitled ' Picasso, Africa and the Schemata of Difference' pithily comments on the " paradox that runs throughout the history of modernism, the fact that almost without exception the Other is considered to be part of the narrative of modern art yet not central enough to be considered constitutive " [14].Rhys was astute enough to splice through this simultaneous foraging and erasure via her fiction.

The geographical specificity, right down to noting the longitudinal-latitudinal co-ordinates, and its telling lack thereof, characterize the contrasting registers of the voyage in and the voyage out as fictionally rendered by Rhys and Conrad. While Conrad fixes a penetrative eye on the cultural productions of the Europeans, such as when the contours of Kurtz's sketch are described in detail by Marlow, the cultural and natural landscape of the native land is figured in terms of riotous excess, that in its proliferating abundance seems to defeat both description and analysis. I am thinking primarily of those two passages redolent with Achebe's adjectival clutter, the impressionistic recording of the anarchic vegetative sprawl of the jungle, almost finding its echo in the second instance, the 'ornamental jungle'(Hobsbawm) that the native woman carries on her person in Marlow's telling. Thus even as an impression of excess and magnitude is built up , it works more to cloud than to define. Conrad works towards diminution through expansion, that is, the Congo jungle in its nightmarish, gothic vastness is indicative of a pre-historic, 'rudimentary' stage of existence, and hence the focus on the barbarous ornaments that the native woman wears , while functioning as a conduit to the fantastic, also write her human functionality out of the script. In fact the sheer(sinister?) corporeality of the description accorded to her paradoxically seems to preclude a role for her in the narrative. David Spurr points out that by the last decades of the 1890s there was a taxonomic mania that gripped the West in its keenness to identify the cultural and economic import of the objects encountered in and amassed from non-Western cultures. Spurr sees the proliferation of geographical societies as symptomatic of a similar desire to sift through the material overload of the empire. Such a detailing and close focus on the artifacts of native territory is rarely evidenced in *Heart of Darkness,* a point emphatically argued by Achebe .By bringing in Spurr, however I differ from Achebe in his argument that Conrad's departicularized rendering of the Congo sat well with the mood of his time. Spurr's thesis proves that there was an urgent interest in delving into the particularities of native objects, however accurate or otherwise it may have been in actuality .Interestingly another nugget from Spurr's book would also help in resituating Conrad's portrait of the native woman. Spurr cites Charles Allen's reference to how the euphemism for native mistresses was ' sleeping dictionary'. Since colonial officials were required to learn the native languages, native women combined a sexually gratificatory role with a more functional one. That the native woman possibly fulfils a more utilitarian role in the economy of imperial cross-exchange is elided from Conrad's text, as it is the overpowering sensuality of the 'gorgeous apparition' that broods over a text whose narrator phobically recoils from a closer interaction with the figure of the native, thus

only allowing for portrayals that resonate with a corporeal visibility, ironically working to elide human reality than to foreground it.

The passages dealing with the native habitat and the native woman diverge from the otherwise languid, often lugubrious pace of the narrative. In these instances, Marlow seems to breathlessly record the sensory excess that confronts and assaults him. Speaking about Conrad's metropolitan fictions, Christina Britzolakis in her article rather significantly titled 'Pathologies of the Imperial Metropolis' argues that the sensory overload of urban modernity produced a crisis of perceptual synthesis in the metropolitan denizens. I find that in the passages under discussion, there seems to be a suggestion of how the sensory apparatus of the colonial officials was similarly overwhelmed by the shock and disruption posed by the 'savage' . Britzolakis incorporating Ford Madox Ford's notion of 'anaesthesia' in *The Soul of London* into her argument says, " Metropolitan identity must therefore , Ford claims, be an affair of anesthesia, of defensive non-sensitivity to an otherwise overwhelming burden of stimuli." Significantly, Ford's comment comes at a juncture in his text where he ironises how London's purported openness to foreigners and aliens stems from its uncanny, cannibalistic,ability to anaesthesise differentness. Could one then argue that one sees the alternate manifestation of this in Conrad's colonial fictions, where difference is pathologized through an unleashed descriptive frenzy? The 'perverse' anarchism of the native scenario is either negotiated by recourse to a fevered narrative framing or in Marlow's often defensive recoil into the familiarity of the work ethic , an echo then of Ford's anaesthesising imperative? Except that my argument is that even in the colonial contact zone, it is the integral otherness of the indigenes that is negated/ contained, such that the authoritarianism of the Western narrative remains unchallenged, whether in its pursuit of light or in its profound knowledge-embrace of shades of darkness.

The colonial contact zone is for Mary Louise Pratt that point of intersection which endows a co-presence on subjects otherwise divided by culture, history ,geography etc. She sees it as a dynamic and contestatory space .If one now moves from the colony to the metropole as designating that contact zone, one sees how Jean Rhys makes that her unique province from where to offer a series of diagonistic and satirical insights that go towards puncturing the narrative of European exceptionalism. Rhys seeks to engage with the premises on which Western civilization differentiates itself from the native lands, that is by evoking its cultural, literary and intellectual sophistication that is a signifier of the registers of progress. However as opposed to Conrad/ Marlow who filters all traces of the other through an excessive deployment of the authority of speech , Rhys' references to the cultural landscape of the Western world are scant, bare and nominally registerd. They however gather interpretative momentum when carefully balanced against the context in which they are placed. Since this chapter primarily relies on a side by side reading of *Heart of Darkness* and *Voyage in the Dark* , let me begin by substantiating my argument with that brief reference to the painting ' Cherry Ripe' in Rhys's text. To first look at the immediate context in which it appears, it is at the juncture when Anna is in a relationship with Walter and Maudie comes to visit Anna in the apartment Walter has arranged for her to stay in.The conversation hinges almost entirely on Maudie's attempts to indoctrinate Anna into the harsh, unsentimental, rules by which the amorous game is played. Throughout the scene she talks down to Anna , casting her as a child. This denial of maturity to Anna, an insistent desire to frame her as childlike, so much a subject of later

postcolonial theories about the native as instinctive and childlike, is seen even in Walter's treatment of Anna. This can then be a stepping stone into an analysis of the picture 'Cherry Ripe' that hangs in Anna's bedroom, a spin off of an 1880 painting by John Everett Millais . The painting is of a captivating little girl and the painting's title derives from the cherries at her side. In her exhaustive analysis of the picture, Laurel Bradley comments on how the quaint garb of the child seeks to reinforce visions of an Edenic England. More importantly, the timeless purity of the young English maiden made the painting an apt emblem of the virtuous nobility of the British empire- as Bradley says, "The girl child symbolized all that was prized, all that the manly soldier pledged to protect." Reading its timing as significant, Bradley argues that it undergirded Britain's increasingly rose-tinted, sentimental sense of the nobility of the imperial mission. As the reprints of the painting, numbering over half a million , flooded the homes of the Empire's English speaking citizens around the globe, it appealed to their Anglo-Saxon values. But I would like to bring in an alternative interpretation of the painting by Pamela Tamarkin Reis also published in *Victorian Studies* as an exchange with Bradley. Reis focusses on the suggestive and provocative body language of the figure to argue that Millais , perhaps unconsciously, endows the girl a sensual allure, a come-hither quality.

How then does one read the mention of the painting in Rhys's text as a covert yet deliberate cultural signifier? For one, the painting in Bradley's interpretation insistently plays on the idea of white purity , and the 'sneer' directed at Anna as the girl who comes from a 'lush', 'hot' place, suggests how Rhys probes into the stereotypes of temperance versus intemperance. It is in fact Maudie who berates Anna for being 'soppy' and sentimental about her affair with Walter and tries to induct her into the extractive, mercenary, logic of such exploitative liasions. The imperially self-congratulatory nature of such artistic productions is thus reassessed by Rhys. The raced nature of female virtue as signified by the picture dissipates under Rhys's corrective rewrite, as she shifts focus to the compulsions and insecurities that hound the lives of women like Anna and Maudie. In fact, just after this conversation, Anna shows Maudie some poems by the former occupant of the room, poems that revile London .Maudie visibly bristles at the preposterous prospect ,as she says, of someone not liking London. Thus Rhys records how the insider exercises the luxury of self-critique but at the same time quickly marshals a sense of belongingness when challenged by the deracinated outsider.

The fact that the painting can invite such divergent responses, Bradley emphasising the figure's innocence and Reis reading it as flirtatious, I think has a bearing on the label of the child sneeringly pinned on Anna, working as it does in conjunction with her racially suspect status. I believe that a similarly conflictual response is directed to the 'childlike' Anna and that Rhys fictionally anticipates what later postcolonial critics would theorise. Probing into the intricacies of how the native was configured as a child in colonial discourse, Bill Ashcroft argues that the hegemony of imperialism finds manifestation as alternately paternalistic and disciplinary , thus miming the binary registers of the parent/ child equation. The colonizer's attitude towards the child native embodies contradictory tendencies, where "authority is held in balance with nurture...debasement with idealization...". A similarly fluctuating response is directed at Anna, who is alternately perceived as naïve and untutored on the one hand and wild and dissolute on the other. In being attracted to her and in continuing to pin the category of child onto her, Walter is by turns condescending (of her intellectual backwardness) and circumspect(of her lineage

of the pornotropics).In a conversation that almost echoes Maudie's injunctions to Anna, Walter labels her simple for investing so much in him ad counsels her to try and 'get on' in life. Patronising her, he says- "You're a perfect darling, but you're only a baby.You'll be alright later on .Not that it has anything to do with age .Some people are born knowing their way about: others never learn.Your predecessor..."(44) Almost hinting at some intrinsic incapacity in Anna, he then pushes her into the other stereotype of the child. In a geographical trope ,his reference to the excessive lushness of the tropics figures her as intemperate and primitive.

Even if 'Cherry Ripe' is read as it was meant to be read according to Bradley, as a valorization of the virtuousness of the colonial ideal, the stasis of purity within which it freezeframes the woman is seminally linked to the probing of the spatial dynamics of imperialism. Doreen Massey makes the point that a gendering underpins the dualisms of space and time where " It is time which is aligned with history, progress, civilization...and coded masculine. And it is the opposites of these things which have in the traditions of Western thought, been coded feminine. The exercise of rescuing space from its position, in this formulation, of stasis, passivity and depoliticization , therefore connects with a wider philosophical debate in which gendering and the construction of gender relations are central." With this in mind I want to superimpose the female image in ' Cherry Ripe' over another resonant image of female virtue nurturing and brooding picturesquely over the *noblesse oblige* of the imperial mission, the Intended in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. It is important that in his reminiscing about his adventures in the Congo, Marlow travels through time. In fact this felicity to grasp multiple time lines, to be in more than one time at a given moment, is a refrain throughout Marlow's encounter with the Intended-" Before the high and ponderous door, between the tall houses as still and decorous as a well-kept alley in a cemetery, I had a vision of him on the stretcher voraciously opening his mouth voraciously as if to devour all the earth...The vision seemed to enter the house with me." The adjectives deployed, 'still' and 'decorous', foreclose any possibility of the Intended participating in the epistemological core of Kurtz's voyage. The magisterial image of Kurtz marshals a dynamic immediacy that threatens to spill out of the borders of time and is counterpointed against the suspended, frozen, time in which his fiancée lives. The young woman seems to be immured in a portentous, enclosing space, where the shifting time zones and frenetic mobility of the imperial quest can at best be imaginatively and romantically accessed. If one were to read this in terms of the rapidly spreading network of empire, the gendering that Massey talks about is clearly manifested. Conrad makes the visual iconography of the scene speak for itself. The black dress that she wears much beyond the designated mourning period symbolically consigns her to a timeless- " She seemed as though she would remember and mourn forever"- disconnectedness from the bustling temporal shifts transforming the imperial metropolis that quite literally beat around her doorstep.

The Victorian parlour of the Intended as an inner sanctum , seems to stand in for the modernist penchant for interiorized processing, where the outside, that which belongs to a disparate time and space, can be processed and stored away by Marlow. That Conrad himself felt that everything in the novella finds its final culmination in this scene is telling. If the shared adventurism of Marlow and Kurtz is exhumatory, a cerebral variant of treasure torn from ' the bowels of the earth', the exchange between Marlow and the woman curves towards a shrouding of the ' truths' that have been unearthed. And yet, in

the entire interface between the two, Marlow's consciousness is abuzz with images, fragments, sights and sounds of the African experience, the traumatizing yet jealously guarded memory cache of the colonizer that is finally not unravelled in front of the maiden who lives in static time. The tale of making, re-making and unmaking that draws upon the elasticity of time and space born of colonial circuitry is cast as masculine in essence. Marlow's overtly sexist comments on how women do not live in the world of time are insidiously bolstered by the tale's trajectory where the Intended's rosy conception of the colonial voyage is left undisturbed. In fact, all her attempts to enter into 'colonial time' stand exposed as examples of misconstrual. The 'time-space compression' that Massey refers to as such an essential feature of globalism began with these colonial voyages and the Intended, a non-participant in the economy of colonial travel, is deemed incapable of apprehending the density of cross-talk generated by this phenomenon. Strangely enough, the 'unrestrained' garrulousness of the young woman, completely contrary to how Marlow reads her portrait, implicates her even further in the unknowingness of the stay-at-home .Her 'babble' is reminiscent not only of the loquaciousness of Marlow's aunt but also of the natives. Thus even as the overt sexism of Marlow is ironically exposed, it is also simultaneously subtly reinstated by the author. Before the meeting, Marlow declares himself ready to give up the ghost of Kurtz. Yet he ends up doing exactly the contrary-deciding to cling to the last to that spectral presence. In a sense, while the sinister whispers of the outside are not allowed to rupture the 'decorous' inside of her boudoir, for Marlow, the Intended's parlour stands in for the modernist trope of the 'room', the creative crucible where the 'voyage out' and the 'voyage in' coalesce.Its pristine insularity paradoxically sharpens Marlow's sense of the treasured expansiveness of the 'voyage out'. The Intended wants Kurtz's last words, and by reassuring her that Kurtz died with her name on his lips, he damns her permanently to the static prison-house of imperial pageantry, while he keeps to himself knowledge of other realms, other interfaces, other visions. That continuum, sacralized as a masculine stronghold, is evoked by the final sentence of the novel where the waters flow outwards to the 'heart of an immense darkness.' The celebration of the integrated Western subject in adventure fiction is diluted by Conrad's tale, but the text comes dangerously close to replacing it with the neurotic triumphalism of the disintegrating Western subject. While the dark underside of colonialism is bared, the psychic and metaphysical visions it makes available are hoarded.

The women in Conrad's novella are interestingly poised between hyper-stimulation and stasis - their overactive imagination spinning tales of heroism and martyrdom (vis a vis the colonial enterprise) because they are incapable of taking the leap, cognitively, into the nightmares that underlie the 'official narrative'. This awareness of the substratum of 'horrors' brought back from the colonies makes Marlow radically question the knowledge base of the inhabitants of the metropolis. This intersection where the metropolis is negotiated through the looming shadow of the colonies that it feeds off, is of course central to Jean Rhys's work. Thus in Conrad's text, lack of understanding, misconstrual, misreading stand curiously feminized. Rhys's texts reverse that process because it is the marginal, liminal space available to women that in fact gives them an insight into the subterranean gothic of the polished metropolitan exteriors .Massey's probing of how different individuals are differentially aligned to the flows and interconnections of what she terms the "power-geometry" of time-space compression

comes into play as we analyze the position occupied by women in the colonial matrix, and as we shift our attention to women like Anna Morgan whose marginalization is constituted along dual registers. Bill Ashcroft's theorization of post-colonial literature as a corpus of excess can be used as a frame to understand the almost perverse repetitiousness that one encounters both if one takes a generalized overview of Rhys's oeuvre and also in individual works like *Voyage in the Dark*. Anna frequently comments on how the rented rooms she stays in shade off into one another. But this is to ignore that the geographical, local and cultural references that cluster around those rooms make for a platform from where Rhys's diagnostic insights can operate and which make these early works more than defeatist accounts of female powerlessness. Ashcroft's point about 'excess' as the tactical machinery of the marginal to make itself heard is demonstrably in operation in Rhys's work leading perhaps to all those outbursts of discomfiture about the sheer, excessively repetitive, predictability of her scenarios . A particularly engaging example of such distraught reactions is encapsulated in this response to *Quartet* – "*Quartet*...starts on a high note and plunges downward for 228 pages, hitting the bottom on the last page with a dull thud. You will read it at one sitting and then you will put cigarette ashes in the grand piano, the cat in the goldfish bowl , and your own illusions about the sweetness of life in an unmarked grave...Vivid? To brutality. Well done? Beautifully...But why was it written?" The reviewer despairs at the writer's unflinching recording of the morbid. Not only am I suggesting that this relentlessly vivid portrayal of mundane bleakness , posited against the modernist quest for novelty,is itself a mode of protest but that this needs to studied in nuanced conjunction with the specificity of topographical and cultural allusions in Rhys since these are the nodes of opposition to the varying axes of discrimination.

Voyage in the Dark charts Anna Morgan's slide into dependence and entrapment. But its opening , that posits the idea of the subject as reader versus the subject as they are read by others, gives a clear indication of Rhys's authorial positionality- that she sets out to disrupt the West's " customarily parochial geo-cultural forms." The first encounter between Walter and Anna, where they meet as a part of a foursome with Maudie and Jones, is framed cleverly by the writer as an attempt to read Anna according to pre-given writs, all linked in some way to her past, and more pertinently, to the discourse of racial hierarchization, whether it be notions of 'heat' or the label of Hottentot or Walter's ascription of infantilism to her .Anna is set up as a text whose borders are penetrated and breached by the denizens of the metropolis, whose alienness is read and fixed in terms of familiar tropes. In a familiar reprisal of colonialism, Anna's identity-boundaries are infringed with impunity whereas Walter maintains boundary control through his reclusiveness. As Anna feels even the basic foundational pillars of her already beleaguered sense of self under threat ,such as her age, she offers to produce her birth certificate as a testament. This impulse to fix Anna's otherness in terms of available generic tropes, such as when she comments on how Walter " listened to everything I said with a polite and attentive expression, and then he looked away and smiled as if he had sized me up", can be interpreted as a variant of colonialism's taxonomical imperative.

That Walter's criteria of assessment in 'placing' Anna bespeak a preoccupation with physicality pertains relationally not only to the field of colonial erotics but also to the 'medicalized' discourse of racism. Mary Lou Emery refers to Walter's rather curious interest in Anna's teeth, " a strange choice that brings to mind the examination of horses

or slaves for sale." That Walter's aesthetic appreciation of her teeth could also play upon the other frame within which such body parts were evaluated, that of racial stigmata, is also a possible undertow. Robert L Hayman recalls how the racial science of the nineteenth century isolated physical anomalies in the inferior races. In that context, Hayman mentions Cesare Lombroso's focus on " the presence in human beings, of anatomical stigmata associated with primitive creatures- a simian forehead, rodent-like teeth, or a facial asymmetry..." This also calls to mind a tract that inserted itself so loquaciously into the annals of Western 'ethnography' on the Caribbean , Carlyle's 'Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question'(1849). Painting a willed picture of the happy, emancipated negroes of the West Indies enveloped in a haze of masticatory bliss, he paints them as " sitting yonder with their beautiful muzzles upto their ears in pumpkins, imbibing sweet pulp and juices, the grinder and incisor teeth ready for every new work...".Such overtly racist documents , and coming as they do from the literary giants of the Western canon, dot Western historiography about the 'other' and the interspersed textual fragments in Rhys's texts become a counterweight to the monocultural optics of the former. Where Walter seems to rest easy in the fact that he has placed the placeless Anna, she herself , through her memories that defy categorization and containment, threatens to slip out of the frame within which he reads her .Here is Anna musing on her desire to share with Walter the almost visually alive registers of her Caribbean past –" I wanted to talk about it. I wanted to make him *see* what it was like. And it all went through my head, but too quickly. Besides, you can never tell about things." This may well read as an insider's scepticism of her metropolitan auditor's ability to follow her drift, and to that extent it is reminiscent of Marlow's jibes against his urban/e auditors' bafflement with his inside account. But where Marlow's response is an enactment of his continual need to seal his knowledge pact with Kurtz, Anna's statement is more an acknowledgement of the contradictory and complex strains of Caribbean society, which even an 'insider' would find hard to negotiate. This tendency on the part of Marlow, to dismiss the limited experiential base of others as debarring them from apprehending the epistemological expansion that results from a direct experience of multiple spatial zones, already seen in his encounter with the Intended is also tonally present in his address to his companions aboard the Nellie or in his mute dialogue with the residents of the Belgian metropolis. However, instead of this producing a decentred subjectivity, it ultimately concretizes a monadic selfhood, where Marlow broods possessively over the mystificatory essence gleaned via his alliance with Kurtz.

While Marlow enshrines himself, through that knowledge-base, that 'yogic' seer into the nether regions, as the 'insider', able to absorb the epistemological ruptures of the voyage out into the 'alien', Anna fights throughout to find acceptance within the multiply inflected axes of her existence, in the Caribbean as in England. Thus her inability to revivify her experience to Walter stems not so much from the limitations of his urban proclivities as from the uncontainable, fractured and fluid nature of her own context/s. While the experience of dispersal produces in Conrad a conception of self that is poised above that of the uninitiated urban crowd, Rhys's Anna summons the shards of the past, or grapples to come to terms with the norms of the present, to marshal a sense of completion. In that crucial exchange with Walter, her need to communicate the locational specificity of her past only fetches either monosyllabic replies or platitudes from Walter. Her pressing upon the fact that she is a real West Indian, fifth generation on her mother's

side, meets with incomprehension from Walter-he fails to grasp the full import of the gulf between belongingness and unbelonging that has haunted Anna in the Caribbean and even after. To that extent, Hester's prophecy of how the sins of the father are visited upon the children indeed comes true. Hester functions as a foil to Anna and her father since she never suffers from muddled loyalties, and hence looks upon the existential schism that torments them as 'tragic'. Anna and her father are aligned in their sense of being uneasily suspended between two world orders –one, that of the plantation economy, exploitative and inhuman, and the other, of an increasing, tactile, identification with the land and its ethos Though Hester in her damning references to the tainted slave past of plantation history voices " the 'Anti-Caribbean animus' emanating from the metropole", her denial of human status to the black help proves that she merely parrots the rhetoric of emancipation. She falls more into Sandiford's categorization of 'purists' who inveighed against the creolized milieu of the Caribbean posing the threat of cultural pollution. The exchange of letters between Hester and Uncle Bo about Anna's locational future symptomises how Anna remains uncomfortably suspended between the troubling binaries of her West Indian past-Hester as the spokeswoman of colonial society's insistence on the distance between planter class and black servants, and Uncle Bo as the symbol of Creole inter-mixture to the point of profligacy, emblematized in the reckless inter-breeding that Hester comments on. Anna and possibly her father occupy a position that shuns these extremes. Anna conceives of a closer alignment with the blacks and her father expresses impatience with Hester's attempts to quarantine Anna from these interfaces. The puritanical Hester's hints at the taint of racial mixture running through Anna's veins is consonant with Sue Thomas's insight into " the nineteenth-century and early twentieth century stereotype of the white Creole; that white Creoles were often merely passing for white, covering up a family history of 'miscegenation'". It is under the pressure of these currents and cross-currents that Anna despairs of conveying to Walter a coherent, stable image of her time in the Caribbean. In her conversation with Walter she in a way re-reads the Caribbean ethos, and with her sharper apprehension of discriminatory structures stemming from her time in London, fragments and 'parchments' that play on bodily iconography stand out in clearer focus. Fully cognizant of the bodily stereotypes of primitive decadence and 'hot-bloodedness' affixed onto her in the imperial metropolis, Anna finds her memory of inscribed reference on a parchment to the slave body , Maillote Boyd , chanced upon in Constance Estate, profoundly disturbing, linked as it is now to her greater understanding of the scriptural and corporeal violence of the carceral network of colonial patriarchy. De Certeau's thoughts on how the dominant discourse, the Law, as he designates it, 'inscribes' the body bring this memory trace from Anna's consciousness into clearer focus. He speaks of how " the law constantly writes itself on bodies. It engraves itself on parchments made from the skins of its subjects…It makes its book out of them." This is not to suggest that Rhys portrays the situations, Anna's and Mailotte Boyd's, as comparable but that from the vantage point of her experience of England, Anna finds it harder to reconcile the disparate fragments of the Caribbean, the beauty of Constance Estate held in uncomfortable balance with the taint of slavery. While Marlow negotiates masterfully through the dense texture of memories, Anna meanders her way through the chequered pool of hers.

That the body is much at the centre of what she recalls is important. She figures the "social schizophrenia of white Creole society" through the corporeal, such as when Hester's English norm of modesty is claustrophobically imposed on Anna in the form of gloves that are too tight for her or when the advent of menses is discussed in a hushed and portentous tone by the educated, worldly, Hester, who finds it hard to look Anna in the eyes as she discusses it, and when Anna finds a more natural biological acceptance of it in the coloured servant-girl Francine. That Anna's vivid memories associate a certain compelling physicality with the blacks on the farm veers close to being a stereotype but Rhys avoids lapsing into it by deglamorizing these vignettes. We access these visually through Anna's consciousness or Hester's and by maintaining the specificity of focus, Rhys assimilates these into the choral flavour of Anna's memories, thereby escaping exoticizing generalizations. That Hester aggressively attempts to graft onto Anna a prescriptive femininity , exacerbated by settler panic, and that Anna's befriending of the servants is partly a reaction to this, is a suggestion present in the text. Whereas Anna expresses a naïve desire to be black, Rhys does not argue for automatic,natural affinity but for a more nuanced analysis. Rhys's writing does not lose sight of the plural and conflicting strains of West Indian society, even as Anna yearns for, but also despairs, of a forever deferred holism. Seshagiri comments on the fact that "the temporal kaleidoscopes of Rhys's novel are neither enabling nor enlightening." Her use of the word 'enlightening' is a crucial signpost to the difference between the way Rhys and Conrad negotiate these colonial crossings. Anna's desire to vocalize can be counterpointed with Marlow's desire to guard " the essentials of the affair." Though Marlow's very narration is premised on the need to articulate his Congo experience, it remains as much an act of sheathing as unsheathing , of admitting that the emperor(Colonialism? Kurtz?) wears no robes to then turning that nakedness itself into a cosmic truth, to be glimpsed only by the select(or rather the damned), thereby re-enacting the hermetic isolationism of modernism.

Where the phychic dis-integration entailed by colonial mobility becomes a conduit to a hypostatizing of modernist genius in Conrad's novella, Rhys's vision weaves its way phlegmatically between the meta-discourse of modernism and the empowering hybridity of post-colonialism- Rhys's work flirts around the edges of these two literary moments- combative of the one and predating the other. Anna's embrace of the emblems of modernity-increased mobility, fashion, consumerism, cinema- are very differently figured from the way they are portrayed in the works of mainstream metropolitan modernists.There is the much discussed defining paradox of how the avant gardists were simultaneously enthralled by the dizzying polyphony of their times as also resistant to the mass element in it. Rhys engages with that debate between the high and the low by inducting into her text the vertiginous spectacle of modernity but exploring it from the point of view of her outré protagonist whose forays are survivalist rather than experimental. Rhys's description of shop windows veers sharply away from how recent work on the spectacle of modernity describes their bewitching appeal. Both Elizabeth Outka and Mica Nava comment on the dazzling window displays of the Selfridges store. Outka offers an important insight when she suggests that these lavish spectacles promised an illusory escape from constraining social brackets, such as that of class- " These new commercial strategies could also play normative roles...In other words they drew their transgressive power from their performativity, making what had been exclusive and class

bound into an opportunity more widely available." According to Seshagiri, the pastiche through which Anna's history is figured in the novel becomes a dark riposte to " the very polyvocality and pastiche that had ushered in so many exhilarating possibilities for earlier modern protagonists". On the other hand, Anna's own uncertain lineage, as also her child's , consign her to the interstices of history, uncomfortably poised between entrapment within the ironies of an exclusionist imperial discourse(ironical because the history of miscegenation was spawned by the empire's penetrative zeal) and a half-articulated opposition to it, to be theorized in more enabling terms by some later practitioners-" Although the bastard half-children of a hybrid past eventually become the heroes of post-colonial literature [*Midnight's Children*] ... *Voyage in the Dark* consigns such children to scorn, invisibility and death". It is singularly hard of course to find enabling tropes in Rhys. Anna's downward descent makes for bleak reading. Anna's articulations of freedom from gendered norms are lost in the multiple indices of the discriminatory sneer that follows her. For instance even as she distances herself from the encoded ideal of chastity, she also subliminally understands that this will only re-confirm the prejudicial picture of her lineal decadence in the minds of her metropolitan acquaintances-" I am bad, not good any longer, bad. That has no meaning, absolutely none. Just words. But something about the darkness of the streets has a meaning." If the Congo wilderness is perceived in threatening terms as a riotous incursion by Marlow, Anna paints the urban streets in sinister carnivorous colours- this is how she describes the early morning washing of the streets-" Men were watering the streets and there was a fresh smell , like an animal just bathed."

In modernist literature, it was the primitivist vogue that most signalled a growing metropolitan interest in the alien exotic. In *Quartet,* Rhys weaves this primitivist obsession into the novel through how the figure of Marya is read. Marya is clearly the 'other' in the clinical world of the Heidlers. The complicated amorous ménages are managed with measured precision by Lois and H.J. It is Marya's 'excess', her refusal to play the game by the designated rules, that renders her suspect and inconvenient in their eyes. That she is figured as the outré figure is clear from the way in which in the aftermath of lovemaking Heidler addresses her as the 'savage.' At one point in the text Marya herself assesses how she has failed to master the formalistic idiom of this ménage de trios, by exhibiting her emotions in an unrestrained manner-" And, from the first Marya, as was right and proper , had no chance of victory. For she fought wildly, with tears, with futile rages, with extravagant abandon- all bad weapons." In fact, she exhorts herself to be 'clever', which is how she reads the controlled, measured, conduct of the other two players in the game. Noticeably, in a conversation with Stephan almost towards the end of the text, Marya asks him what he thinks of Lois, and perhaps in the light of Carole Sweeney's reference to how a wave of cultural primitivism swept through the Parisian centres of high culture, Stephan describes her as primitive. Marya recalibrates his response and suggests that she could instead be perceived as 'clever'. Rhys gives the reader enough hints to suggest the disjunction between the Heidlers' arty trendiness and their otherwise calibrated approach to things, wherein they lust after as also patronize Marya's 'primitivism'. Rhys fits their passion for primitivism both into the prism of the erotic vis a vis Heidler and in terms of their quest for novelty such as when the narrative voice informs us of how Lois liked to cull "characters" and "types" for her parties. Lois's parties in this respect are close replicas of modernist salons and soirees. Stephan's (mis-

)reading of Lois can be understood in terms of the distinction that Mary Gluck draws between 'sentimental' and 'ironic' Bohemianism.. While the former would be closer to the ideal of the struggling, impoverished, anti-establishment artist figure, the latter Gluck identifies with " parodic gestures and ironic performances". It is the self-performative nature of avant gardism that Rhys pillories through the Heidlers. Sweeney points out that " an aesthetic appropriation of non-Western cultures as artefactual domestic commodity does not produce an equivalent political tolerance."(106) This is how Rhys interprets the expansive gestures of the Heidlers whose much touted patronage of marginal figures is more self-aggrandizing than genuinely inclusive .It is also important that Rhys casts this patronage of Marya by the Heidlers as the sexual equivalent of their expansive, cosmopolitan, encouragement of peripheral artist figures. Both are then seen as part of a whole- a cultivated , self-serving, posture. Significantly the first time that she meets the couple, when she accompanies Miss De Solla for a lunch meeting with them, Marya remarks on how the three of them discuss eating, cooking and Marya in the same breath, " whom they spoke of in the third person as if she were a strange animal or at any rate a strayed animal-one not quite of the fold". This paradoxically is suited to pique Heidler's interest, since he is a collector/promoter of curiosities. A discourse that is celebratory of cosmopolitanism would look at *la culture negre* and the interest in primitivism as contiguous with a modernism that in the words of Urmila Seshagri drew its " creative energies arose out of profound cultural and aesthetic estrangement" since as she goes on to point out " what richer aesthetic resource than the alienation inherent in racial difference?"(9)

In her article on *To the Lighthouse* , Urmila Seshagiri makes the briefest of references to the skull that hangs in the children's bedroom .I believe that the trope of the skull is significant, especially since Seshagiri herself places it in the context of the ubiquitous presence of the empire in the daily lives of the English. In fact, she discusses how tea and china " although associated with Englishness for centuries, are nonetheless imported and appropriated from the East with the same violence , as Mrs Ramsay's jewels or the skull that hangs in the children's bedroom." Hermione Lee's note informs us that the opals as also the skull are sent by Mrs Ramsay's brothers, colonial officers both, by way of a display of imperial spoils. *To the Lighthouse* is a good exemplar of both the pervasiveness as also the erasures that are integral to an understanding of how the empire wound its way into the heart of English life, its exotic appeal and its gothic otherness split into the objects sent by Mrs Ramsay's siblings. The boar's skull hangs like a disturbing shadow over the Ramsay household. It is peculiar that the chosen spot for its exhibition is the nursery, as if there is no protecting the children from the long shadow of imperialist/patriarchal violence. Cam in fact protests that she feels it " branching at her all over the room" and that wherever the light shone, it cast a shadow. In a book that deals with the violence and aggression loosed upon the world as a consequence of masculinist hegemony, and keeping in mind that in Woolf's argument the war was a direct corollary of the male imperializing impulse, the skull is the underbelly of the empire, the bloodthirst that undergirds imperial marauding. Significantly, while Cam detests its hostile emanations, James is vociferous in letting it remain. If the jewels represent the aestheticized allure of the other, the skull stands for its gothicized bloodlust, its unspeakable regions of horror. It is interesting that Mrs Ramsay tries vainly to protect her brood from its specter by wrapping a shawl around it, and follows up that gesture by

distracting them towards a more exoticized, romanticized model of otherness, inviting Cam into a realm of 'lovely palaces' and far-away lands. Thus, even as modernist texts are dotted with signs of imperial loot, the viscerality of the originary violence that accompanies their induction into the metropolitan economy is written out of the imperial script. Woolf makes a half gesture towards unveiling the blood-soaked script of colonialism, but the veil soon comes back on it in the form of Mrs Ramsay's shawl that covers the animal skull, even as she wonders why her brother would send her such a freakish exhibit from the colonies.

It is this conflictual relationship with the 'primitivist allure' of the colonies that Rhys homes in on. The atavistic invites both revulsion and a prurient curiosity. The editors of *At Home With the Empire* mention how there was the " imagined sense of impervious boundaries allowed for...by a historical sensibility portraying Britain as an 'island nation' mostly untroubled by its imperial project." The writers from the core and the peripheries would alike have acknowledged that modernist fiction's polychromatic canvasses incontrovertibly breached those fallacies of insularity. But even in the midst of recent body of formidable research on modernism and empire, the reason why the in-between status of writers like Rhys and Mansfield should not be elided in the haste to enfold them in the modernist canon is because their work contributes much towards what Paul Stasi calls the chastening of modernism. One might frame the argument in terms of the distinction Lefebvre draws between space of consumption, which is the interpretative frame through which I filter modernism's anti-insular gestures, since its radicalism of design, form and performance drew on imperial spoils , and consumption of space, that is, how the writers from the peripheries watchfully perceived and read this hotbed of irreverence. The interpenetrating grids of the voyage in and the voyage out made for a complex network of exchange and mobility, such as has led to many an optimistic formulation of the liquefying malleability of the modernist embrace of the other. Recent research has certainly broadened the parameters of modernist studies- the pulsating cross-traffic of imperialism is being studied in great detail. I believe that contemporaneous writers placed at a slight distance from the inner modernist coterie and hence looking askance at its compelling narrative of heresy showed remarkable prescience in consuming those gestures sceptically, considering that this chastening reading of the self impelled legend of modernist iconoclasm has had such a long critical afterlife .An apt example of this would be Mary Butts' essay on 'Bloomsbury'. Speaking about what can be called the sampling fetish of modernism, that is the Bloomsbury group's eagerness to toy with all societal trends and a certain revelling in their own experimental transgressiveness, Butts writes-" For if you are to taste everything, you have rarely time to sit down to a long meal."(43) This could be an implicit comment on the group's zealous pursuance of the registers of alterity. Rosner comments on how the oppositional vanguardism of Bloomsbury invested heavily in transforming the interior. Christopher Reed too comments on how experiments such as the Omega Workshops aimed to revolutionize the look as well as the values of the British home. Where Fry spoke of decongesting the bourgeois home by ridding it of the ubiquitous Victorian ottoman, Bell and Grant focused their energies on the aestheticization of domestic objects, Bell recalling how Duncan Grant visualized her studio in their new house in Gordon Square as a giant tropical forest. Victoria Rosner's mention of how Vanessa Bell rebelled against the Victorian convention of walls painted in muted colours by hanging on them an array

of brightly coloured Indian shawls underlines how modernist non-compliance drew on imperial artifacts. This unfurled against the backdrop of the increasingly cosmopolitanised department stores of England. David Gilbert and Felix Driver take us on a fascinating tour of the changing complexion of English stores in the age of empire- "there was a long tradition in the retail trade spectacular displays of goods from around the world. A direct lineage can be traced from the silks and other fineries sold in Georgian Regent Street through Liberty's position as the ' commercial wing of the entire orient-influenced avant-garde' in the late nineteenth century to Selfridges' explicit celebrations of its 'cosmopolitanism'". They go on to demonstrate how Victorian establishments that rose to prominence in an insistently imperial climate announced their global swank through their slogans, such as William Whiteley presenting himself as " the universal provider" or that Harrod's telegraphic address was " Everything, London", slogans designed to promise a bounteousness that of course drew on colonial products, and Whiteley's in particular almost mimicking the claims of empire.

Rhys's story 'Let them Call it Jazz' is an interesting study since it traverses this whole gamut of primitivism, alterity and art . Selina is one of those rare Rhys heroines whose Caribbean lineage is explicitly marked through her Creolized idiom. The story starts with the usual Rhysian motif of the émigré adrift and at a loose end in the imperial core. There are some moments of delightful, deadpan, comedy extracted from Rhys's unashamed miming of colonial stereotypes by describing the English in the same token, such as when Selina says that the man who allows her use of his house is quite different from the English in general who take so long to decide on something that you would be " three quarter dead before they make up their mind." When Selina moves into Mr. Sims house, she has to contend with the xenophobic paranoia of the neighbours. Significantly, it is her art, her singing , that she turns to in at attempt to stonewall their palpable hostility. That Selina's singing is given a centrality by Rhys in her attempts at oppositionality is undeniable. She feels at her confident best when crooning. Not only is her singing imitative she also has a composer hidden inside of her As she explores that gift, she again comes up against the opprobrium of the neighbouring couple, who see her public singing as a sign of a wild creature let loose, and who label it 'noise'. But that Rhys connects her singing to her subaltern status is clearly manifested in the choice of melodies-for instance, when the white couple deride her for bringing contagion into their neighbourhood, her rage and embitterment are expressed not only through gesture, hurling a stone at their windowpane, but also breaching their walls of sanctimoniousness in another way, through one of her grandmother's songs that dwells on how the powerless are marginalized. Selina's song-making is centrally tied to both the idea of creativity and to the idea of finding a voice. That 'voice' of course is different from , and hence mocked by , the governing idioms of metropolitan society. Where Rhys's other fictions articulate protest through excoriating Western cultural forms , the enunciative site of protest in this story resides in the alternately inflected 'art' of the protagonist. Peter J Kalliney reads the story as Rhys's rather strategic transition from modernist forms to a post-colonial nativism, since that trajectory chimes with the coming into prominence of the primarily black and male West Indian writers. What I disagree with is Kalliney's reading of the first phase of Rhys's career as partaking of, or at least consonant with, the modernist anti-establishment sneer, since this study proposes that for Rhys, the modernist cartel was itself the establishment, and their aristocratic disdain of calcified bourgeois

attitudes strikes a different note from her less platform-like contrarian position. In fact, that sceptical reassessment of the modernist quest for novelty as so often vocalised in its embrace of alien idioms is in evidence in this story as well. This is to re-visit the thorny terrain of whether the modernist embrace of alternate voices indicates an escape from isolationist aesthetics or in fact reconfirms its centripetal aestheticizing of its centrifugal geo-cultural wanderings. John Marx connects a many-tongued modernism to its widening consciousness of other worlds-" modernist fiction made linguistic facility necessary for understanding, administering and mediating an infinitely divisible, multilingual , yet English-speaking globe." Kristin Czarnecki connects Selina's patois resounding through the imperial corridors to "dialect usage during the modernist period , when Rhys began writing and when experimental narrative harboured different implications for 'white' and 'black' writers." She cites Michael North's observations on how high modernists like Eliot, Pound and Stein forged innovation through the use of black speech patterns. This could lead to the other possible caveat that both Czarnecki and Kalliney insert into their articles- that Rhys's own position as a white Creole transcribing the idiomatic dialect of coloureds is a form of racial masquerade, so that even as she sharpens her attack on the 'inauthentic' cultural plundering of the modernists, she veers precipitously close to an appropriation of post-colonial 'authenticity'. One possible way of looking at this is to suggest that like other fictions in Rhys's oeuvre, Selina's artistry evokes no transcendent, collective, communal basis. Very seldom does Rhys write in terms of collectives. Though the West Indian context is so much at the heart of her other fiction , most explicitly *Voyage in the Dark*, it is evoked through a frictional chorus of voices that form an unassimilable medley. Similarly, in 'Let Them Call it Jazz' , even as Selina hones her art in the crucible of post-colonial memory, the discordant notes push against an idealization of the past. Rhys's multiply interstitial positioning rendered impossible a homogenized valorization of her past that is often(though not always) so strategically important for post colonial fiction.

Thus rather than reading the story as consonant with either of the master-discourses of modernism and post-colonialism, what interests me more is Rhys's exploration of the artist figure through her coloured female protagonist. This is a rare case study where Rhys allows her disadvantaged protagonist a voice of her own, sometimes culled from the experiential realm of the past, and sometimes from the emancipatory rhythms that break down the incarcerating barriers of her present. That Selina finds sustenance in these hybrid consonants is as Czarnecki notes, a more enabling concluding note than that found in Rhys's writings as a rule. But that Rhys also comments on art that is nascent versus one that is more cued in to the processes of institutinalization becomes in hindsight an implicit comment on how her own untheorized insights predate the evolved discipline of postcolonial writing. Of course, Rhys is not Selina. With her close association with Ford behind her, she understood the workings of the art markets better than her protagonist does. In fact, by the end of the story, Selina also comes close to learning to effect a synchronization between individual talent and the demands of the commercial market. Her gift of 'fine handsewing' which was perceived as at odds with the demands of mass production is now channelized into the humdrum rhythms of " take in, or let out..." but in a significant break from her former work history, in a big, plush store. She gets the new assignment as much through her 'native' talent as by manufacturing a sophisticated career profile and effecting a mincing tone. As Selina says at the end of the story, after

she realizes that the Holloway song which she privately saw as artistically transformative has been put out for public consumption-" For after all, the song was all I had. I don't belong nowhere really, and I haven't money to buy my way to belonging...".The story is fascinating in the suggestive layers it carries. For instance it can be contended that Selina's excitement at hearing the song, her being almost consumed by it, is not simply a register of its communally uplifting significance for the incarcerated residents of the prison, but more a response of a fellow artist to whom this creation from the margins is a more enabling addition to her native repertoire of songs about pain and injustice. After Selina ingests it, she feels ravenous. She senses a tomorrow for this oppositioal crescendo-" One day I hear that song on trumpets and these walls will fall and rest." Her response I believe is aspirational- that of an unsure 'othered' artist who now understands that these oppositional tunes have an audience .But what then does one make of her admission that she has stopped singing after that – in fact the man who recognizes its marketability overhears Selina whistling its tune? That could be an echo of Rhys's feeling of impasse- of being variously incapacitated by gender, location, history, circumstances,from capturing the market. The survivalism of Selina is admirable but it also disbars her from the luxury of venturing into art except perhaps in private. Kalliney seems to be right in detecting a note of hurt in the story- that even as Rhys pans the metropolitan appropriation of alternate art forms, emanating from the 'margins' , there is also a sense of, perhaps intensifying towards her final decades, how others from the West Indian location could institute an authentic corpus that her in-betweenness historically and perhaps intellectually precluded. The story's messages are evasive and complex .But what emerges ironically, and it is perhaps an irony that Rhys with her avoidance of modernist cerebralism would not have been too happy with, is that Rhys whose writing happens in a vernacular and uncerebral idiom was capable of anticipating so much of what twentieth century literary theory would discuss. For instance, the story's trajectory is in sync with the difference between a postcoloniality that attempts to decolonize expression to one where with Graham Huggan a circulation of otherness becomes a feature of the global art markets. So is Rhys ironising or begrudging how these cultural interfaces would come to dominate the art marquees of the West? Like much else in Rhys, concepts emerge from her position at the crossroads of periods, movements, nationalities. Thus I stay within the reading-writing schematics to suggest that though Selina 'reads' the potential change in trends correctly, she has neither the wherewithal nor the writerly preparedness to convert trauma into text.

Czarnecki points out that Selina cannot really claim the song to be her own just as "what rights can Jean Rhys claim to a black idiom?" It is this 'insider-outsider' dichotomy that accounts for the piquant, often frustratingly slippery, quality of Rhys's work- the contradiction for example between an avowed fascination for the qualities she attached to the blacks and coloureds , but frequently disrupted by intimations of danger and terror, which for Ramchand is a pointer to the "terrified consciousness of the Creoles." Though such observations normally accrue to a reading of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, this admixture of nostalgic yearning and an awareness of lurking violence is present in *Voyage in the Dark* as well- for example underlying the entire description of lovely moonlit boatrides with the vividly remembered boatman 'Black Pappy'is an undertow of anxiety at Black Pappy's warning about lurking barracoutas- "then you would imagine the barracoutas- hundreds of them...waiting to snap." Is this only a child's overactive imagination? There

is certainly the thrill of transgression that Anna feels in keeping the company of the 'other' but the sense of violence waiting to erupt is also palpably conveyed. Perhaps that little detail about the frayed seat of Black Pappy's trousers patched with sacking is not so fortuitous after all but conveys Anna's sense of the increasingly tenuous, capsizable, foundations of an unjust plantocratic society. The pervasive visuality and embedded sensoriness of her work deals too much in specificities to fall into the simplistic lures of colonial romance. This hallmark of her fiction, her swooping down on minutiae, her resistance to generalized commentary and aerial overviews, is also one way in which her writing resists subsumption into racial stereotypes , in an either/or format, a recognition of " how far she resists or complicates the essentializing definitions that colonialism relied on." These conflicting and fluid vectors of affiliation connect with but also go beyond Anna's need to break through constricting 'English' behavioural codes. They are more importantly situated in a discursive context that evokes the shifting and complex racial definitions of the Caribbean . For instance the term Quashee that white planters coined for the black man was an ideological stranglehold that characterized him as gay, unrestrained and childlike. Hilary Beckles notes that accounts such as John Stewart's(1808) perpetuated an image of the black male as " possessed of passions not only strong but ungovernable...a temper extremely irascible; a disposition indolent, selfish, and deceitful; fond of joyous sociality , riotous mirth and extravagant show." More tellingly for the present argument ,Stewart traced a behavioural equivalence between the Quashee and the white Creole woman, in turn labelled 'Quasheba.' One only has to turn to Bronte's *Jane Eyre* to understand the iron-grip of racialized thinking vis a vis the Caribbean. Rhys's text shows how the Caribbean almost functioned as a theoretical laboratory for the English to 'develop' their thoughts on racial traits and racial regression. She also shows how race and gender criss-crossed in insidious ways to the disadvantage of white creole women.

A number of critics have acknowledged how whiteness was a fluid and shifting signifier in such a complex social stratification as the Caribbean. Bill Schwarz speaks more generally of " the conflicting repertoires of white identity" as a result of colonialism and this awareness in inscribed in various early twentieth century texts, for instance in Woolf's *Night and Day* the two matriarchs, Katharine's aunts, call her Uncle John 'poor John' and discuss how "the fool of the family" was shipped off to India. He found distinction there and Mrs Milvain believes that might just earn him a knighthood and pension, " only it is not England." Mrs Cosham's tone is even more plaintive as she declares, thereby betraying her imbrication in colonial hierarchies, " In those days we thought of an Indian Judgeship about equal to a county-court judgeship at home." While this is an ironic glance at how the voyage out was viewed so often as a sloughing off of societal surplus, it does nevertheless provide a glimpse of the set stratifications and of the contested meanings/configurations of Englishness that would, predictably, be even more rigorously exercised vis a vis the voyage in.

That the obsessive vocabulary of racial decadence was linked to a sense of social crisis as the colonial wards began to make decided inroads into the colonial cities is undeniable. One hears it in the hysterical reaction of Ethel to 'foreigners', in Laurie's bolstering her Englishness by insisting on the good, strong peasant blood running in her veins, and in the geographical anomaly of Anna being labelled a 'Hottentot'. Her labeling as the Hottentot refers to the figure of Saartjie Baartman emerging as " a troubling presence, a

diasporic, multicultural, transcontinental being caught between very different worlds-ultimately her story circulates through Dutch, British and French imperialisms".(Gillian Whitlock, *Postcolonial Life Narratives:Testionial Transactions* Oxford University Press, 2015, pg 35).Whitlck's observes that in Georgian London Baartman became an object of imperial curiosity-" she was an erotic wonder signaling all that was strange, alien, sexually deviant, and monstrous;an explicit spectacle of flesh and touch;an individual frozen beyond history and time as the authentic indigenous subject before the authentic the ethnographic eye...Enlightenment intellectuals- Diderot, Voltaire, Montesquieu-were fascinated by the place of the Hottentot…The emerging sciences of evolutionary anatomy and biology…referred to the 'Hottentot Venus' to stabilize notions of a racial type".(pg 37) That sometime later in the text Anna imagines the "damned bust of Voltaire" sneering down at her indicates the connections Rhys was suggesting. Moreover, Anna is throughout perceived as untutored and perhaps 'unteachable', much as the labouring population of the West Indies was cast as unredeemable .Many voices in the text despair at her inability to master the art of getting on and Walter also reprimands her for lack of discretion and restraint such as when she readily shares with Vincent that she first met Walter during her chorus-girl days at Southsea. This is also that moment in the novel when Anna's internalized rage as the sneer directed at her outlier status finds expression in her bringing her cigarette butt down on Walter's hand. After their spat following Anna's tactical blunder/s, Anna tells Walter that she just wants to move upstairs and be alone with him and he mocks her saying- "Let's go upstairs , let's go upstairs. You really shock me sometimes , Miss Morgan." Anna's multiple 'indiscretions' reconfirm her 'otherness' in Walter's mind. Considering that it is shortly after this episode that Walter severs his connection with Anna, one can read backwards and see that from Walter's perspective(and Anna registers this) the incident proves a 'hysterical'(pg 76) and uncontrolled element in Anna. Just after this, Anna begins to reminisce about the pool in Morgan's Rest and most tellingly about the flowers that bordered it and whose 'excessively' strong, 'rank' scent made Hester "faint". The overpowering sensory experience of the Caribbean is too blatant for the well-heeled Hester. In fact, Anna also recalls the crabs that lurked at the bottom of the pool and how when you threw stones at them, a soft white substance oozed out. This intermixture of suppressed violence, viscerality, anxieties about decadence(Hester) and a resistant pulling at convention(Anna) provides a frame from within which to read the incident with Walter.

The colonial peripheries are read through various frames in the metropole, then, for instance in *Heart of Darkness* its denizens read it through the second hand " rot let loose in print." Philippa Levine offers an interesting insight into how the technological advances of modernity sometimes contributed to a concretization of regressive, raced thinking on the part of the metropole. She points out how " The advent of photography made cheap depictions of the nude 'savage' more common, reinforcing the gap between the clothed and proper English and the barely clad and shameless 'primitives' they ruled." It might be argued that Conrad's text testifies to a desire to read for itself, to reject prevalent readings guided by such visual evidence circulating in the metropolis. The primary narrator sets up Marlow as the modernist imprimatur in announcing that his sea yarns bore his inimitable stamp, in that there was no neat , compact 'kernel' of meaning nestled in them but only suggestive and multiple layers. In rejecting maps or his aunt's 'view' of the 'ignorant millions' , presumably based on the kind of visual evidence

Levine talks about, Marlow chafes against a pre-charted visuality of empire, and the primary narrator's opening gambit further bolsters the impression that Marlow's archaeologizing can penetrate beneath the spectacle of modernity, to recover truths that evade the technologies of vision. All the targets of Marlow's ire for their incomprehension are groups who would rely on knowledge about empire disseminated through the organs of modernity. Women in particular were cast as eager and suspectible consumers of the allures of a technology elevating exoticized stereotypes. For instance Mark Wollaeger offers a detailed analysis of how picture postcards contributed to "imperial stereotyping by disseminating primitivist images of indigenous peoples during the most jingoistic period of England's global dominance." He points out that the vogue of picture postcards first caught Britain's imagination in the 1890s and interestingly identifies the year of publication of *Heart of Darkness* as signalling the beginning of the golden age of postcards.His piece also mentions how contemporary fears about women's 'vulnerability' to proliferating forms of consumer culture now extended to the avalanche of postcards flooding the colonial capital. Wollaeger discusses how colonial postcards promised an 'authentic' glimpse of native life. It is then possible to understand how Conrad's protagonists show a contempt for these mass cultural forms. These mass pictorial representations, for all their claim to authenticity, are juxtaposed against a knowledge that is wrenched from the entrails of the colonial narrative and that cannot be accessed by the popular imagination. How does one reconcile this with Marlow's oft-repeated statements about women being out of touch with reality? There is perhaps little contradiction here since women's minds being seized by popular media would only corroborate Marlow's assumption that they live in a romanticized world. As Gabreille McIntire suggests, " The 'world' of women that Marlow imagines is distinguished by its non-relation to 'truth' and its excessive concern with aesthetics over practicality." Andreas Huyssen's article on the gendered lens attached to mass cultural forms is directly pertinent, especially when he points out that " the lure of mass culture, after all , has traditionally been described as the threat of losing oneself in dreams and delusions and of merely consuming rather than producing", a formulation that ties up with the text's counterpointing the passive compliance of the women to circulated knowledge as opposed to the male protagonists' forging it in the crucible of menacing darkness. One wonders whether the violence with which the decaying symbols of modernity that dot the novella are described, the upturned truck reminiscent of a 'carcass', the 'mangled' steamboat, the absent rivets, betray a suspicion and disavowal of modernity's pathways. They suggest a discomfiture with an African terrain already saturated with Western forms, but forms that fail to decode the spectral whispers of its wilderness. The almost paranoid shrinking from the technological rot exceeds the registers of the accepted interpretation of viewing the technological detritus that desecrates the Congo landscape as Conrad's critique of the 'idea' of progress as colonialism's *raison d etre*. This picture of a land laid waste by the emblems of modernity is thus governed as much by ethics as by aesthetic ideology. *Heart of Darkness* sets itself up as a modernist masterpiece in the way it rejects established and mass produced forms, both machinic and ideational, and elevates autonomous creativity. Conrad's antipathy to a world of standardized mass forms(the world that the women compliantly soak in) can be deduced from a 1905 letter written to Graham where he says: " The stodgy sun of the future…lingers on the horizon, but all the same it will rise-it will indeed-to throw its sanitary light upon a dull world of

perfected municipalities and WCs sans peur et sans reproche." Perhaps one could even read Marlow's suspicion of the urban crowd in the light of Huyssen's remarks as " the constant fear of the modernist artist who tries to stake out his territory by fortifying the boundaries between genuine art and inauthentic mass culture." Rejecting the immobility that the already mapped/ represented conjoins, Marlow and Kurtz invest in the residual primordial traces. Commenting on the conflicted relationship between popular forms and modernism, Rachel Potter observes: "In modernist texts there is often a strain between the incorporation of the energies of the new media, and the judgemental imposition of timeless notions...This conflict which is arguably a social and historical one, lies at the heart of Anglo-American modernist writing. It is at the centre of its remarkable achievements and its most troubling gestures." Potter's insights have more bearing on Conrad as an early entrant into this world as compared to those like Woolf who were arguably more receptive to it.The potentially anti-imperial, and hence progressive, thrust of Conrad's narrative is undone by its recurrent tendency to fetishize difference, both in the metropolis as in the colony.

Another Conradian tale,'Karain', that in fact predates *Heart of Darkness* also brings together this complex miasma of empire, deceit/lies, visuality and the urban sprawl. Karain is a Malay prince and the narrator and his companions a gang of gunrunners. As a man haunted by phantoms and shadows, Karain turns to the Westerners, those unbeset by the spectral , to give him a 'charm' that would give him the strength to go on, much like the Intended who needs that final talisman of faith , " something to live with" as she says.And much as Marlow resorts to a lie for the prophetic strains of bared truth that are reverberating in his ears even as he talks to her would shatter her idealized world, the native is handed a coin that is supposed to anchor him to the world of purpose and save him from dissolution. The coin is a Jubilee sixpence that underlines the might of the empire and its monarch. David Adams traces the way the spreading might of the empire connoted changes in the coinage, such as the abbreviation 'Brit" being changed to 'Britt' to underline the expanding borders of Britannia or later when the Queen's pride in mastery of the Indian subcontinent was stamped onto the coins by way of the inscription ' Ind.Imp' standing for Indiae Imperatix. Hollis's confidence that this would work with Karain comes from the many occasions when Karain expresses an elevated belief in the imperial sovereign, and in fact his own royal regalia might be read as an attempt to emulate atleast to some degree imperial pomp and splendour. Conrad suggests how empire rested on a cross-truck of visuality, where the empire was envisioned by both urbanites and indigenes from afar through a barrage of images and iconographies. This is important since it shows how *Heart of Darkness* walks the tightrope vis a vis women and empire, locating women's inadequacy on both the empirical and epistemological levels.Conrad is not suggesting a sequestration from the fact of empire. That would be historically anomalous given that the ceremony and spectacle of empire had invaded London by the 1890s, in the form of exhibitions, parades, newspaper reports, visual images, etc. But what Conrad underlines is how the naïve, uncritical consumption of popular spectacle, and here there is a suggested equivalence between metropolitan women and imperial subject, leads to a faulty and illusory picture of empire, innocent of the sinister undercurrents. 'Karain' ends like *Heart of Darkness* in the metropole and offers a similarly bleak picture of the press and crush of the urban crowd. When the narrator runs into Jackson, one of the party of gunrunners, and Jackson wonders whether

Karain was real or imagined, the narrator points to the urban street traversed by an unceasing crowd who are as unreal in their self-serving existence, rushing along with harried, animated or despairing faces. This too is madness and chaos, an urban version of it, and yet the final word rests perhaps with Jackson who registers the panting, engulfing, urban monster, yet still feels the spectral appeal of Karain's world more palpably. The apprehension of the 'other' world renders possible odysseys into nether regions, a perpetual contest of the visible and the invisible, that the women of course, with their experientially and cerebrally limited horizons, are foredoomed to lose.

If Marlow's readings self-consciously disdain the ready tools of modernity, Rhys's novels excavate the imperial imaginary through a reliance on the paraphernalia of modernity. This would then complicate any suggestion of women's particular gullibility to popular forms. In Rhys, the socialized aspects of gender are foregrounded rather than the essentialized as in Conrad. Laura Frost makes the crucial point that Rhys's women in fact *do not* display a somatic response to economies of pleasure, even while participating in them. As has already been discussed, modernity's pulsating buzz, that of urban streets lined with stores or the appeal of the cinema, forms a crucial part of Rhys's fictional canvas, and of her expository purpose. A brief insertion in *Voyage* that could easily be overlooked is where Anna, along with the xenophobic Ethel, watches some episodes from the Three-Fingered Kate cinematic series. It is the subversive element in the criminal leanings of Kate that most interests Anna who rebels against her co-readers' interpretation , that is, her fellow audience's loud applause at Kate getting caught. In Ethel's discomfort with foreigners, such as the actress who plays Kate, making inroads into British cinema the ' othered' Anna reads an instance of conservativeness.

Two voices from the pantheon of female modernism theorized the cinema in divergent but telling ways. Elizabeth Bowen writes in her essay ' Why I go to the Cinema'(1938) of the 'primitive' appeal of the cinema-" In time, the cinema has come last of all the arts; its appeal to the racial child in us is so immediate that it should have come first. Pictures came first in time, and bore a great weight of meaning: the 'pictures' date sight back in their command of emotion; they are inherently primitive." Bowen seems to break down cinema's appeal to the visual, sensory and non-theoretical, also echoed in her repeated assertions that the cinema is her access-point to " the fairy story." On the other side of the spectrum, Dorothy Richardson reads cinema's advent as resonating with a cosmopolitanised world-" These youths and maidens in becoming world citizens, in getting into communications with the unknown, become also recruits available, as their earth-and cottage bound forebears never could have been for the world-wide conversations now increasingly upon us in which the cinema may play, amongst its numerous other roles, so powerful a part." Richardson pushes for a conception of new media as revolutionizing the world whereas Bowen embraces it in more intimate,primeval,personalized terms. There isn't too drastic a leap from Richardson's views about how cinema brought Britons out of their insularity to Martin Pugh's recording of how " There was a huge output of propagandist films, thinly disguised as documentaries or adventure stories, including 'The Wildest Africa'...'From Red Sea to Blue Nile' ...in addition to the Empire Marketing Board's productions such as Windmills in Barbados(on sugar) and Cargo from Jamaica(on banana)." John M Mackenzie who has done extensive work on empire and popular culture discusses at length how cinema provided the interface between colonial settings and the untravelled British public. In so

far as British authorities attempted to monitor the content aired and saw films as an ideal way to inculcate robust imperial pride, Mackenzie sees this conservativeness as running counter to cinema's technological novelty. These various views, contemporaneous and otherwise ,help situate this emerging phenomenon in Rhys's time along the vectors of gender, empire and modes of reception/consumption. How does Anna Morgan read the cinematic text? Is she only alive to its sentimental, immediate appeal, a la Bowen, or is she aware of the interpellated nature of the whole experience? And how does Rhys's authorial imprint inflect and modulate Anna'a cinematic experience? Elizabeth Carolyn Miller studies the Three Fingered Kate series vis a vis the figure of the New Woman Criminal. The transgressive, protean and antiestablishment potentialities of the New Woman law-breaker are exemplified in Kate. Miller gives specific instances from the films in the series, such as the first one where Kate relies on racial cross-dressing to evade the law or the fourth one wherein Kate relieves a retired colonial officer from India of his imperial loot. Anna's entry point into the film is her restlessness with how the public in the theatre celebrates Kate's eventual downfall. Any hasty dichotomous interpretation of victim-victimizer however comes unstuck since the text has already set up a contrast between the cinema that smelt of poor people and the well-dressed glitterati on the screen .Anna invests emotionally in Kate's victories since they trigger the euphoria of transgression, a challenge to the " upholstered ghosts" of 'polite' society, whose exotic, lavish existence is built on collectibles and curios that pit Kate's robbery against imperial raidings. That Rhys places Anna in a context of lower class audience and yet differentiates her reactions from that of the others underlines that not only class but more specifically colonial and racial politics are in play. Anna's reaction and Rhys's own selective use of the Three Fingered Kate series(Miller points out that Rhys places the film in a " conservative and moralizing" context) perform a decoding of the cultural badinage of the imperial centre , and the locational lens impelling these readings would become the transgressive spur in recognizably post-colonial literature. Laura Frost's gloss on the film on Theodora that follows the screening of ' Three fingered Kate' resonates equally with such a reading. Frost notes that Theodora was an actress/ dancer who then rose to the stature of empress as the wife of Justinian I. The references to Theodora's voracious sexual appetite "point to the conflation of female entertainers...with prostitutes at Theodora's time". Rhys thus keeps her eye firmly on the juridical and censorious, but simultaneously makes space for fissures in that narrative, whether in Theodora's ascent to power, Kate's skirmishes with the powers that be or more tentatively, Anna's acts of rebellious and creative consumerism.

That Rhys's reading of the West's prurient fascination with what Stuart Hall terms " the exotica of difference" is mapped onto the filmic text can be gauged from Julia's and Horsfield's cinematic experience in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*. The narratorial voice describes the liaison that unfolds on the screen in racialized terms-" On the screen a strange, slim youth with a long white face and mad eyes wooed a beautiful lady the width of whose hips gave an archaic but magnificent air to the whole proceeding." The emphasis is simultaneously on the man's whiteness and his intoxicated fascination with the woman's uncontainable voluptuousness, tellingly figured through her prominently huge hips, thus evoking again the Hottentot image. The notion of primitive otherness is further underlined in fact by the use of the word 'archaic'. This also prefigures Horsfield's own interest in Julia's unplaceable exoticism. When a woman sitting behind

them rubbishes the film on account of all involved in it being " dingo" Horsfield reacts rather violently at this intrusion into this rather meagre gateway to a fantasy world – the "bare place" and the "frail music" make him feel that " the illusion of art was almost complete. He got a kick out of the place for some reason.". Laura Marcus notes how " for the moderns, experience and representation are mediated through and through by the technologies of the times." This is certainly true for how Rhys characteristically dispels the idea of cinema as a communal experience and describes it instead as a space for psychic mapping. Bowen lists as one of her reasons for going to the cinema the prospect of " sitting in a packed crowd in the dark, among hundreds riveted on the same thing; I go to have my most general feelings played on." While that statement would accurately describe Horsfield's eroticized ingestion of racial binaries, since these would constitute the generalized backdrop of the pornography of empire, it does not hold true for Rhys' and her protagonists' resistant, non-communal and edgy (counter)responses. Critical discussions of modernism and cinema testify to an ongoing quibble about what cross-section of the public the medium primarily set out to woo. James Donald points out how cinema in its inceptionary stages was largely an urban phenomena but by the 1930s cinema centres began to proliferate in the suburbs. More pertinently for this argument, he details how cinema helped "consolidate" the suburb by " bringing the experience of 'going out' to a way of life primarily built around 'staying in', a way of life mediated primarily through a privatized experience of telephone, radio and television." Leading forward from Donald's suggestion and placing cinema against the backdrop of empire, one can see how it both visually unveiled and ideologically perpetuated the imperial matrix. But that Rhys details consumerist recalcitrance and not just compliance is also a theoretical suggestion made by Donald . He develops on Miriam Hansen's idea that while "the publicness of the cinema like the domesticated publicness of the department store" made for a potentially communal experience of shared commodity consumption, it also allowed for a distance from social and cultural norms, and this commentary illuminates Anna's stubbornly personalized response to the Three Fingered Kate story. In fact both the textual instances cited foreground divided as opposed to shared responses and while this might overlap with the multi-perspectivism of modernism, it is more about coming at something from different locations than about in Esty's words the modernist proclivity for "connoisseurships of mental states". Another facet that needs to be kept in mind is that in her treatment of that Ur-symbol of modernity, the moving pictures, Rhys remains resolutely within the vernacular idiom and skirts the highbrow quotient of the complex conversations that clustered around this innovation, in which female modernists such as Woolf and Richardson prominently participated.

That the criss-cross of empire was seminally tied to a visual matrix that undergirded the imperial imaginary is thus a strand explored or atleast suggested (I mean Conrad here) by both the writers being discussed. While Conrad rejects popular visual representations as 'inauthentic', Rhys's entire critique adopts the visual as its playing field. For instance while Conrad suggests that both the indigenes(*Karain)* and the uninitiated urbanites(*Heart of Darkness*) are the dupes of the popular mass culture of empire and hence suggests more daring voyages into the other , the topos of the visual is essential to Rhys's purpose. That Conrad saw women's untutored minds as most vulnerable to the technologies of mass culture such as advertising is clear from his story 'The Partner'. The depiction of Cloete , the " Yankee", as an unscrupulous and unethical charmer from the

world of advertising certainly raises morally troubling issues about the advertising industry, as Stephen Donovan points out. Yet the story , though it perspicaciously cuts through to deeper questions like the dubious ethics of the advertising trade also needs to be read in its specific place and time to unravel some of its own troubled gestures. Donovan points to how it was precisely in the time period in which Conrad was writing that advertising grew into a major industry, and that Conrad made his dislike of the medium quite clear, berating his publisher in 1896 for " the abominable advertisement being put against my dedication." The critic also mentions how advertising itself was caught in an ambiguous configuration, " accused of polluting the urban environment" by naysayers and on the other hand some contemporary commentators and people in the industry arguing for it to be seen as 'art' and even as 'literature'. This could then be read as a reprisal of the high/low schism that continues to plague modernism , wherein Conrad sees red at a lowbrow form being pictured alongside his highbrow craft. As a proto-modernist, Conrad's statements speak of an insistent need to distance himself from mindless patterns of bourgeois consumption, and this would of course become embedded as the sneer that would define the project of "monumentalizing modernism" as Ann L Ardis terms it. In 'The Partner' that mindlessness is again associated with women, and hence a gendered reading complicates the interpretation of the tale as encoding a moral distaste against the compromised world of advertising . The tale works like *Heart of Darkness* to fix women as being the easiest to be persuaded and wrought on by the spurious myths of popular forms. While in *Heart of Darkness* , women's literacy as built on pulp forms is rejected , in 'The Partner' George's troubles in the story are blamed on his wife's desire for opulence and how she is completely enamoured of Cloete, the advertising man, "the man of the world", since her entire persona is akin to a fashion catalogue. The story certainly makes its point against capitalist greed yet problematically its critique reinforces gendered stereotypes where consumption of mass forms is seen as a degraded feminized suspectibility, the wife," the silly, extravagant fool" led by the nose by the purveyor of consumerist myths. One kind of necromancy , that which appeals to the coarse feminized sensibility is pitted against another, a darker world of anarchic visions that only the robust masculinized mind can reach. Of course, it could be contended that Kurtz's breakdown can be read as a sign of feminization. But that is where one must understand how Conrad walks the treacherous line between decentring the colonial idiom and instating the modernist one. And in fact this frictional relationship with forms of mass culture paves the way for the aristocratization of modernism, with the peripheral, 'othered', forms it consumes permanently frozen in hierarchical vassalage to it. Looked at in another way, Kurtz is the greatest consumer of all, his wide open mouth and his zeal for ravishment suggestive of both the colonialist and the modernist impulse. It is easy to understand how the colonial edifice had consumption as its motive force. That modernism had a rather troubled and conflictual relationship with the consumerist onrush unleashed by modernity needs to be contended with. In their denigration of the bourgeoisie, the avant garde made swipes at its crass appetitiveness. Yet as John Xiros Cooper points out, in their very resistance to commercial civilization "they ended up providing the cultural scaffolding for the very civilization they were resisting." In the immediate context, this implies that possibly modernism's cosmopolitan leanings opened the floodgates of popular consumption of imperial imports.

The juxtaposition of the impoverishment of the urban imaginary with ex-centric visions recovered from darker, hidden, recesses , psychogeographical in the case of both writers, leads also to the subject of madness. Modernism's minotarian pitch often figured madness as a disaffiliatory discourse, as a reaction to the brutalizations and automatism of urban existence, a visionary transcendence of which would shade off into the hallucinatory regions of madness. Both Anna Morgan and Kurtz seem to move in a hallucinatory haze. Kurtz's insane rupture with the unimaginativeness of 'civilized' society is narrated with éclat . It is panned by small-minded people like the manager as 'madness' but Marlow's corrective voice subtly guides the reader's response, pitting Kurtz's 'excess' as the superior alternative to the non-presence of the manager and his cronies .Anna's slide into the hallucinatory surfacing of sedimented and unresolved memories is however seen as a lack. A number of characters in the text comment on her 'absentness'. They jeer at her desire to anchor herself to an ethos, as if in their minds her vagueness is her primary reality, a register of her non-being . Anne McClintock argues that in the contact zones of empire, " as domestic space became racialized, colonial space became domesticated." Rhys's portrayal of how Anna's very being has to contend with the metropolitan variant of the colonial gaze fits into McClintock's formulation. Her grip on sanity founders as she finds herself incarcerated within the pathological brackets of colonial society and her final 'confinement' which culminates in stillbirth establishes the blankness and absence conjoined on her by the amnesiac erasures of history. Thus Anna's madness is that of a being ghosted by time and history. The second clause of McClintock's statement however is trumped by Conrad's novella whose critique of colonialism as well as its eccentric take on the adventure tradition both invest heavily in the undomesticated , the former from a diagnostic and the latter from a philosophical vantage point. The untamed becomes a signifier of the pre-civilizational and Kurtz its mad, occult worshipper .Kurtz comes looking for worldly fame and his pursuit of that smacks of excess too. But since in Conrad we see the modernist gesture of de-legitimating philistine, bourgeois modes of perception in favour of profounder truths it is to Marlow that we turn to understand how Kurtz's delirious séances lead him into phantasmal realms that "the dead cats of civilization" would be blind to. Is Marlow wrong in suggesting that the breakdown of Kurtz indicates a mind more open to the ghostly seductions of the alien than those others at the station who only roil around in the "dustbin of progress"? But it needs to be emphasised that Kurtz's and Marlow's modernist aesthetics of speech that speaks from the dark abyss is built on the silence of natives and women. In these inaugural texts of modernism, even as its territorial boundaries are being drawn, the process entails a territorial/ aesthetic/ cerebral occupation of the margins. These passages into and out of the metropolis hence revolve around the uncontainable in the colonial script. In Conrad's text , Kurtz represents that which ruptures the imperial script and in Rhys's text, Anna Morgan's ambiguous positionality both invites and escapes containment, since she signifies that which could potentially unseal its lexical gridlock. Kurtz's uncontainability, however, becomes surreptitiously reinstated as modernist heroics even as it destabilizes the conventional registers of colonial heroism .Sent out to prepare a report for the "Society of Suppression of Savage Customs' Kurtz's neurotic and peremptorily cryptic addendum 'Exterminate all the Brutes' to what is otherwise the model of magniloquence suggests how his extremism imperils the normativities of the imperial scriptorium .This is where *Heart of*

Darkness negotiates between breakdown and utterance and the collapse of one script makes way for the intricacies of the other. Urmila Seshagiri contends that Marlow's narration forces his auditors to "confront the incoherence of all racial identities." Conrad's tale opens up for her a world of racial multiplicity. But it is important to remember that her observations take the metropolis as its stage. Speaking from that centre, it is true that Conrad's novella splits open "the totalizing master narratives of European imperialism", with the racial 'play' of Kurtz as its dark underside. More to the point, Seshagiri studies these incursions into the entrenched binaries of race in relation to modernist aesthetics and pits the straightforward scripting of a racially codified imperial identity with a more complex and pluralized encoding of it. To look at Anna's pariah-like status now, whether figured as excess or lack, her absence is never able to become presence in the metropole. That she represents the contagion that festers in the crannies of the colonial script is made amply clear through the imagery that is associated with her even before she enters England in Hester's dire pronouncements. The entire weight is on the notion of hygiene under the looming shadow of the libidinal. Anna as a child wears a woollen vest a size too small because wool next to the skin is 'Healthy', wears scrupulously starched white drawers and petticoat, and extremely tight gloves that do not fit, with a voice, presumably Hester's berating her " You naughty girl, you're trying to split those gloves; you're trying to split those gloves on purpose." Rhys evokes a specific Caribbean scenario here-as Callaghan deduces from her wide-ranging texts by women from the West Indies, " Femininity for the creole elite is English femininity." She also refers to how imposition of English fashions was frequently represented as a torment for creole women.(112) That the scene also contains a reference to Anna's watching how Joseph dexterously uses spittle to blacken the family's boots dents the polished veneer of respectability Hester aims for, since it is a glance at both the improprieties of the colonial class and the resistant impieties of the victimized. The opprobrium that sneers at an unmanageable, creolized, sexuality that strains at containment follows Anna from childhood. Shortly after losing her virginity to Walter and aware of how this would reconfirm society's 'image' of her, she tells Walter that she does not like the mirror in his bedroom since in the novel Hester and Walter are the ones who hysterize the body the most. The mirror in his house underlines for Anna the deformative specularity of the mirrors of colonialism. The image of a precipitous descent at the end connotes how Anna continues to fall betwixt the two alternatives given her by colonial society, those of dismemberment (figured in the aborted birth) and re-suturing. Struggling under the leaden weight of the supremacist myths of Western society as also the tenacious hold of the memories of her past, Anna remains suspended in interim in a voyage that is never completed, much as her step-mother in England and her Uncle in the Caribbean squabble over who will pay her passage money. Neither colonizer nor colonized Anna's madness is of those who occupy the edges of the colonial economy and who can plague and decode its hegemonic formulations but have not found the writerly corner from where to forge a counter-writ. Anna's youth, especially considering that Rhys's other tales of feminine adriftness are of aging women, shorn of the evolutionary arc of the bildungsroman underlines how Rhys intends us to read her as statically entrapped in repressive power structures and that her non-progress is a comment on how Anna is the caesura between the moment of breakage and the moment of change, between the anti-colonial and the autonomous. Can Anna'a prolonged hemorrhaging at the end then be

read as colonial society's zealous, violent, need to expel the offensive other and to then suture Anna into a more compliant member who as the doctor blusteringly declares at the end is ready to "start all over again in no time." Anna comments on the brisk and machinic efficiency with which he moves, ready to 'smooth' out the blimps in the colonialist narrative and to stitch into some semblance of order the fissures and excesses that threaten its narrative valency. Mary Lou Emery points out that the doctor misreads Anna'a reference to falling, since Anna points to her vertiginous descent into the depths of her Caribbean memories while the doctor interprets it to refer to her sexual indiscretions. This is pivotal since Rhys portrays Anna's absentness as her identitarian ambivalence whereas the doctor abnormalizes her sexually. Anna deliriously navigates between being a blank and a 'pregnant' pause. Evelyn O Callaghan mentions the selectivity of West Indian canon-formation, the irony of a counter-canon to which women critics like Callaghan and Donnell now working to restore 'women writing the West Indies' posit a women's counter-canon in turn. Donnell speaks of how in the formation of the post-1950s Caribbean writing portal, certain names figure repeatedly such that " Together these nominated few navigate a fairly smooth, if highly selective and all-male, crossing from colony to nation-a crossing in which literature and history make a happy couple...the exclusion or selection of pre-1950s writers becomes a means by which to side-step works which were and perhaps remain out of step with the prevailing politics of reading, a way to ignore those texts that never made the crossing successfully." This could well be a gloss on how Rhys's work continues to worry canons , and could also point to how her first major Caribbean protagonist navigates her way between inscription and erasure.

In her earlier illness, Anna, in a feverish haze comments on how fever makes you " heavy and light, small and swollen."(29) Anna's body becomes an embodied signifier of the imperial script, with the hymeneal rupture signifying the perforations of its vaunted exceptionalism, marred by the libidinal excesses of imperialist penetration. Walter both overvalues virginity yet does not show too much anxiety at discovering he is Anna's first sexual partner as if she, a creature from the colonial periphery, already bears the mark of an innate decadence. His laughter at Anna's spirited as also matter-of-fact rebuttal of how chastity is overemphasized vis a vis women shows that he only receives the remark as a sign of her looseness. In fact, such statements from Rhys's heroines do not garner the same attention as the questioning of sexual norms by women writers like Woolf since there is for one no over-voicing, and secondly because these get obscured by the character's slide into a prostitute-like existence, so that one battles hard to negotiate in Rhys between the regressive and the progressive .Nevertheless this scepticism about sexual mores is significant since it does expose the double speak of bourgeois as well as imperial 'exemplariness'.

Rhys envisions a creative dynamic where Anna's psychospace interweaves with the images on the screen, and out of these collusions, a counterdiscourse is coaxed out of the inscribed text. In Certeau's words, "the procedures of contemporary consumption appear to constitute a subtle act of "renters" who know how to insinuate their countless differences into the dominant text." Jean Rhys and her heroines are undoubtedly 'renters', and I believe that the suggestion of unsettledness that the word carries bears the conceptual weight of the shiftiness of Rhys's ' voyage in' within the dominant discourse of modernism and colonialism. As a renter, Rhys was shorn of a space to call her own-her

authorial uniqueness emerges instead from disingenuous insurrectionist forays into the spaces of modernist discourse, and the ensuing history of engagements and dis-engagements also give her writing a Janus-faced creative force-looking back at and bringing into view the reactionary backrooms of modernim's emancipatory salons on the one hand and prefiguring the anti-imperial genesis of postcolonial writing on the other. Buffeted from place to place, room to room, period to period, the sheer corrosiveness of the renter's non-belongingness becomes a poser for the master-narrative of modernism. Conversely, her searing analysis of the dis-empowerments wrought by colonialism does not quite knit into the later integrated empowering notes of postcolonial discourse. Bill Schwarz points out how most of the potential writers and artists who migrated from the Caribbean had already found a voice of their own before the voyage in-they had as he puts it " their typewritten novels and poems in their suitcases, mimeographed manifestoes" so that while they were still 'renters', the internal processing of colonially inscribed space was already a work in progress for them. Rhys emerges, then, more as a provocateur in Certeau's terms, a creative, insurgent, occupier of inscribed/re-inscribable spaces. Critics like Jed Esty and John Clement Ball have traced the efflorescence of West Indian literature in the mid-twentieth century London as a collective phenomenon. Esty is of the opinion that though writers from the colonial peripheries like Rhys and Mansfield had been a part of the London scene, " the colonial writers of the 1950s represent a distinct phase in the remaking of English culture insofar as their work participates in the transformation of centre-periphery relations at the end of empire." As a white Creole, Rhys was never part of these emerging collectives, and here one cannot but note that Phyllis Shand Alfrey, a Creole like Rhys, played a formative influence in the developing West Indian nationalistic narrative and in island politics. Battling a schismed identity,and 'ghosted' at the level of class(since her stage career marked her as déclassé, unlike Alfrey), background and gender, Rhys's work is expository rather than constitutive. If as the editors of *Postcolonial Geographies* argue, " Postcolonialism has an expansive understanding of the potentialities of agency, sharing a social optimism with other discourses, such as those surrounding gender and sexuality…", then that utopianism is singularly absent from Rhys's fiction but the fractious and contentious spirit that would go on to enact a final rupture with repressive, monocultural authority certainly broods insubordinately in its crevices .Mansfield and Rhys prefigure the 'remaking' of English culture by puncturing its haloed narrative and thus initiating its un-making.

Hence, before we entomb Rhys's protagonists forever as masochistic and passive and functioning in a somnambulistic mode , it is important to see how their zombie-like voyage through the urban corridors and spaces includes the casual yet invaluable, telling references to the pathologies of patriarchy and imperialism conducted in *Voyage in the Dark* in particular through an excavation and dismantling of the visual, lexical iconography of the imperial centre. Though prime examples of women who are sucked into the societal machine, they also remain recalcitrant in their ironic anatomization of its machinations and its prejudicial basis. Thus Rhys is enacting a refusal to let colonial visuality be one-sidedly denominative.

To centre the discussion more specifically around Voyage in the Dark now ,initially, rather obviously the gaze is turned against Rhys's heroine. As a Creole from the West Indies, Anna is referred to as the Hottentot (12) [20].Pamela Scully and Clifton Crais [21] speak about how Sara Baartman, a KhoeKhoe woman from the Cape Colony was put on

stage in London as a freak show and how the iconography of the Hottentot Venus continues to resonate in all its murkily voyeuristic racial- imperial registers well into the mid-nineteenth century. Sara Baartman labeled the 'Hottentot Venus' for her protruding bottom became a freak show, a show premised on magnified biological dimensions. Elleke Boehmer in fact links Sara Baartman's being put on public display in London to her examination of the colonial gaze, the commanding perspective from which the colonizer scrutinize the colonized, what Pratt alternatively terms the " monarch-of-all-I-survey" attitude (201). Sara Baartman was simultaneously figured as atypical and typical, figured as excess and also as representative. In their article on the figural valency of the Hottentot Venus, Carlos A. Miranda and Suzette A. Spencer quote an advert recording her arrival, inviting audience to partake of this curious yet symptomatic spectacle:

> THE HOTTENTOT VENUS- Just arrived...from the banks of the River Gamtoos, on the borders of Kaffraria, in the interior of South Africa , a most correct and perfect specimen of that race of people . From this extraordinary phenomena of nature, the public will have an opportunity of judging how far she exceeds any description given by historians of that tribe of the human species. She is habited in the dress of her country, with all the rude ornaments usually worn by those people. She has been seen by the principal literati in this metropolis who were all greatly astonished as well as highly gratified with the sight of so wonderful a specimen of the human race.[22]

The contradictory registers of this advertisement can be glossed by Sadiah Querishi's observation of how difference is on the one hand reified and on the other becomes the "typological basis of alterity."[23]. This gaze that simultaneously exoticizes and elides difference, that is simultaneously bewitched and juridical, is the one Anna encounters in the shape of metropolitans who underline her otherness only to collapse it into convenient stereotypes. Selina Davis, the protagonist of Rhys's story 'Let Them Call It Jazz', again of West Indian lineage , voices her raw protest at this constricting net of social opprobrium closing in on her when she says, "They don't look at me but they see me alright"(166)[24]. The differentness of the Other is both acutely lodged in the consciousness of the gazers as well as subsumed within the racial frame through which the Other is viewed.

In an article entitled 'States of Undress: Nakedness and the Colonial Imagination', Philippa Levine discusses the colonial obsession with the figure of the unclothed native, often in the name of scientific curiosity. For instance she points to the increasing development of the science of anthropometry. As she points out, "In 1875 the British Association For the Advancement of Science established its Anthropometric and Racial Committee. In its very name the typological and classificatory urges of the new scientific photography and of the Association were made manifest , and though the ambitious imperial scope of the project was quickly scaled back for want of funds as well as personnel, the intent of such work is clear. The Committee aimed to collect photographs of racial types and also bodily data such as height and weight. The details they amassed revealingly included an index of 'nigrescence' as a measure of degeneration among the population of the British Isles." [25] An interesting paradox thus opens out- a classificatory, scientific gaze aimed at containing and a salacious gaze thriving on the stereotype of the hypersexualized excess of the native defying containment. This is in line with Anna Morgan's reception in London. She is regarded with suspicion because of her difference and yet also gathered under a common rubric of polluting influx from the colonies, thus

simultaneously singled out as freakish and fitted into a broader categorization of the "half-potty bastard"(124).

As a chorus- girl the Hottentot label sticks even more firmly because she is in the performative zone. And yet there is another performative aspect of *Voyage in the Dark*, the interior consciousness of Anna that pierces through the hypocrisies and regressive thought structure of the ostensibly gregarious and cosmopolitanised metropolis. If her exterior life is one of sameness, projected as an inevitable slide into victimhood, it is the astutely critical, unsparingly acerbic commentary that Rhys invests in her protagonists that makes them something other than the hunted and the helpless. At one point in the seduction ritual, when she is with Walter in the initial stages of their tentative physical intimacy listen to Anna listening to a musical interlude " The orchestra played Puccini and the sort of music that you always know what's going to come next, that you can always listen to ahead, as it were." (31)This could well be wry self-awareness on the part of Anna of where she is heading with Walter. These are the metafictional moments in Rhys that would make any labelling of her protagonists as sorry examples of victimhood untenable. Not only is this an ironic aside on Anna's part but also a comment by Rhys on her own methodology , almost prescient in terms of how critics have read her female protagonists as constituting the composite heroine. Her irony is double valenced here, one in not shying away from the predictability of the projected scenarios and also in her refusal to cerebralize or refine these in any way from the drab, grim economics at the heart of it[26]. Also, critics who read her novels in terms of the Rhys woman fail to give due credence to the iconography she selects and inducts as an inverse gaze.

Thus my argument is that in *Voyage in the Dark* Anna Morgan reverses the reductive gaze trained at her. If Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* works towards diminution through magnification, that is the Congo jungle in all its immensity is reduced to signifying a rudimentary stage of human progress, then Anna traverses the same path: London that purported centre from where all power flows outwards is pinned down thus through Anna's eyes: " This is England Hester said and I watched it through the train window divided into squares like pocket handkerchiefs; a small tidy look ...I had read about England ever since I could read- smaller, meaner everything is never mind." (15) The voice from the periphery summarily dismisses the much-vaunted variety and breadth of the imperial metropolis by finding a disturbing sameness in its gestures of exclusion, judgement and discrimination.

If the gaze in Conrad focuses on the sublimatory aspects of the physical as a conduit to the epiphanic, the gaze in Rhys anatomises the quotidian and the everyday as an expository maneouvre. Thus the iconography that Rhys chooses is of everyday markers- songs, jingles, prints, posters, films, all this paraphernalia is spliced through, cut open, to disembowel the residues and traces of unequal power equations. And these visual tropes that are underpinned by racist, colonialist and patriarchal power-grids are almost casually slipped into the text, only to be unrelentingly held up to scrutiny.

During her stay at Ethel's house Anna chances upon a 'Cries of London' print. She mentions them as a part of her describing the setting of Ethel's house and her insistent claims to respectability, even as Ethel extricates her own enterprise from the other déclassé places that advertise massage. The placing of the reference to the 'Cries of London' is thus pertinent since we are in the referential economy of selling and

advertising wares. Ethel's chant of respectability is belied by the goings-on that Anna participates in and describes, where the services of the masseuse cross the threshold between the advertised portfolio and hinted-at assignations.
In *Images of the Outcast : The Urban Poor in the Cries of London* , Sean Shesgreen traces the evolution and decline of the series over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and draws out the difference between its four main practitioners, Laroon, Boitard, Wheatley and Sandby. The 'Cries of London' etchings chronicled the lives of urban street hawkers. The spectrum of individual styles – ranging from pastoral, romanticized/ eroticized to harshly realistic- is masterfully explored by Shesgreen. If Wheatley for instance sentimentalized and prettified the face of the hawker, Sandby as Shesgreen says "recreated the vulgarity, the feel, even the smell of hawkers"[27]. In these four artists Shesgreen traces the varied and divided history of the genre, ranging from pastoralism to antipastoralism, and from a picturesque depiction of hawkers to the "historical actualities of street hawking." (125) For instance, discussing the depiction of the flower-girl, Shesgreen argues that Sandby removes the veil of innocence sentimentally and stereotypically attached to the profession of the flower-seller, and shows her embodying a knowing sexuality and playing on it to ply her trade, thus describing Sandby's flower-girl " as the least euphemistic" (129) of such etchings .Wheatley's prints on the other hand embody a rural "lyricism" (136).

While Mary Lou Emery is probably right in conjecturing that Rhys is referring to a Wheatley print[28], since Ethel's manufactured respectability and fervid Englishness would lean towards the more sanitized, bucolic English version, the underground history of the genre feeds into Rhys's dis-membering project. As Anna says in one of her many seemingly flat yet gall-infused statements in the novel, "This is England and I am in a nice, clean English room with all the dirt swept under the bed" (pp 27). Similarly Wheatley's 'Cries of London' as Shesgreen explains, would signify a similar sleight of hand-the sweat and grime of the hawkers' milieu is transformed into a consumable artistic rendition of healthy English virtue. As Emery points out, the 'Cries' evoke the "global commerce of the street" (63), since they captured the history of this profession transnationally-traversing various cities of the world such as London, Vienna,,Boston etc. She goes on to argue that the defining element of peddling, the 'cries', "the distinctive shouts, rendered visually are … silenced." (63) She cites Shesgreen to underline the fact that these cries would most likely have sounded bawdy and transgressive.

The 'Cries of London' then allow Rhys to emphatically suggest that the underclass are accepted only when they appear to cleanse themselves of oddities and eccentricities. The assimilative pressures that city life exerts exist alongside how it also expects you to fight hard for survival. Thus Anna has to earn her upkeep with Ethel by participating in the suggested allurements on offer yet she must not voice her discontent or even bring what is transpiring to the level of articulation, only to perform it behind the curtains of propriety. Emery reads Rhys's use of the iconography of the 'Cries' as the author's way of portraying her protagonist as a silenced woman (65). I would however like to problematise or atleast underwrite that silence by using Michel de Certeau's formulation that those who are enmeshed in societal grids find tactical spaces to refuse the "scriptural imperialism" that works along the lines of active/passive, producer/consumer,

author/reader[29]. Certeau's theoretical framework is particularly apposite to my reading since he also talks of how reading as an activity is far from being passive (xxi). Similarly he argues that though we live in a society of which visual consumption is such an integral part, consumers again cannot be categorized as passive (xix) .Thus these deliberately chosen though seemingly breezy references to Western cultural artefacts on Rhys's part are not to be dismissed as peripheral since it is by directing her protagonists' gaze to these that Rhys splices through the veneer of culture to the subsumed power politics coded into it.

Another such almost passing but revelatory visual reference comes when Anna goes to meet her stepmother Hester. The fact that this visual fragment is woven into their conversation is again strategic, as we will see, since Hester holds the flag of unbesmirched Englishness high. In the course of their meeting, Anna spies an advertisement of Bourne's Cocoa at the back of a newspaper - " 'What is Purity? For Thirty-Five Years the answer has been Bourne's Cocoa' " (50)And a little later as she turns that notion of purity around in her mind- "Thirty-five years…Fancy being thirty-five years old. What is Purity? For thirty-five thousand years the answer has been….."(51).In an article entitled " Bittersweet Temptations: Race and the Advertising of Cocoa" , Emma Robertson discusses the history of cocoa advertising .She points to one interesting poster in particular, where the plantation backdrop of cocoa sourcing is superimposed by "selected images of the manufacturing process in Britain" and the caption proudly proclaimed that once transported to Britain the raw tropical material became Absolutely Pure through industrial technology, an obvious reference to how the manufacturing process neatly skirted the use of human hands [30]. Thus the purity of the product depended on both the elision or atleast the gradual obscuring of the plantation backdrop and the highlighting of Britian's technical/ industrial know-how. Anandi Ramamurthy similarly discusses how a number of advertisements depicted scenes of the metropolitan production process and even where the plantation context is evoked, the images "assert a false idealism"[31], suggesting scenes of "rural toil that are picturesque and harmonious" (65). Again, the coercive nature of plantation labour is aestheticized and its unpalatable exploitativeness rendered invisible .The sweatedness and unsavouriness of the labour context is quite literally eased out of the frame as the product is encased in a sparkle of "purity" made possible by the marvels of technological expertise. Joanna de Groot sums this up in her article "Metropolitan Desires and Colonial Connections: Reflections on Consumption and Empire" when she notes the paradox that "the powerful everyday presence of colonial products in metropolitan lives was both pervasive (the role of sugar, tea and tobacco in mass consumption) and invisible (the unseen commercial and exploitative structures of colonial power or labour which delivered the products)"[32].

Catherine Rovera suggests that the advertisement be read against the backdrop of "England's obsession with moral purity as some kind of mass neurosis"[33]. She reads the Bourne's Cocoa Purity claim as an allusion to the "Social Purity Crusades that swept Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century, in the wake of the Contagious Diseases Act enacted to fight against venereal diseases"(7). By foregrounding the idea of purity Rhys therefore evokes the dense web of both the imperialized and gendered contexts. As Hester reveals to Anna, undoubtedly trying to slip in an implicit sermon, how the preacher's daughter is getting married, the advertisement in its gendered connotations evokes the socially encoded connection between respectability and

matrimony for women. The announcement carries all the weight of Hester's disapproval of Anna for her "impure" ways. The advert also breaks into, as visual backdrop, a conversation about Anna's Uncle Bo who Hester derides for his many-coloured offspring populating the West Indies- "the colours of the rainbow" as she bitingly comments (54). So the idea of miscegenation that renders any notion of "purity" rather tenuous in the fraught cross-racialized atmosphere of the West Indies is hinted at by Rhys here. In an insightful article entitled "Rhys's pieces: Unhomeliness as arbiter of Caribbean Creolization" H. Adlai Murdoch describes Rhys's world, as that of her protagonists, as one of doubleness .Talking of *Voyage in the Dark* and its evocation of the "ubiquitous British product Bourne's Cocoa" he points out the complex nature of the reference when he discusses how the 'lasting (and therefore) desirable purity of English products is inevitably tied to the "corrupting humidity of the tropics"[34]. As he argues, it is ironically suggestive of the doubleness and intersections of a colonized world that "Britishness is defined through Bourne's cocoa's brownness-a processed product of colonial origin, which is then re-exported to be consumed by metropolitans and colonials alike." (269) Since consumption of cocoa was implicitly tied to that of milk, Groot too points to "the combination of the domestic (indigenous rural purity) with the colonial (tropical exotic flavour)" (170).To expand the argument, it is these intercultural, intermeshed trajectories that Rhys insistently evokes as a challenge to the exclusionary impulses working in imperial metropolises.

Critics have repeatedly argued in recent times, countering the myth that colonialism was something that took place out there, away from the European metropolises, that imperialism permeated the daily texture of the lives of the metropolitan populace [35]. In this vein, Ian Baucom wonders how the notion of Englishness itself stood beleaguered `as Britian's frontiers expanded outwards. He cites Bhabha's formulation that the self-definition of a nation depends both on its gazing inward to dwell on "the Heimlich pleasures of the hearth" and outward to take stock of and ward off "the unheimlich terror of the space or race of the other."[36] As Baucom says:

> Was the empire the domain of England's mastery of the globe or the territory of the loss of Englishness? Or most ominously…was it neither of these but a place where Englishness would be reformed, a place crowded with "other spaces", other cultural locales, other local knowledges and local memories that must begin, to expand the catalog of Englishness…If that were so, the Englishness would survive intact only by refusing to admit that the imperial beyond was in fact partly the national within. Its conservators could save England by insisting that the empire had little or nothing to do with England… (6)

It is this process of the empire making inroads into the alleys and corridors of the imperial metropolises and the "conservators" of the sheen and aura of the latter battling to erase such invasive spectres from its jealously preserved frontiers of nationhood that Rhys traces. This idea that the British nation defined itself as much through exclusions as through its internally constitutive elements is traced by Rhys in the novel through characters like Ethel. It is a measure of Rhys's being as Joshua Esty opines " a ruthlessly systematic feminist"(171) that she does not shy away from showing the constraints that beset Ethel's life and yet she also fixes with an ironical eye Ethel's desperate need to maintain her English superiority over the rudderless Anna .Though there are admittedly few affirmatively feminist moments in Rhys's oeuvre, in her astute recognition of how gender intersects with race, class and nationality and hence how any articulation of

female oppression is to be understood in its locational and contextualized parameters, Rhys anticipates a major strand in arguments forwarded by non-western feminists and increasingly by voices within the western academia .This statement by Rita Felski provides me a theoretical framework for what Rhys fictionally rendered when Felski says in *The Gender of Modernity*: "Any notion of a common political identity or set of interests arising out of shared oppression disappears here behind the sexualization and pathologization of racial categories."[37]

The visuality of *Voyage in the Dark* thus manifests itself in the gap between how Anna is seen and what she consequently is privy to, seeing into the system that judges her. In *Picturing empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire*, James Ryan comments on the "ambition of regimes of colonial representation: to see without being seen", "a kind of one-way vision."[38] It is this one-way truck that Rhys poses a visual challenge to. Ethel sees in Anna "a half-potty bastard", an obvious reference to her Creole origins but when Ethel also says that Anna "is not all there" it carries suggestions of insanity, absence, madness (124). In Rhys's rendering however the not being all there is the recalcitrance that Anna retains beneath the mask of compliance and passivity. It is that that gives an edge to Anna's observation, rendered again through a palpably visual metaphor, of the hollowness of Ethel's claim to a ladylike position. Importantly, it is not the spurious nature of the claim that Anna inveighs against as much as the constructed nature of such norms when she records: " That's what I can remember best- Ethel talking and the clock ticking .And her voice when she was telling me ...that she was really a lady. A lady- some words have a long, thin neck you'd like to strangle."(120) Anna spies a new 'respect' in Ethel's eyes for her when she notices Anna's 'talent' in bringing the men in, which would in fact reconfirm Ethel's stereotyped image of the oversexedness of the Creolized, half-potty bastard. It is then when she sees that recognition in Ethel's eyes that Anna says she begins to hate her.

Deirdre Lashgari in her write-up ' To Speak the Unspeakable' comments on how literary norms carry a laden Eurocentric inflection such that it is difficult for women writers writing from an oppositional stance to shed, for instance "the bias towards authorial distance" [39].For the woman writer, she argues , this often means silencing the rough-edged, the strident .But as an exhortation to challenge, she cites poet Janice Mirikitani's call for women to " birth our rage" from "the mute grave of patriarchal history" [40]. In the off-kilter, askew, lurid world of Rhys's protagonists, the rage is written into the texts through the enraged, inflamed consciousness of her women characters. It is this shared thread of rage that constitutes the insurrectional locus of Rhys's work and that erases the distance between Rhys and her women, thus diverging away from the normative banner of "authorial distance". As opposed to Conrad's narrative-within-narrative, his densely layered, complex narrative routing, Rhys opts for a flat, bald style. The shared outrage at the discriminatory societal machinery extending from the writer to her protagonists is something that Ford caught the pulse of though he also got it woefully wrong when he asserted that locality played a minimal part in her fictional universe. Ford believed that Rhys's collection lacked "topographical context", as Deborah Parsons points out.[41] Parsons herself refutes this line of thinking when she asserts that Rhys is definitely sensitive to the sights and sounds, "the tones and shades of the different cities that her characters inhabit"(137).

In *Voyage in the Dark* the visual compendium that unfolds, such as the pictures, prints, adverts etc that Anna dwells on in the course of her dislocating sojourn through the imperial centre, as also her " corporeal" memories[42] of her West Indian childhood , becomes a channelway into Anna's inner world of felt placelessness and marginalization. The visual emphasis of the text also provides the linkages between a seemingly arbitrary yoking together of images at various junctures. An apt instance of this is when after Walter's intention to end their liaison becomes known to Anna, and she goes to see him, he seems hard and distant and then Rhys inserts the visually evocative image of Anna feeling like she was "falling into water and seeing yourself grinning up through the water, your face like a mask and seeing the bubbles coming up as if you were trying to speak from under the water .And how do you know what it's like to speak from under the water when you're drowned ? ' And I've met a lot of them who were monkeys too,' he said..." (84).The last is a fragment from her memory bank about her father who in her and Hester's telling is something of a maverick and hence not the paradigmatic colonizer figure. The racial connotation is of course a deliberate pointer to what Rhys is suggesting here- Anna's in-betweeenness that invites the judgemental tone from the denizens of England on the one hand such as Walter himself who at one point in the text declares (cognizant of Anna's origins) that the "the tropics would be altogether too lush for me" (46), and on the other hand her need to belong in the Caribbean, somewhat like her father's, as Hester repeatedly bemoans, "tragedy"(53) of Creolized "propensities"(56) and hence his uncomfortable relationship with the codified framework. Anna occupies that interstitial position from where she can comment on the fragile, unstable and yet obsessive processes of marking boundaries.

To cast a final glance at how the dynamics of visuality and vision operate in these two texts, for Kurtz boundary crossing becomes a stepping- stone to triumphant vision, Conrad thus extending to him the dubious honour of becoming "the privileged bearer of epistemological authority" (Felski, 26), articulated in Marlow's reverential testimony .It is a telling index of the visual economy of *Voyage in the Dark* that it is mentioned at one point how her father relies on Anna's "sharp eyes" (62). Anna's desire to shed the constricting framework of defunct plantocratic attitudes hence enables her to visualize an alternate, less repressive milieu, but her intercultural positionality given the prevailing rigid oppositions of empire can lead to no visionary culmination. While in Conrad the space of contact becomes a visionary laboratory for metaphysical truths to be birthed, Anna can only envisage birthing a monster. Urmila Seshagiri comments on how Anna's pregnancy "intensifies the cultural ambivalence history has thrust upon her" (13). Anna's "unassimilable racial identity" (14) accentuates the incisive gaze she directs at the societal mechanism but also entraps her in a historical impasse.

With the empire as the frame, an ability to penetrate beneath and to see beyond is hence respectively conferred on their protagonists by Rhys and Conrad. In Conrad, the concrete materialities of imperialism become a conduit to a resonant "cosmic irony"[43] and the concrete dissolves in the immaterial. Rhys on the contrary records the material co-ordinates of the imperial project and the 'monstrosities' it spawns in a visceral manner. If as innumerable critics have argued, male modernism configured itself as a rarefied cartel, then Kurtz's overarchingly damning last cry earns him pride of place (in Marlow's awed rendering)in those sororities. Anna Morgan remains the suspect outsider whose half-articulated asides, the uncerebral tonality of which Rhys is at pains to establish, as if to

distinguish herself from the epiphanic thrust of the enshrined modernists, undoes the master narratives of patriarchy and colonialism but with no sublimatory crescendo. So while Conrad transcends visuality to voice a vision, Rhys's recalcitrance and locational ambivalence manifests itself in a refusal, or historical incapacity, to traverse that distance from visuality to vision.

Though I find a side-by-side reading of *Voyage in the Dark* and *Heart of Darkness* an ideal entry point into the contours of the voyage in and the voyage out, it is around the seminal tropes of the 'half-caste' and the 'slave' , appositely , that the most explicit interface between Rhys and Conrad occurs, in Rhys's brief evocation of *Almayer's Folly* in her *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*. But I would like to take a slight detour and find my way into these texts via another thread of linkage, that is, that both invoke the names of the male characters in the title. This allows one to analyze how Rhys's focus on masculinist commodification and aestheticization of women draws on the colonialist mythos and how Conrad's tales ultimately and troublingly operate within that paradigm. *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* is an important part of Rhys's corpus for me because it takes a closer look at what is of course seminal to her fictional diagnostics, the male psyche. The male characters in her fiction, I am arguing, are often closet aesthetes under their brisk, worldly exteriors, who fall into edgy encounters with marginal, mysterious, women like Walter with Anna Morgan or Mr Mackenzie/Horsfield/ Neil James with Julia to stimulate their secretly nurtured bohemian, arty inclinations. In *Voyage in the Dark*, Anna's and Walter's love scene in Savernake forest where Walter takes her stands out for Walter's willingness to show interest in Anna's Caribbean origins. But closer reading reveals that the whole scenic backdrop of a wildly flowering landscape , his exhorting Anna to admit that the flowers that grow on his island are as charming as the ones that are found on hers, his vocalization of his 'fantasy' to make love to her in those 'lush' environs, lead to that revealing moment when as the narratorial voice tells us, " Walter said, as if talking to himself, " No imagination? That's all rot. I've got a lot of imagination. I've wanted to bring you to Savernake and see you underneath those trees ever since I've known you." It is not just that Walter as an armchair adventurer attempts to revivify the exoticised colonial encounter with the 'other', that he recreates the classic colonial contours of the encounter between the colonizing male figure and the exotic female other but more importantly that he seeks to establish a distance from his more staid image and adventure imaginatively and sexually into uncharted regions. But that Walter's wild fling is deliberately orchestrated to cultivate a rakish adventurism and that Anna's origins add to this picturesque simulation is clearly underlined through Rhys's use of the word 'clockwork' and through Anna's discomforting awareness of Walter's self-absorbed objectification of her. In fact, just after Walter's admitting to his scripted erotica, Anna muses on how the loveliness has gone from the scene-" But something had happened to it. It was as if the wildness had gone from it." Thus Walter's manufactured, simulated 'wildness' , makes for a titillatory odyssey. Invoking colonial discourse theory, Walter navigates between paranoiac boundary maintenance on the one hand and also displaying as in the scene under discussion, one of the anxieties plaguing male imperial discourse according to Anne McClintock , the dread of impotence , where she evokes that primal scene of the rational,in control, powerful, male explorer fearing loss of control from the vampirically sexualized indigenous woman. In this scene, interestingly, Walter who otherwise characterizes Anna as 'forward' in her ways, calls her 'shy,Anna' since

this is his turn to be the conquistador. His foray into the imaginative is figured in erotic terms with Anna serving as the conduit to a fantasized 'excess' such as when he tries to seduce Anna into making love in the forest.

Mr Mackenzie is introduced to the reader as a model member of "organized society". Rhys's sneer at bourgeois patriarchy and its mythos of respectability is at its stingiest when she writes, " Mr Mackenzie was a man of medium height and colouring.He was of the type which proprietors of restaurants and waiters respect. He had enough nose to look important , enough stomach to look benevolent .His tips were not always in proportion with the benevolence of his stomach, but this mattered less than one might think."(17) Mr Mackenzie, this most practical of men otherwise, whose very corporeality is the exemplum of measured deportment, and in an echo of Walter's wariness of Anna's unrestrainedness, suspicious of Julia's feminine unguardedness, finds himself nevertheless drawn to Julia's mysteriousness. This is where I also see Rhys slyly engaging with the co-ordinates of the adventure genre, and hence again participating in an interface with Conrad. Of course, her insights are very different from Conrad's as one will see. Mr Mackenzie, whose frame bespeaks proportion, we are told was something of a poet in his youth who had even published a book of poems back then. The narrative voice emphasises his secretly nurtured lust for "strangeness", "recklessness", even 'unhappiness', and that his 'morbid' fascination for the strange has brought him to Paris , almost compulsively as a matter of fact- " Paris had attracted him as a magnet does a needle." Significantly, his money is made through passed down ownership of a line of coastal steamers, further strengthening Rhys's suggestion of his flirting at the edges of an adventurous existence .The unsaid corollary is that this fascination for the unfamiliar has also led him to Julia. Extremely prescriptive in his behavioural code, he has that other voyeuristic side to him-one that feeds on the flamboyant displays of Parisian bohemia and on Julia's mystique. The imagery of ingestion that is associated with him, since he seems to be connected in the novel with the world of restaurants, is significant as it underlines how he intoxicatingly consumes the exotic voluptuousness(since so different from the motto of self-control he adheres to publically) of a woman's unrestrained misery, even while sitting in judgement over it. As he says to himself, " She was irresponsible. She would have fits of melancholy when she would lose the self-control necessary to keep up appeareances."(21) The two sides of Mr Mackenzie co-exist in a masterfully maintained balance. We are told that he swore by the social code and departed from it only when he was absolutely certain no one would know. There is the socially-scripted imperative , of propriety , proportion, order and balance , that he follows scruplously and yet that is threatened from below by his desire for 'adventuring' into the wild. The closeted poet in him resurfaces in his letters to Julia where he expresses his willingness to put his throat under her feet. By placing his desire for Julia and his cloaked adventurist aspirations in such close conjunction, Rhys exposes the lurking subtext beneath the normative colonial script- the rational fighting hard to contain the anarchic while also pruriently drawn to it. The novel's many references to the animalistic and the primitive incontrovertibly places it within the modernist and colonialist paradigms. The enclouded genealogy of most of Rhys's protagonists ensures their entrapment within these frames and hence creates space for Rhys to decrypt these stereotypes. In *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* she does this through exposing the double speak of the male characters. She uses the exclusionary narratives of modernism and racism as subtext in

Julia's relationships with the three men. In the mention of Mr Mackenzie being drawn to Paris like a magnet is implicit Rhys's first-hand knowledge of the primitivised erotica on show in the sexualized atmosphere of the Parisian clubs .Julia's 'animalisitic' otherness similarly intrigues the roué in Mackenzie- in the words of Carol Sweeney, this is how racist exotica " nourishes the etiolated poetics of Rhys's exposure of how the domestic subject." The remark is particularly appropriate in that it employs the metaphor of consumption and also points to, via the enervated versification of Mackenzie, how modernist aesthetics sought to establish distance from a flabby realism by deploying the aesthetic shock of the primitive.

Thus while Mary Lou Emery is right in pointing out that Julia is framed in every sense of the word, the racist-imperialist, patriarchal and modernist discourses that frame her into in Emery's words " the abyss of nonrepresentation" are constantly held up to scrutiny by the writer. In *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* , too, as in other fictions by Rhys, the societal sneer is architecturally inscribed onto streets, houses, buildings,etc. Just after her meeting with Uncle Griffiths, the juridical voice of patriarchy in the novel, Julia looking around her as she traverses the streets, finds the houses "bulging" with importance, stepping forward as if to posit their stolidity(Julia also notes that they all look apiece) against her waywardness, which was the judgemental refrain of Uncle Griffiths' patronizing conversation with her, and the "fat" pillars as if 'engorged' with a sense of their importance. The phallic imagery underlines Uncle Griffiths' masculinist arrogance . Even later in the novel, there are telling moments, such as when he recounts with relish how pickpockets wore false arms while the real arms did the trick. He also proudly announces how he did not become a dupe. From within Griffiths' perspective, this could well be an indirect , sneering glance at the subterfuges employed by women like Julia. He then goes on to hold forth on 'life', 'literature' ,'Dostoevsky' , to a captive female audience-" Uncle Griffiths sat in the arm-chair and went on talking, eagerly, as if the sound of his own voice laying down the law to his audience of females reassured him." But it is Julia's voice that again threatens his declamatory burst. When he pontificates against Dostoevsky wondering why one should " see the world through the eyes of an epileptic" , Julia retorts , " mechanically, as one's foot shoots out when a certain nerve in the knee is struck". It is Griffiths blustering espousal of aesthetic eugenics that she opposes when she says, " But he might see things very clearly, mightn't he? At moments." Her rejoinder is significantly phrased- the "at moments" ensures that this not be read as a rarefied aestheticization of the voice from the edge always being the bearer of wisdom, in the manner of the high modernists- it is more a suggestion to open one's mind to the possibility of an art emerging from low life. It is primarily a revolt against the eugenicist paranoia of people like Uncle Griffiths, which ranges from the social, racial to the aesthetic. To turn to Ford's *The Soul of London* briefly, Ford speaks of "oblivion" being the note of London. He ironises London's tolerance by reading it in terms of its assimilative, unflappable, imperturbability- " It loves nobody: it needs nobody." Casting a wry look at this " permanent world's fair" he goes on to say, " It has palaces for the great of the earth, it has crannies for all the earth's vermin." He also concedes that co-existence might be the hallmark of an increasingly imperialized London but " the unfamiliar is almost inevitably the iniquitous." Though Ford too punctures the idea of London's malleable largesse ,Rhys comes at the same insights from a different direction- while Ford's account itself bespeaks a bemused tolerance of London's claim to tolerance,

Rhys's searing testimony seals London's response to otherness as predatory and/or phobic. This is not to perpetuate or glamorize the marginalized/centrist divide but to register how a more cerebralized perspective, Ford's , is juxtaposed against a more tactile one, and hence see how , in this case, the high sneer is complemented as also modulated by the low. The irony of course is that Ford's view is that of the insider's but Rhys's outré point of view adds a note of visceral rage to the more considered ironic diagnosis of Ford. In fact, to dip into Ford's own phraseology, the view from the crannies throws a glaring, unacademic, light on the exclusionary mechanisms whereby the "unfamiliar" is iniquitously treated. Both Rhys and Ford in a sense probe the limits of London's claim to a cosmopolitanised elasticity. This is also where I find the point of intersection between her work and that of the monumentalized modernists since a disruption of the status quo is hailed as the latter's mission. Though the sneer would then function as a convenient point of convergence vis a vis how the modernist writers inveigh against prevailing orthodoxies, what interests me more is that Rhys's work also infiltrates into and disrupts that canon.

After Leaving Mr Mackenzie is an apt case study for my overall argument that Rhys's work performs a readerly diagnostics of scripted norms and societal narratives, to expose such murky and problematic undercurrents as in fact denaturalize them .In the novel, it is the script of masculinity that Rhys pries open, not only through the eponymous character but also through Horsfield and Neil James, again to underline how their venturesome forays out of the bound script by which they live necessarily reduce the woman , Julia, who is their conduit to the non-conventional, to the status of object. Significantly, Horsfield first gazes at Julia through a mirror, as he catches a glimpse of her slapping Mackenzie. The moment fixes itself in his mind as having a " fantastic", almost filmic quality, which is even more pertinent since his encounters with Julia seminally involve the " primitive" pleasures of the cinema. The 'hysteria' embedded in the scene, its muted sensationalism, seen through a distorted mirror, frames Julia for Horsfield in the economy of the primal and fantastic, which is in sync with his current desertion from the scripted imperative of purposive masculinity since he has decided to taste adventure by spending his inheritance in sojourning around Spain and the south of France. In the Rhysian world, the co-ordinates of 'adventure' are differently inflected from Conrad. While Conrad recalibrates the genre and shifts its focus from its earlier manifestations, navigating between the topographical and the psychological, between the masculine and the 'feminine'(that resonant image of Kurtz as an enchanted princess in a castle waiting to be rescued), in the final analysis Conrad reinscribes its masculinism. Rhys brings the lens of gender to bear on the issue from the reverse direction-she shows how Julia's adventuring is seen as perforating the authority of the script whereas the calculated and opportunisticexperimentalism of the male characters only bolsters their manhood. Thus while both Rhys and Conrad reshape the adventure genre vis a vis its masculine provenance, Rhys's insights are expository whereas Conrad fluctuates between disavowal and re-investment, between rupture and reconstitution.

Mr Horsfield gives way to impulse in picking up Julia but only begins to feel in control once he has given her money-"When he had done this he felt powerful and dominant. Happy." Importantly, this is a prelude to her sharing her chequered past with him. It seems that like Mackenzie, Horsfield too is attracted by the unknown quantity that she represents, underlined early on in the text by the extra-diegitic narrator-" Her career of

ups and downs had rubbed most of the hallmarks off her, so that it was not easy to guess at her age, her nationality, or the social background to which she properly belonged." Thus, adventuring in the case of the woman amounts to nullity – her urge to escape turns Julia into a blank , so that when the sculptor Ruth hesitates to give credence to Julia's past, she actually needs to pull out her documents and scraps of memory to resuture her identity. She tells Horsfield about her desire to get away from England " I wanted to go away with just the same feeling a boy has when he wants to run away to sea-at least, that I imagine a boy has. Only, in my adventure, men were mixed up, because of course they had to be. You understand, don't you? Do you understand that a girl might have that feeling?" A little later she describes her intense urge to get away as seizing her in an "iron" grip, reminiscent of Marlow's fascination for the Congo possessing him completely. Marlow too uses the offices of the opposite sex, his aunt , that is, to procure a berth but the realm of adventure can only remain robust by exorcising flabby female melodrama as "rot" and "humbug". Thus the last meeting between Marlow and the aunt happens over the domesticated ritual of a cup of tea and sees Marlow moving off with the aunt safely immured in the lady's drawing room. Marlow lingers over that picture of felicitious femininity safely sealed –in "a room that most soothingly looked just as you would expect a lady's drawing room to look." He already has enough to do re- anchoring the woman who is swept off her feet by the imperial narrative, caught in its adrenalin rush. Though initially hounding his aunt, Marlow proceeds to erase the shadow of the feminine sex from his voyage out, and his take-off point coincides with the woman being kept out of it, both conceptually and materially. It is only with the aunt 'soothingly' ensconced in her boudoir that the male adventure begins. Julia's adventures cannot "of course" proceed forward without men- it is matrimony that becomes her release from a contracted existence. Julia's existence fluctuates between a desire to defy norms and a recognition of dependence on the male sex. In the patriarchal script, the narrative of adventure when deployed by the woman devolves into misery and destitution. Even as Julia narrates her intense desire for an unconstrained existence to Horsfield, he feels a "warm glow of humanity" suffuse him at this account of misadventures. While Horsfield pre-emptively reads ruin and downfall into Julia's moment of confession, Uncle Griffiths strikes the more punitive note when he announces a doomed existence for Julia as a woman who "always insisted on going your own way." This of course would problematise a feminist reading of Rhys since in her fiction women's efforts to unshackle themselves from scripted authority seem foredoomed. Julia recalls how she communicated these yearnings to Ruth and also strangely it seemed to the woman in the painting , referring to the Modigliani nude. This is a moment of a redoubling of frames, as she herself is framed by Ruth and as the woman in the painting is framed within the discourse of modernist art. Though such moments in Rhys's texts seem unnervingly suffocating in their bleakness, they do chillingly chart the sociocultural imperatives that delimit women's lives. In *Paradoxy of Modernism* Robert Scholes approaches the high-low divide from a different angle when he speaks of the artistic aspirations of three women models, Nina Hamnett, Kiki and Beatrice Hastings who all wrote(Hamnett also painted) but would more likely be found in high modernist discourse by virtue of there being " nude images of all of them, made by famous male Modernist artists." He then asks a basic but pertinent question-" How many nude images of male Modernists do we have? ...And male artists painted by others than themselves?" As women with talents in

their own right, their fame derives more from their being framed within the anointed triumphs of modernist art. Griselda Pollock anatomizing the gestures of modernist art from a gendered position notes how a noticeable number of the famous male masterpieces foreground the nude or the brothel. As she observes, " So we must enquire why the territory of modernism so often is a way of dealing with masculine sexuality and its sign, the bodies of women-why the nude, the brothel , the bar? What relation is there between sexuality, modernism and modernity. If it is normal to see paintings of women's bodies as the territory across which men artists claim their modernity and compete for leadership of the avant-garde, can we expect to rediscover paintings by women in which they battled with their sexuality in the representation of the male nude?...there is a historical asymmetry- a difference socially, economically, subjectively between being a woman and being a man in Paris in the late nineteenth century."

But by replacing the presumed male viewing subject of Modigliani's nude by the female spectator, Rhys through Julia shows how this art not only draws on the sexuality of the woman but in its evocation of the primitive also self-absorbedly co-opts indigenous forms. Sarah Victoria Turner speaks of how Alfred Barr's diagrammatic representation of the landmark moments and movements of modernist art, created for the exhibition 'Cubism and Abstract Art' anchors particular movements to specific locales and cities. But she rightly notes that 'Japanese Prints', ' Near Eastern Art' and 'Negro Sculpture' are not geographically placed –" Safely boxed and thus contained, these artistic forms and cultures are emptied of their particular cultural, temporal and historical specificity, only gaining value once they are incorporated into the histories of Western modernism." If one looks at the chart closely, one notices how 'Negro Art' as a floating, unanchored signifier, is indeed shown as flowing into the Fauvist stream on the one side and the cubist on the other. And this is also where I find recent innovative scholarship on modernism such as Turner's veering perilously close to re-inscribing a Western-centric narrative. While Turner does note these disquieting discrepancies in the narrative of modernist art's daring forays, the concluding section of her essay seeks to restore to the revolutionary vanguard its original lustre, even though she shifts its co-ordinates from Anglo-French contact to the contact zone of empire. She inclines towards a rewriting of the history of British art that does not stop at continental influences but remains alive to the imperially inflected " vital link between cosmopolitanism and modernism." She does show awareness of the problematic asymmetries of such exchanges yet she is content with focusing on the exciting trajectories and iconoclastic newness of one-way traffic.

As someone who found her way out of that incestuous world of Paris, Rhys having been a model herself illuminates that world where women's lives wander between scripting and entrapment in dominant scriptings .This is pertinent since Beatrice Hastings was the lover of as well as model for Modigliani. Just as the woman in the painting, if one keeps Beatrice Hastings in mind, seems to connote to Rhys/Julia(since Rhys knew the Parisian milieu intimately) the struggle between subjecthood –"the eyes were blank…but when you had looked at it a bit it was as if you were looking at a real woman, a live woman"- and a submergence in the triumphal performances of modernist iconoclasm ,in finding that she is speaking to the woman in the painting , Julia too flounders between subjectivity, that is, voicing her own thirst for adventure, and a conduit to the adventurism of the men in the novel. Commenting on her, Mr Horsfield thinks, "And this one had rebelled. Not intelligently, but violently and instinctively. He saw the

whole thing." It is as if Julia is a more extreme manifestation of his more considered quest for the untraditional. The distinction he draws between rebelling intelligently and dramatically also underlines how Julia becomes for him simultaneously the object of pity and a piqued curiousity. But if he reads Julia's spirited yet bound to fail sallies as an example of indiscreet, foolhardy adventuring, she in turn reads astutely his divided personality-"very tidy and very precise" on the outside but erotically impelled towards the "primitive" nevertheless. His own responses betray that he has not quite subdued that animalistic part of him, a fact that Julia again intuits when she notes-" He's been taught never to give himself away" And then " He looked rather subdued , till you saw in his eyes that he was not quite subdued yet, after all." And that flashes through in his rejoinder when Julia observes how society derives a "subtle pleasure" out of the misery of the powerless-his response-" Subtle pleasure? Not at all. A very simple and primitive pleasure." As opposed to Julia who has been cast "outside the pale", men like Horsfield flirt at the edges of that precipice, seeking a thrill in such liaisons, (ad)venturing out of the familiar but never endangering their social respectability. There are various protestations from Horsfield against his bourgeois existence(" a white house with green blinds"pg 121)-importantly he speaks of his yearning for "a bit of sun" which would again bespeak of his pursuit of exoticised pleasure through Julia. And finally, having sampled that he heaves a sigh of relief at Julia going off, and after his brief skirmish with the unfamiliar retreats into familiar environs-" It was as if he had altogether shut out the thought of Julia. The atmosphere of his house enveloped him- quiet and not without dignity, part of a world of lowered voices, and of passions, like Japanese dwarf trees, suppressed for many generations. A familiar world."(pg 127) It is time to put an end to his orientalized fantasies and withdraw into the hushed tones of respectability.

To this interface with Conrad and his 'sneer' at the simplistic, even propagandistic, glories of the adventure tradition, whose generic conventions he strips of glamour in his first novel, *Almayer's Folly*(the text named in *After Leaving in Mr Mackenzie*) Rhys brings a gendered lens as she shows how the woman's, Julia's, desire to insert herself into the adventure quest brings her up short against encoded cultural norms. Mr Horsfield's privately expressed yearnings for a more exciting life are contrasted with Julia's explicit chafings and publically expressed rages, which ironically entrap her further while making her quixotic enough to attract the closet libertines. One must also keep in mind that Rhys domesticates the adventure tale, that is, places it in a metropolitan setting. Severed from an imperialized provenance, Rhys probes the Gothicized, repressed libidinal subtext of the urban city through such fiction.

Andrea White analyzes how Almayer marks a departure from the heroes of the imperial adventure tale since he is hardly the stuff that pioneers are made of, for instance in the way the lure of lucre seems to be the primary animating force in his life. Conrad's fraught, uneasy, relationship to market driven writing is discussed by both White and Dryden. Linda Dryden points out that Conrad wrote rather self-consciously to Cunninghame Graham about *Karain*-" I am glad you like *Karain* . I was afraid you would despise it. There's something magazine'ish about it. Eh?" And White too discusses how in composing his Malay fictions, Conrad was both deploying the frame of the exotic and " also aware of a certain antagonism towards the very discourse he knew his work would be read within." Though White is referring to antagonistic responses to tales about strange beings from far-away lands, might we not also talk about Conrad's own suspicion

of pre-fabricated brackets within which his writing might get boxed? To that extent, Conrad seems to anticipate the conflictual relationship of the modernist coterie to popular modes.

The rebellion against pre-scripted norms is also reflected in how both Conrad and Rhys, though this would simultaneously involve taking stock of Rhys's response to Conrad too, write back to the generic bind of the adventure tradition. Carol Dell Amico in her comparativist reading of the two writers makes two important points-one, that the colonialist subtext of *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* is underexplored and two " the coincidence of Julia and Almayer." But first to start with the women characters since *Almayer's Folly* inserts itself into the fictional landscape of *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* when Norah from Rhys's text contemplates the fate of the slave woman, Taminah from *Almayer's Folly*. Amico interprets the reference to primarily illuminate Norah's positionality, where she is on the one hand the slave to her domestic situation and hence akin to Taminah and on the other hand according to Amico her physical description allies her to Nina, the half-caste daughter of Almayer. But it would perhaps be more interesting to study the two texts together by casting a look at the range of women characters in Conrad's text , that is Nina, Taminah *and* Mrs Almayer since this is the way into understanding the Conradian shadows cast on Rhys's novel/s- the issue of slavery, that of agency, the Creole/ half-caste woman, the native woman and the motif of adventure. To explore Amico's suggestion of the links between Julia and Almayer is to circle back to the genre of adventure. But I see another interesting overlap, the idea of aging. In this first novel by Conrad, it is as if the adventure tradition ages even before coming to life. Thus though I agree with White that Conrad from the beginning re-deploys the genre to excoriate the bankruptcy of colonialism, I would like to add that though Conrad recognizes the emptiness and the foreclosure of romance in the genre's prescribed forms, its allure holds him and it is only with *Heart of Darkness* that he reanimates the genre by mating it with the cerebral ferment of the modernist script. In *Almayer's Folly*, we are confronted primarily with its atrophy. In fact Conrad's ironic treatment of the genre revolves around replacing movement with stasis, action with inaction-the rivets that never arrive(*Heart of Darkness*) or the colonial house, the definitive symbol of imperial conquest, that never gets completed(*Almayer's Folly*). The novel in the figure of Almayer seems to write the epitaph to the laid down co-ordinates of the adventure format. If Conrad writes of the 'follies' and the etiolation of the genre, prior to pitching it a more philosophical level, Julia Martin herself is the emblem of aging 'folly' and misdemeanour. Rhys looks at Julia's pent-up rage at a system that denies women the chance to break out of a slavish compliance to pre-formations, such as that women advancing in age are squeezed into even narrower brackets- – when after their mother's death, Norah tries to explain away Julia's outbursts as resulting from her feeling "miserable" and "sorry for everything", she is faced with an unrepentant Julia who retorts-" Sorry? But it was rage. Didn't you understand that? Don't you know the difference between sorrow and rage?" Julia then goes on to express a desire to spit in the the hideous and composite face of social respectability-" If all good, respectable people had one face, I'd spit in it." This is startlingly reminiscent of Marlow's strong urge to "measure distance by spittle", by spitting on the manager and his uncle, those buccaneers of imperial capitalism, who condemn Kurtz in the name of respectability. If one were to linger a little over this comparison between *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* and *Heart of*

Darkness both Conrad and Rhys seem to differentiate between true and false buccaneers – but while the true adventurer, Kurtz, is anointed even in failure and death in Conrad, Julia as the more incautious complement to the cautious, calculated breaches of Mackenzie and Horsfield can only effect a readerly rupture of the 'normativity' of the hegemonic script- she cannot write a generic riposte to it.

Rhys chooses this first novel by Conrad because it speaks directly to themes that would continue to haunt her own writing-the idea of interracial, intercultural, contact, and the spectre of miscegenation. It is here that the figure of Mrs Almayer assumes importance. She is something of a Bertha Mason in Conrad's oeuvre. Bearing in mind the important distinction of course between the native woman and the Creole, the commonalty has more to do with the racial slur that is attached to cohabiting with women of tainted or in the case of Bertha dubious bloodlines. When Lingard first suggests to Almayer that untold riches would come his way were he to marry his 'daughter', Almayer thinks only of his own 'dilemma', that is, his fall from the majestic image of the white man –" There was only within him a confused consciousness of shame that he was a white man" and he finally reconciles himself to the reprehensible prospect thus-" ...she may mercifully die. He was always lucky, and money is powerful! Go through it...He had a vague idea of shutting her up somewhere, anywhere, out of his gorgeous future. Easy enough to dispose of a Malay woman, a slave after all..." Conrad renders starkly the racial self-absorption of Almayer, but does this necessarily result in a portrait of Mrs Almayer from the inside, one that takes cognizance of how the trauma of colonialism affects her? She emerges as primarily a schemer and harridan, again startlingly reminiscent of Rochester's characterization of Bertha. In the initial years of their married life, Mrs Almayer lives immured in her separate tenement, only known to the world through her snarls and uncontainable rages. She is shown to burn furniture and shred the pretty curtains and when she finally emerges from seclusion to claim her daughter, Almayer bemoans her "witch-like" presence polluting his house. Conrad portrays her as a deranged, odd, figure though hers is perhaps the starkest story of colonial dislocation and psychic displacement. For instance it is her slimy acquisitiveness that lingers- though there is a brief glimpse into her psyche, it lays bare its distortions rather than its trauma. As a termagant figure, from whose lips abuse spews forth liberally(again reminding one of Rochester's claim about Bertha that " no professed harlot ever had a fouler vocabulary than she) , she makes for a revisiting of how native/ Creole women were figured in terms of foul, unseemly, excess. It is a different matter that Almayer fares no better- his deferred dreams of glory fight for control of Nina with the more palpable native allure of Dain Maroola and egged on by her mother's reminders of the glories of her ancestors, it is Nina's adventure quest that begins at the point that Almayer's snaps. Thus the hybridized Nina becomes the site for Conrad's reworking of the generic valence of the adventure tradition-and nativism and alterity as conduits into unexplored regions that are only suggested here prefigure the more complex and drastic(since Nina as half-caste is already half-implicated in these) ruptures and reformulations of *Heart of Darkness*.

Another figure who flits at the edges of the novel's and Almayer's worlds is that of Taminah, the slave girl who also dreams of release and novelty but whose servitude condemns her to sameness. The novel finds a point of intersection between Norah's predicament of being chained to domestic drudgery and Taminah's situation. Taminah's final revenge on Nina for being able to realize the possibility of a life with Dain,

something that she herself could only dream about, is to incite Almayer into action. The entire scene between them is figured as Almayer wrestling with a demon-in fact the words " phantom" and " apparition" are used for Taminah. Again, the slave woman's move from the shadows to visibility is unimportant- she in fact is invisiblised throughout the scene since she is more a catalyzer to Almayer's fight with his own passivity and inaction. In the cast of primary antagonists her brief emergence into articulacy is obscured and peripheralised.

Rhys's novels examine the complex and varied facets of women's entrapment. In that light, reading the Norah-Julia configuration as a mirroring of the Taminah-Nina dynamic, one can understand Norah's sanctimonious condemnation of her sister as a manifestation of her suppressed yearning for a more expansive existence .It is the meeting with Julia that releases her pent-up frustration and in fact just after dwelling on that passage from *Almayer's Folly* she gazes at herself in the mirror and finds herself torn between a certain satisfaction derived from societal appreciation –" Everybody always said to her: ' You're wonderful, Norah, you're wonderful. I don't know how you do it.' It was a sort of drug, that universal, that unvarying admiration…And so she had slaved"- and a consciousness of how her death-in-life condition – "It's like being buried alive." As she recalls her mother's second stroke and how "since then her life had been slavery", her rage at how the patrons of good society stood around her and moralized about her nobility, while her youth and beauty died a slow death, makes her lash out at them , much like Julia, as "Beasts…Devils…" though she retracts from that rebellious outburst to a more compliant (and baldly pragmatic)position soon enough. Though Sue Thomas is right in pointing out how Rhys erases locational specificity in employing the reference point of the slave woman to underline Norah's subjugation, what Rhys does do is to show her awareness of the differential registers of entrapment that both Julia and Norah face- Norah's claustrophobia resulting from her capitulation and Julia's rage at constriction emanating from her non-compliance.

And that brings one to the most evocative, as also the most underappreciated, images of incarceration in the novel. This needs to be mentioned in this section because it again takes us back to Conrad, this time to *Lord Jim*. In a rather enigmatic reference to her childhood , Julia conflates her feeling of abandonment(happiness) and feeling pinned down (afraid) to the pictured scene of her prancing around, culminating in her catching butterflies. She describes how she had mastered the art of catching butterflies without breaking their wings, her purpose being to put them in a tin and listen to the desperate sounds of its struggle-" And then you walked along, holding the tin to your ear and listening to the sound of the beating of wings against it. It was a very fascinating sound. You wouldn't have thought a butterfly could make such a row…Besides it was a fine thing to get your hand on something that a minute before had been flying around in the sun."

It is rather a puzzling passage since it seems that Rhys is again returning to her excoriation of the lurking capacity for voyeuristic violence in human beings only she is doing it through Julia herself. That the almost salacious pleasure humanity derives from watching the powerless squirm is of course a leitmotif in Rhys's fiction. In *Voyage in the Dark,* for instance, Anna comments on the way the 'other' is hunted down-" But I think it was terrifying- the way they look at you . So that you know that they would see you burnt alive without even turning their heads away: so that you know in yourself that they would

watch you burning without even blinking once. Their glassy eyes don't admit anything so definite as hate. Only just that underground hope that you'll be burnt alive, tortured where they can have a peep…" This sporting with misfortune and suffering is the note struck in the above quoted passage from *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* too, yet whereas Anna reads this in others Julia is presumably " afraid" since she spots that streak in herself. Only Rhys complicates even that interpretation by mentioning that what makes the girl afraid is that labels begin to be pinned onto her acts of impulse- she only wanted to keep the butterfly comfortable and " give it the things it liked to eat", but it is a measure of her socialization that she understands how she has opened herself out to the charge of being " a cruel, horrid child…" The disturbing undertones cannot however be ignored-Julia does extract a thrill from hearing the sound of the ineffectually beating wings. Rhys seems to be doing something here she rarely does-universalizing a debate. She seems to be casting a general glance at the human propensity for gratuitous cruelty. The image is especially reminiscent of Stein's entomological interest in butterflies in *Lord Jim*. Marlow's meeting with Stein underlines the latter's interest in 'curiosities', human as well as those from the insect world – another echo of the residual and cerebralised traces of the adventure tradition in Conrad's work .Marlow is drawn to him in his capacity as a "collector"- he tells Stein he has come to him who is a connoisseur of rarities to discuss a "specimen". In both *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* Marlow seeks to dubiously anoint the compromised,self-involved, protagonists, to overlay their 'absence' with philosophical speculation. It is as if some fundamental 'lack' in them requires them to be written into a haloed narrative by the *par excellence* storyteller Marlow- that'excess' of writerliness can be glimpsed in the meeting between Marlow and Jim where Jim hovers around lost in the background while Marlow writes obsessively. This comes at an important juncture when Chester, the mercenary, piratical, man of business, seeks to use Marlow's services to engage the forlorn, down-on-luck Jim and Marlow rather violently shouts him down, as if saving Jim for a more aestheticized realm of pursuit. Marlow speaks of keeping a grip on his own faculties in the face of Jim's miseries by concentrating on his "industrious scribbling." And Marlow consciously projects himself as protecting Jim from a crudely eartbound future by almost writing him into a narrative of greater allure–" At this point I took up a fresh sheet and began to write resolutely. There was nothing between him and the dark ocean…All at once on the point of the pen, the two figures of Chester and his antique partner, very distinct and complete, would dodge into view…No!" With the furious scribbling of his pen , Marlow fobs off the easy option of telling Jim about Chester's offer- he writes them out of the narrative, inducting Jim into a more resonant one. In both the fictions , Marlow's masterly narratorial rendition writes the protagonists into sublimity. One is left wondering then, who is the more masterful curator of oddities- Marlow or Stein?

Rhys's work reads its way into existence-it tears into the exceptionalism of Western narratives. Conrad's work moves towards a writerly overhauling of arcane generic conventions and the more puerile forms of popular culture, but nevertheless reinscribes some of its more problematic and racial-patriarchal attitudes.

Ruchi Mundeja
Associate Professor
Dept. of English

Chapter Four

_Of Parvenus and Pantheons: 'Reading Back' From the Margins in Rhys and Mansfield

" ...you see I am not a highbrow. Sunday lunches and very intricate conversations on Sex and that 'fatigue' which is so essential and that awful 'brightness' that is even more essential - these things I flee from..."

Katherine Mansfield(in a letter to William Gerhardi)

In a number of statements, such as the one quoted above or when Mansfield writing to Ottoline Morrell, referred to herself as "baby scholar" and "upstart", or in the way Rhys distinguishes herself from the heavily cerebralized milieu of modernist cartels by referring to her "one syllable mind", there is a self-conscious attempt on the part of these writers to place themselves as 'lowbrow'. It is not the contentious(the cross-rivalries) but the commentative value of that self-positioning that I examine in this chapter.

Functioning within the frame of reading Rhys's work in consonance with that of her (near) contemporaries, yet also moving away from looking at her writings in juxtaposition to that of the more canonical writers, this chapter attempts a side-by-side reading of Rhys with another writer from the colonial extremities—Katherine Mansfield. In this chapter, I trace the continuities in their preoccupation with gender, location, the modernist moment and the colonial context.This chapter argues that if Rhys's and Mansfield's piquant position within the colonial structure(and in Mansfield's case her chosen writerly province, as a writer of short stories) made them something of parvenus, they seem to embrace the label and proceed to turn into a leveraging point to cut into modernism's self-monumentality.

This chapter finds its genesis in the argument that rather than simply according relatively late entrants into the modernist corpus like Rhys and Mansfield a place in the hallowed precincts of modernist experimentation, it is important to see how even as the favoured modernist tropes were taking shape, they wrote to combatively engage with them and expose the gaps and elisions. The work of colonial expatriates like Rhys and Mansfield can be seen as looking askance at the culturally miscegenated fictional landscapes of high modernist masterpieces as also offering a resistant reading of the 'cosmopolitanized' writerly milieu in which they lived and worked(Rhys in *Quartet* and Mansfield in 'Bliss', for instance). Since the 'sneer' implies the modernists' distancing of themselves from regressive (imperial) attitudes, and their openness to an increasingly multicultural milieu, it is revealing to examine how these writers show these gestures of iconoclasm as compromised along race, class and gender lines.

Since I am probing more the disaffiliative in their writing, the question I am asking is whether the new turn in modernist studies, its revisionary largesse, might possibly be in danger of appropriating even that which is non-synchronous. The fevered zeal with which these writers voyaging in from the margins are being 'centred' involves perhaps a reverse peril. If exclusion implies a silence,then there can be an insidious silencing even in gestures of inclusion. It might silence the profane impulse in the writings of these authors - their sly yet sure combative engagement(the counter-sneer) with the artistic milieu of their time.The quote from Mansfield that I begin with engages quite directly with the vaunted modernist atmospherics. In this chapter, I attempt a detailed reading of Rhys's and Mansfield's dis-identification from favoured modernist tropes, thus coming at and destabilizing the high-

low schism in another way, by seeing the 'low' as a complementary but also expansionary addendum to the high.

The first section of the chapter looks at the two writers' relationship with urban spaces, mostly in contradistinction with Woolf's treatment of city spaces. In the following section I do a consonant reading of the two writers vis a vis their ironic glance at the modernist milieu. Mansfield, like Rhys, was tortured by unbelonging, neither completely at home in the conservative colonial society of New Zealand as also something of an interloper in the avant-garde circles of the imperial centre.I foreground the sly satire that both direct at the pretensions of the European art world, Rhys in the *Quartet* and Mansfield in stories such as 'Mr. Reginald Peacock's Day', a delightful take on a high-faluting male artist who sees a 'staid' marital life as an artist's nemesis.To that extent, both writers maintain a sceptical and wry distance from "the audacities of avant-gardism".(*Modernism and Colonialism: British and Irish Literature 1899-1939* , Begam and Moses pg).

The next segment deals with the leitmotif of the voyage(and the related implication of female adventurism) in the works of Rhys and Mansfield. And I close with an examination of how their work can be read as predating/ anticipating some of the concerns/ motifs that are now seen as integral to postcolonial literature.

That "Longing For Cities"

The work of Rhys and Mansfield can be sub-divided into two segments vis a vis their occupying the interstices between metropole and periphery- their metropolitan fictions and the work set in their place of origin.In keeping with my overall thrust on reading these writers as in an interrogatory relationship with the thematics of high modernism, I begin with their focus on the city. In engaging with this trope that was so much a part of Woolf's overhauling of gendered economies, I look at how they add a necessary post-scriptum to that.

Touching upon Henry James's depiction of the city's spectacle, Woolf asks in an essay on James-" If London[or the modern city in general] is primarily a point of view, if the whole field of human activity is only a prospect and a pageant , then we cannot help asking, as the store of impressions heaps itself up, what is the aim of the spectator , what is the purpose of his hoard?"(qtd in Deborah Parsons, pg 61). Mansfield, Rhys and Woolf herself, approach and read the visual spectacle with an expository 'purpose' in mind. Rhys deploys the axes of female flanerie to chart the difficult journey of single and disempowered women through the city. In their precipitous descent into alcoholism and vagrancy, brought on or at least exacerbated in large part by societal intolerance,Rhys situates a counter-critique on the society that pillories them. Mansfield's depiction of underclass women like Rosabel in 'The Tiredness of Rosabel' and Ada Moss in "Pictures' manoeuvres between the liberationist and the carceral in charting women's negotiations through the city. Modernist fiction's interest in the new, visible, urban presence of women is reflected in the works of Rhys and Mansfield, yet the revolutionary thrust of female flânerie is 're-routed' in seminal ways. 'The Tiredness of Rosabel' and Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* and 'Mannequin' look at the 'fairy palaces', the consumerist havens, from the point of view of the server rather than the served. Where Woolf turned female flânerie into a high art, my analysis points to how Rhys and Mansfield in their work are more attuned to the urban forays of disadvantaged women. And as for Woolf, her dissection of the city can be sharply political yet her choice of words in critiquing James revealingly reflects back on how the urban forays in Woolf are encompassed within the writerly - the "hoard" of impressions as much

explorations of 'otherness' as extensions of modernism's promiscuous interest in the other to revivify a moribund literary landscape.While her protagonists' rambles through the city imply a sustained and provocative conversation with the realities of socio-political power, yet the observed rests in conjunction with the crafted, both contained within modernism's generative dynamics.The other important difference is that of class-most of Woolf's wandering women are tied to stable(mostly upper-class) structures. Rhys and Mansfield on the other hand focus on women who are a part of the mass that in fact engage the spectatorial eye of Woolf's female narrators, whether one thinks of *Mrs Dalloway*, or 'Streethaunting'.

In Woolf's *Night and Day* , Mary Datchet, the suffragist, after a morning spent immersed in work, prefers to indulge her palate in a restaurant, " a gaudy establishment", while her co-workers choose the quieter alternatives- the much older Mrs Seal eating sandwiches brought from home on a park bench and Clacton opting for a spartan vegetarian meal as opposed to Mary's heavy repast. We follow Mary as she seats herself in a restaurant, and see that a covert flânerie is also a part of the indulgence-" she bought herself an evening newspaper, which she read as she ate, looking over the top of it again and again at the queer people who were buying cakes or imparting their secrets." Running into a female friend, she lunches with her, and then they both emerge onto the bustle of the street, with a purposive sense of being a part of its energy- stepping out "with a feeling that they were stepping once more into their separate places in the great and eternally moving pattern of human life."

Compare this with Sasha Jensen in the opening section of *Good Morning, Midnight*-" I have decided on a place to eat in at midday, a place to eat in at night, a place to have my drink in after dinner. I have arranged my little life"(pg 9). Rhys situates a single woman in an urban context but here the beleaguered aspects of women's existence in cities is more palpable, since her women's outsiderness both disadvantages them and gives them the acidic edge with which to unpick the imperial/ racial/ gendered hierarchies that form the subtext of the city.The novel suggests that it is only through such micro-management that Sasha can negotiate the urban landscape. Sasha follows this up by talking of how choosing the right eating places/drinking holes is crucial to her staying afloat. She talks of how " last night was a catastrophe" recounting an incident of how while drinking in the company of a woman and her male companion , she broke down-at which the woman turns on Sasha for making a public spectacle of her misery. In her unrestrained display of emotion in the cafe, Sasha flouts the distinction between public and private-but this certainly needs to be read in juxtaposition with how Sasha's own privacy is publically consumed.That anguish at how the marginalized are easy prey is written into sentences like this one-" No more pawings, no more pryings- leave me alone."pg 37.

Sasha speaks of how she needs to narrow down on places where she can be" dry, cold and sane"(10). A little later, she plans her next fifteen days with the main thrust on how the idea of survivalism is tied to picking the right urban spots-the ones most likely to be gentle on a down-and-out vagrant like her-" This is going to be a quiet, sane fortnight. Not too much drinking, avoidance of certain cafes, of certain streets, of certain spots, and everything will go beautifully"(14).The contrast with the passage from Woolf could not be starker- while Mary chooses her spots to run her spectatorial gaze over the urban scene, Rhys's women pick spots that promise inconspicuousness. There is a crucial commonalty too- the women in both scenarios execute a reading of the urban miasma- though Mary

does it with/in relative ease, whereas Sasha's bitter dissection is of one from the margins.But what stands out is that Rhys and Mansfield (self-consciously?) choose protagonists who represent the grimy side of women's urban endeavours-as Parsons says, Rhys portrays the " counterparts to the university-educated and professional women entering the city in the first decades of the twentieth- century city: mannequins, models, showgirls, and prostitutes- and are problematically uncertain realizations of the urban woman as model for emancipated identity"(pg. 145).While Woolf revolutionizes women's relationship to cities by showing her women laying a claim to space(the young Elizabeth in *Mrs Dalloway*), Rhys's women look for a space to retreat. And yet from those nooks and crannies of withdrawal, they fix an unerring eye at the prejudicial societal 'sneer' as played out in public spaces.While Rhys's women themselves remain bound within a narrative of failure, their fate reflects back on class and race hierarchies as equally important in any valuation of the changing trajectories of women's lives.Thus what the colonial parvenus , Rhys and Mansfield do, is through choice of alternate city spaces ,to cut into the class biases of the modernist pantheon.

If we shift our focus from Woolf to Mansfield and Rhys, we see the underside of the urban milieu coming into view. Ali Smith notes that " Woolf in her more rivalrous moments dismissed Mansfield to herself for her 'cheap' realism, the ABC tea shop, waitress-peopled, downmarket settings of her stories." Woolf commented on various occasions on the cheapness of Mansfield's fiction, and her comment if lifted out of its disparaging registers, can in fact throw light on the positionality of the two writers-Mansfield's deliberate incursions into the most minutely material aspects of her 'downmarket' protagonists' lives as a deliberate departure (in common with Rhys) from the "aesthetics of respectability"(Sue Thomas). In turn, Woolf's discomfort highlights how as Thomas says, " imperialist politics and aesthetics of feminine respectability inform her judgements about the artistic credibility and respectability of Mansfield's writing"(Thomas, 'Revisiting Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Respectability' in English Studies, 94.1 , 64-82 DOI 10.1080/0013838X.2012.721242, pg 79).

So to move from *Night and Day* to Mansfield's 'Pictures' marks a movement from, while still remaining within the parameters of women's emergence into visibility, the pioneers to the stragglers- Mary investing her intelligence and energy in spearheading the suffragist campaign and Miss Ada Moss struggling to find work as a contralto singer.Interestingly even the rather patrician Katherine Hilberry has her moment in an ABC teashop- and yet it becomes the place where she scripts a part of her own at least partly self-impelled narrative with Ralph.It is a site for a writerly interlude- where she, having first bought pencil and paper in the bookstall , secures an empty table and a cup of coffee and writes her impatience with bourgeois mores-she complains of William's and Cassandra's unimaginativeness in that they " insist that we are engaged". The energy and intellectualism of Mary's and Katherine's ventures is very different from the seedy narrative of Ada Moss's struggles. Even as she sinks into the comforts of the 'gaudy establishment' where she lunches, Mary's is a self-conscious foray into the urban vortex. Ada Moss's straying into the ABC teashop is more a quotidian marker of the landscape that defines her life and crucially linked to her itinerant, random existence. After revelling in the orgiastic tableaux of imagined " Good Hot Dinners" and " Sensible Substantial Breakfasts" she counts out her money and left with only one and threepence, chooses to head for an ABC. Mansfield and even more pungently Rhys sketch the geography of dis-possession through the spots

and locales which form the fabric of their protagonists' lives- decrepit hotels, cramped bedsits, lavabos and back streets and alleys. Rhys's *Quartet* in fact is about sketching a pedestrian path that is in sync with Marya's desire to discover the 'other' city-Deborah Parsons speaks of how the Parisian Left Bank was made up of both the middle class spots, the bals musettes, frequented by students from the Sorbonne, and on the other hand the boîtes which were more disreputable(pg 156). Parsons notes that Rhys knew of both since Ford organised dos at the Bals Musettes. So it is even more significant that her characters, such as Marya, incline more towards the world of the boîtes.In her architectural mapping, Rhys consciously charts the less privileged borderlands of the city.

Commentaries on Woolf and the city highlight how the route charts and sites/ sights that her characters' negotiate are seminally tied to her political critique. My argument is that in the same vein, the choice of locations in Mansfield and Rhys deserve equal attention in foregrounding the critical element in their writings.For instance to stay with Mansfield's 'Pictures', in their discussion of 'new spaces of food consumption', Gareth Shaw et al rightly point out that the department store was certainly the quintessential commercial consumerist haven, but the newly evolving food chains also merit attention. Scott McCracken's essay chooses to debate the complexities of gender and the modern metropolis, and the transforming co-ordinates of both, through the emblem of the chain tea shop. The establishments he looks at are ABC and Lyons. McCracken points out that the " chain teashop was a key element in a distinct lower-middle-class habitus."

In situating Ada Moss in the ABC teashop Mansfield gives us but in characteristically low-key fashion a visual sketch of a space occupied by women- the ABC's were staffed by women. Mansfield relies on her readers' awareness of this by not making the gender of the cashier clear till sometime later in the narrative. Thus she slips in the sense of a differently defined urban scene at the level of the quotidian- and this is in keeping with how the story explores the everyday, deglamorized, struggles of small-time professionals like Ada Moss-the revolutionary ferment of women's incursions into the outside world is squarely approached through the lens of privilege/non-privilege.Additionally, one might again turn to Saikat Majumdar's thesis, a part of his formulations on postcolonial thought, that " the assertion of the ordinary as a significant site of the historical"(pg 176) must be taken into account in tandem with the more theatrical aspects of struggle. Using that theoretical frame, I am arguing that Mansfield and Rhys venture into the non-spectacular and even the compromised in their explorations of women's growing engagement with modernity.Leon Betsworth(*The Cafe in Modernist Literature-Wyndham Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, Jean Rhys* Ph.D. English Literature University of East Anglia 2012) notes in his dissertation on cafe culture in modernist literature that Rhys's women are frequently found nursing a drink in cafes. He reads this spatially as both " potentially transgressive" yet also(pg 156) a marker of their abject marginality. But more importantly he locates in the exclusionary eye that often confronts them in these spaces a platform from which the writer stages her reverse "pertinent observational critiques". (pg 158)

Though 'Pictures' lingers on the visible urban presence of women and although this story looks at predominantly female encounters,the register along which these thematics unfold may be read as non-utopian. This is related to how Mansfield and Rhys look at the woman-woman encounter through the multiple prisms of race, class and gender and hence these encounters are necessarily fractured and divisive.To that extent the work of these writers treads the difficult ground between being non-constructivist but decidedly expository. The

story in fact begins with a particularly abrasive encounter between one woman and another, Ada Moss and her landlady to be precise. Such friction between the woman lodger and the female house owner is an ubiquitous feature in Rhys's fiction and here we glimpse a similar dynamics in Mansfield. The writer shows that the survivalist registers being common to both, the encounter is inevitably hostile- the landlady seeks to eke out her rent from Ada Moss as also to clip the wings of this rather beleaguered avatar of the New Woman-" My sister Eliza was only telling me yesterday-'Minnie…' she says 'She may have had a college eddication and sung in West End concerts' says she 'but if your Lizzie says what's true ,'she says ' and she's washing her own wovens and drying them on the towel rail, it's easy to see where the finger's pointing..'". Mansfield sketches a scenario where the most intimate parts of a woman's life are publically consumed. After that final act of infringing on Ada's privacy by snatching away her private letter, she backs away but not before labelling her a woman of dubious character,through the heavily ironized sally of addressing her as "My lady"(121). Rhys's women constantly battle that sneer too .In *Voyage in the Dark*, Anna's progress through a procession of rooms that replicate one another is paralleled by a repetitive enactment of hostility on the part of the landladies. Thus Mansfield and Rhys do frequently paint the same landscape as Woolf- in fact perhaps oftener than her in that much of Rhys's fiction focuses on single women. These are all writers drawn to the spectacle of the city and preoccupied by women's negotiation of it.But while Woolf and the city have long been the subject of critical enquiry, it is only now that that the same thematics are beginning to be explored vis a vis Rhys and Mansfield.This is also to re-visit the core argument of this study- to bring up front the congruent but also the non-congruent while studying theses writers' different perspectives is in the ultimate analysis to add to and extend Woolf's well-theorized investment in the urban scene, and to see how writers with a different positionality bring a new, though perhaps not as enabling a dimension, to the subject.

Away from London for some time, Mansfield wrote in her journal in 1915-" My longing for cities engulfs me." Intrigued or repelled by the spaces of the city, but alike returning to its labyrinthine realities time and again, Mansfield and Rhys take us into the 'rooms' of single women yet their explorations square upto the indignities of their lives more decidedly than Woolf's fiction does. The focus of Mansfield and Rhys is on the inglorious. This is not to suggest that their work does not take cognizance of the aspirational vis a vis women- yet it makes more space for fraying of aspirations, the lacklustre struggles of the underclass, the tiredness of the Rosabels in other words. Admittedly these are more narratives of failure than fruition-the rooms are a suitably decrepit accompaniment to the grimy lives of their inhabitants. Woolf's oeuvre enjoys its rightful place in the feminist archive since hers is an enabling narrative in the ultimate analysis. Yet as Sue Thomas points out, the tactility of hardship, the underworld of unsavoury sights and smells, is left out of her writing and in fact a revulsion to it expressed in many of her private statements. **[Take to Notes-with Thomas on respectability-As Pamela Dunbar points out, Mansfield plays with " literary decorum"; she " gives a cleaning-woman, a boardinghouse-keeper, a lonely spinster, the stature and status of heroines. And in the gap she reveals between their lack of social esteem and the richness and generosity of their inner lives lies the stories' irony." Dunbar's point is well taken yet in more general terms she seeks to restore a certain decorousness to the proceedings, acknowledging the mundane yet simultaneously ennobling it, whereas I detect a more**

flagrant departure from decorum in Mansfield. Mansfield's heroines' inner lives are made interesting not only by their richness but also by the societal diagnosis and astute understanding of society's sneering vanities that their cloaked rage or alternately, their tired despair, unleashes]. Thomas notes how 'Pictures' opens with the stale smell of Ada Moss's 'cheap' dinner pervading the room as also becoming the signature signifier of the story. She relates this to how Woolf in a number of statements panned Mansfield herself as also her stories such as 'Bliss' for their cheapness. Both Rhys and Mansfield factor in the sensory co-ordinates of their protagonists' existence with unflinching attention to minutiae, which probably explains Woolf's objection to the 'cheap realism' of Mansfield's stories.

A louche, low, world is of course the fictional province within which Rhys works. All three writers chronicle changing gender paradigms through their focus on women and the city, yet in Rhys's case, the registers of class and race equally pressingly modulate that concern. Deborah Parsons speaks of how the proliferation of consumer "stores offered a new sensory experience for women, and were liberating for those working and shopping in them". Mansfield and Rhys portray this more from the inside, focussing on how the fragile sense of identity of their outré protagonists is affected by this consumerist stimuli. Pamela Dunbar points to how Mansfield "challenges conventional notions of the romantic heroines by focussing on ageing and socially disregarded figures"('Miss Brill', 'The Canary', 'Life of Ma Parker')[Pamela Dunbar,*Radical Mansfield-Double Discourse in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997, pg 71] .In their conscious choice of socially marginalized protagonists, Mansfield and Rhys certainly extend the canvas of fiction revolving around women.

I would like to end this section with looking at two stories,one from each writer, where they examine the consumer spectacle of the city.Rhys tells the story of the urban vortex from the other side- whether it be from the point of view of the model vis a vis the world of art or from the perspective of the mannequin when it comes to the booming, bustling fashion industry. That in fact is how one of her early stories is titled. The story that recounts a very young Anna's first assignment as 'Mannequin' , hence the title, looks at the unglamourized inside of the glamour business. Rhys employs a de-pastoralized vocabulary to convey the shabbiness of the setting, such as when the room where the models change , if one looks beyond the sensual flashes of rouge, naked limbs and silken lingerie , is described as unwelcoming and cold,"a very inadequate conservatory for these human flowers."(21) There is also a frequent evocation of the labyrinthine metaphor-on numerous occasions, Anna's negotiation of the corridors of the establishment is compared to her winding her way through a maze. The story shows an interest in the back-rooms of the glamour industry-Anna muses over how " At the back of the wonderfully decorated salons she had found an unexpected sombreness; the place, empty, would have been dingy and melancholy, countless puzzling corridors and staircases, a rabbit wren and a labyrinth".(pg 21)

Interestingly the word 'underground' is used to describe the place from where lunch is served. This is important since this is the most animated space in the building and the place where Anna exists in an uneasy bonhomie with the other models. This scene is the centrepiece of the story. On the one hand, it is the space where the work-force casts a counter-glance at the inner workings of the business, such as a fellow model , Babette, who speaks of sexual exploitation at the hands of proprietors of these salons.To that extent it is

the 'underground' feminine space of subversion.But at the same time Rhys looks at the internal hierarchies that reign among the women.Rhys lingers over how the models have been selected to fit into the 'genres' of the fashion industry. This is of course a glance at how commodification is finessed into an art, with fine distinctions and artful niches honed to perfection. She also hints at how their professional profiles seem to seep into their actual demeanour, such as when Mona, the femme fatale of the house is shown as having cultivated a sneering superior air towards the rest.Rhys's inside rather than aerial view also dwells on how work divisions breed rivalries, for instance how the pale-faced 'workers' sewing away with "the stamp of labour" on them glance enviously at the 'blatant charms' of the models. While both process are implicated in the process of commodification, the latter is more inconspicuous , the former more in the arena of visuality.

The envy of the women in the labour pool and their looking askance at the models can be better understood if one takes into account Nancy J Troy's analogy between theatre and fashion. She quotes Paul Reboux who speaking in 1927 of the Rue de la Paix, the fashion high street that is the site of Rhys's story, emerging as the locus of couture houses, also observed how the mannequin had evolved from a strictly functional role: " Presentations by mannequins have acquired a kind of theatrical pageantry." Taking the analogy between fashion's staging of spectacle and the form of theatre, Troy points out, making a particular mention of the needle trade, that the visual lure of the foreground depended on the mass of workers sewing away in the background. Yet the place of congregation, riven though it is by hierarchies , is also the place where they experience a temporary reprieve from the "raking eyes of customers", and where they swap stories about boyfriends and career struggles. It is a measure of Rhys's unromanticized portraiture that she shows how the scopic ethos permeates the store and so even the lunch hour is not entirely free from the assessing gaze that the women turn towards each other, though it also allows for a modicum of sociability that eases the otherwise dehumanized atmosphere of the place.

Rhys again collapses the division of the inside and outside by bringing the metaphor of the labyrinth from the street to the inside. Where a number of Rhys's novels show the woman wending her way through hostile streets, sneering faces and derisive glances, this story places that sense of dislocation on the inside. Sasha's sense of the houses stepping forward aggressively to sniffingly judge her claim to urban passage takes a slightly different complexion in Anna's case in' Mannequin' even as the feeling of constriction binds the experiences of the two. At many points in the story Anna feels the oppression of the inside weighing on her and after the long day of work, feels that "the white and gold walls seemed to close in on her."(25) In fact, that sense of winding through a never-ending maze also forms Sasha's experience of the inside of the fashion house she works for, as she is sent off by Mr Blank on a futile search.

Thus neither shopper nor worker break free from exploitative networks. For all early readings that saw Rhys's work as lacking a locational specificity, these cryptic yet involved renderings of specific urban facets shows how attuned she was to what Steve Pile terms the " micro-climates" written into cityscapes. The story ends with Anna feeling as if she is gasping for air ,caught in the meshes of "hectic capitalist urbanity." Rhys conflates the inside-outside yet again when the story's finale casts a glance at the surging stream of models and mannequins sashaying down the pavement of the Rue de la Paix , as if the street and the ramp of the couture house have merged into one. There is admittedly a moment when Anna feels an onrush of elation at being part of this purposeful, pulsating,

female multitude. Rhys plays on the notion of artifice when she again deliberately bends a pastoral metaphor in describing how the colourful and gay parade of mannequins made the pavements " beautiful as beds of flowers." The final vision is of the Paris night swallowing up these women. The story looks at the world of fashion from the inside and its gendered lens explores both facets- the enabling potentialities as also further entrapment within a consumerist gaze. In lingering over the aspect of artifice and constructed glamour that make up the city, Rhys unpicks the tantalizing surface-text of the urban fabric to reveal the lurking inequities and oppressions on which it rests.The story touches upon both the sense of a burgeoning female presence in the city, but also the networks of exploitativeness that impede its paths.

Like Rhys in "Mannequin', Mansfield approaches the fashion industry in 'The Tiredness of Rosabel' through the consciousness of the worker.Mansfield's story places Rosabel in the consumer space along all the three axes identified by Reginald Abbott(pg 194) as central to women's relationship to commodity culture-as a shop assistant, as a shopper and as a consumer icon(in the way that both the girl in the shop and her male friend spectaclise her). The story significantly begins with Rosabel exercising her power as a consumer though the reader is made to understand clearly that this power is severely constrained and can only mean securing one indulgence at the cost of forgoing others. The story plays off one kind of room against another-the dazzling largesse of the rooms of fashion spectacle as against Rosabel's small rented accommodation. These represent the two poles of the urban spatial environment for women from the sub-strata trying to make a life for themselves in the city.

That Rosabel's entire negotiation of city spaces, including her domestic establishment, is mediated by her worker's experience of the consumerist parade , is in evidence- on her way home, she endows with magic some of the sites encountered but as she nears her room, the magical changes into the gothic-" Westbourne Grove looked as she had always imagined Venice to look at night...even the hansoms were like gondolas dodging up and down, and the lights trailing luridly...When she stood in the hall and saw...the stuffed albatross head on the landing, glimmering ghost-like..". Rosabel's interface with the city is through the registers of fantasy – the oppressiveness of public transport is briefly palliated by the romantic haze induced by her reading a few fragments of *Anna Lombard* over her co-passenger's shoulder. At the same time, the 'voluptuous' fantasies unleashed by the read fragment make her chafe against the mass of humanity, which "seemed to resolve into one fatuous, staring, face..." She seeks to erase her own implication in that anonymous sea of humanity through the erotic power of the fantasized scenario. This is also in contiguity with the desire for transcendence that the day's events at the store have released in her. The two spaces that define her existence are alike marked by constraint and powerlessness, but one through its potential for voyeurism, creates 'room' for imagining an alternate, richer, life.

Mansfield like Rhys retains a stubborn focus on grim micro-details, such as when Rosabel shifts from the canvas of fantasy to confronting the decrepitude of her day-to-day existence-with even the minutest details such as the enamel coming off the basin being recorded by the writer(pg 514).Objectality is of primary importance in the way Mansfield and Rhys reconceive/ revise modernist landscapes.Objects are foregrounded but while in Woolf everyday objects lead forward to the epiphanic(the snail in 'The Mark on the Wall'), in these writers they are squarely a measure of the oppressiveness of the existence

of the lower classes.Mansfield and Rhys have an unerring eye for the small, trivial detail. In subjecting the question of detail in art to a gendered analysis, Naomi Schor points out how the focus on detail in women writers is seen as evidence of their inferiorized literary production - she argues that embrace of detail in women writers is directly pertinent to " traditional separations of high and low subjects"(Naomi Schor *Reading in Detail- Aesthetics and the Feminine* London: Routledge, 2007 pg 4). She sees the foregrounding of detail on the part of women writers as an instance of insubordination- it represents a desire to " subvert an internal hierarchic ordering of the work of art which clearly subordinates the periphery to the centre, the accessory to the principal, the foreground to the background"(pg 15). Can this , especially given the vocabulary Schor uses, be reoriented as a comment on high and low modernism?Can one then hazard to say that in Woolf details are both brought up front but also fitted into a whole-ideological/aesthetic- but in Rhys and Mansfield they obtrude, stare you in the face, and become a statement in themselves?

At the store, Rosabel has a unique vantage point from where to view up close the private lives of her customers. Mansfield shows how the spectatorial operates here from the point of view of both the customer and the seller and for the latter it is alternately intoxicating and embittering. As she watches the languorous intimacy between the young lady and Harry, she experiences a moment of rage at being treated like a mannequin by the girl who then sweeps out of the shop, secure in her affluence. Thus if we read backwards, Rosabel's entire journey back from the establishment where she works is an effort to un-write her dehumanization by the rich class. While the girl personalizes the encounter briefly when she comments on how good the hat looks on Rosabel, but in the next moment majestically exits from the shop with scarcely a look backwards, Harry in turn dehumanizes her by his over-familiar remarks on her figure. As soon as his girlfriend's back is turned he assumes a tone of insolent familiarity in speaking to Rosabel, thereby underlining that her status as a shopgirl renders her easy game. When the girl first enters the store, she turns to airily ask of her escort-"What is it exactly that I want, Harry?" who envisages for her an eccentric, impossibly structured, piece with a giant feather. For the upper classes, buying is a non-utilitarian pursuit that strengthens the aura around them. This is precisely the scenario that Simmel in his essay on fashion associates with the fashionable strata of society- how their quest is for the item that scandalizes- "The reason why even the aesthetically impossible styles seem distingue, elegant and artistically tolerable when affected by persons who carry them to the extreme, is that the persons who do this are generally the most elegant…so that under any circumstances we would get the impression of something distingue and aesthetically cultivated".

Class dynamics are written into the fashion script, and the pursuit of fashion by the luckless protagonists of Rhys and Mansfield foregrounds this aspect. Rosabel's entire fantasisation following from that brief encounter revolves around a relationship with Harry but at the centre of this flight of imagination is the life that it can make available to her. Consumerism remains very much the pivot even of her fantasy life- the bunch of violets that she buys at the beginning of the story and that seem like a rash indulgence, are now available by the armful. There is the luxuriant erotica of dress and food-it is these sensual luxuries that form the centre of Rosabel's dream and it is these that electrify her contact with Harry. Mansfield brings alive the yearning for consumer goods in someone who is steeped in that economy, but from the other side, those who are part of the industry yet without the material power

to be its beneficiaries. Thus Rhys and Mansfield are aware of the chimera their women pursue but they also understand how these can give a sense of worth to their dispossessed selves. They portray the compelling nature of these consumer spectacles for those women struggling to forge a life for themselves in urban centres, with understanding, since their own experiences showed them how these contributed to the self-definition of the derided. Maroula Joannou points out that in an article in 'Harper's Magazine' Rhys dwelt on the pleasure she got from clothes and how this added a different dimension to and hence interrupted her predestined role as a victim-"This assumes" she said that "I have never had any good times, never laughed, never got my own back, never dared, never worn pretty clothes, never been happy". Rhys's protagonists alternately analyze the iron grip of contemporary trends as manifested in fashion and draw on these as a way out of their abjection. Joannou comments on how the vocabulary of fashion is expansively spread across Rhys's works –"It encompasses hairstyling, jewellery, cosmetics, manicure and all the means whereby the fashion-conscious woman is able to perfect..." In 'The Tiredness of Rosabel' Mansfield's enters the fashion industry through the 'tired' Rosabel's eyes. Rhys's fiction focusses similarly on the role that fashion plays in the lives of her women characters from a non-judgemental perspective. In fact, they often reconcile themselves to the drabness and constraint of the 'rooms' they live in by dwelling on the buying of new clothes. When Julia is paid off for the final time by Mackenzie, she skirts the emotional wrench of the situation by buoying herself up with how she can at least present a better made-up face to the world-"She thought of new clothes with passion, with voluptuousness. She imagined the feeling of a new dress on her body and the scent of it, and her hands emerging from long black sleeves". In that last reference to self-specularity is the voice of a woman trying to restore her pride in her physical self.

In a close reading of 'The Make-Up of Rhys's Fiction', Rishona Zimring points out how Rhys both scrutinizes the culture of commodification yet also makes space for the fashion culture as assuaging the bruised subjectivities of the pariah figures of her fiction. As she writes, "Analyzing the effects of beauty culture from the point of view of the urban ingénue, Rhys's fiction of the 20s and 30s repeatedly show women spending in attempts to compensate for displacement and loss...Make-up and other adornments do offer her protagonists some means of self-assertion...". This can be read against the repeated references in the novel to Julia'a self-perception as also other people's looking at her as a ghost. Coming back to England, Julia writes to her former lover Neil-" I hope you don't mind my writing to you. I hope you won't think of me as an importunate ghost". Clothes help add a layer to her self- to ward off these frequent feelings of dissolution and ghostliness. It is significant that all of Julia's recounted history is one not of presence but of absence, not of continuity but of severance. Thus 'making up' is crucial to her fighting against disembodiment. When she meets her sister after a long gap, Norah typically measures her in terms of her clothes. In fact, Julia's fashion consciousness first prods her to reflect on her own complete disconnect with the fashion vocabulary of the times and to ask fiercely of her sister, when Julia seems to indicate financial problems-" And who's better dressed – you or I? " Julia responds by explaining that this buying spree was to gain at least some acceptability in the eyes of her family, since she knows she is the mote in the eye of their embrace of bourgeois norms. It is fitting that it is in her meeting with Uncle Griffiths , the voice of surveillant patriarchy in the text that Julia yearns for the protective armour of her fur coat-" She told herself that if only she had had the sense to keep a few

things, this return need not be quite so ignominious, quite do desolate. People thought twice before they were rude to anybody wearing a good fur coat; it was protective colouring, as it were". A little later the hunter-hunted metaphor is even more explicitly underlined – " She felt as though her real self had taken cover, as though she had retired somewhere far off and was crouching warily, like an animal, watching her body in the armchair arguing with Uncle Griffiths about the man she had loved".

Thus these fictional pieces from Rhys and Mansfield do not look at the fashion system from within a rigid binary of dupes/ accomplices- their women are the victims but also alternately the strategic deployers of what this new consumer realm had to offer- whether to fight off "the eternal grimace of disapproval" or to eroticise and expand the contours of their drab existence. But of course that brings us to how " the hieroglyphics of dress" is so much at the heart of Rhys's writing and whether the popular culture paradigm it falls into would not again summon the spectre of high and low, a fact contested by Woolf in her questioning why writing on fashion should be designated 'trivial' , yet her tone in her essays and personal memoirs indicates that she herself never quite saw much merit in these user-oriented realms. Modernists saw themselves as creators and not as consumers. Trinh T Minh-ha writes-" High culture has often been defined as creator-oriented" and a little later, " High culture in such a context is …mystified as the exclusive realm of the creators, while popular culture remains equally mystified as that of the passively demanding consumers who, more often than not, are presented by their very advocates as fixed and unchanging in their ideology of consumption". One is arguing against that last assumption- that even those who are participants in this culture retain a perspicacity to decode its inner workings, that consumption need not be entirely severed from creative or tactical cunning. Woolf makes the point that the frame overpowers the framed, that the extraneous descriptiveness obscures rather than reveals. It is here that the micro narratives of the non-canonical (at least at that time) writers could be seen as in dialogue with such formulations. For with Mansfield and Rhys, we return to these grottos of mundaneness where micro details are not merely atmospheric or even illuminative(in terms of throwing light on the character) but in fact seminally related to their interstitial placement between core and periphery, inside and outside.

Of Literary Soirees and "Cubist Sofas":Modernism as Performance

"Everything is clubs in London, isn't it? Clubs, clubs…"

Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*

Both Rhys and Mansfield in their non-fictional and fictional, Mansfield more in the former, outpourings engage with their status as little colonials sneered at not only by Londoners but also by non-human entities (as already noted in Rhys). In her journal, Mansfield writing of a walk through a garden feels as if the red geraniums jeer at her- "'And what are you doing in a London garden?' They burn with arrogance and pride…If I lie on the grass, they positively shout at me, 'Look at her, lying on *our* grass, pretending she lives here, pretending this is her garden'". By detecting violence in the landscape, Mansfield joins Rhys in their apprehension of a predatory city , closing in on the "swarm of outcasts" that had descended on it as a consequence of imperial cross-truck.In another entry, Mansfield, never one to let go of an opportunity to unmask, speaking of a book where the French are portrayed in an uncomplimentary manner writes-" They aren't human; they are in good old English parlance-monkeys." Even though one finds, given her context, a more searching

analysis of racist taxonomies in Rhys, such statements show that Mansfield's work too bears the stamp of the awareness of England's imperial arrogance, so that inferiorization of any kind is pictured through 'good old English' racist parlance. Thus when we see Mrs Norman Knight parading her dress ensemble at Bertha Young's party, we cannot but note her acute and in fact provocative awareness of the shock value of her attire, with monkeys embroidered along the hem. Though Rhys's work, primarily due to the longer chronological stretch of her writing career and because of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, is often read against the backdrop of empire, Mansfield's New Zealand stories are read in that context but her metropolitan tales are rarely subjected to that category of scrutiny. Yet these stories in fact betray a wry engagement with the playing fields of colonialism and empire.In this section, I look at both how these writers satirize the performative gestures of modernist non-conformism, and their particular ironization of modernist cosmopolitanism's problematic relationship with empire through their works set in the metropolis.

As someone who was more closely aligned to coterie formations and yet aware of their qualified acceptance of her, it is a different aspect of in-betweenness that we come across with Mansfield-more a consumer of these art coteries than their acolyte. Mansfield reads the nature of their self-fashioning cosmopolitanism with a spry wit and satirical eye whereas Rhys casts a more unforgiving glance at it. But both in their metropolitan settings foreground the elisions in the captivating tale of modernity-" Elided in the preoccupation with individualized modernity...was the question of how imperial spoils were being channeled as capital accumulation, urban wealth and grandeur in the metropolis".What marks their commonalty is their *reading back* to the empire's cosmopolitan modernity .

The vanitas of the (male)modernist milieu is read into by Rhys in 'Tea with an Artist'. The narrator of the story finds herself drawn to the figure of an artist in a Parisian café. Verhausen, the narrator's friend informs her, is a maverick and a loner, who jealously guards his own pictures and refuses to exhibit them. He is reported to be living with a girl he " had picked up in some awful brothel". When the narrator seeks an appointment to at least see his paintings, he insists on her consuming two cups of tea before she sees them- "Two cups of tea all English must have before they contemplate works of art". The story constantly fluctuates between the homely and the unhomely- the ritual of tea to make the narrator feel at home, the long row of Verhausen's pipes hanging on the wall that the narrator comments on as suggesting the "Dutch homely"(pg 31). The homeliness, even ordinariness , of the proceedings is counterbalanced by the artist's separateness. When the narrator compliments him on his work, she observes that " He received my compliments with pleasure, but with the quite superficial pleasure of the artist who is supremely indifferent to the opinion other people might have about his work"(pg 32). In the midst of the banal, Verhausen retains the exclusive elevatedness of the artist figure.And the irony of this is most visible in how the homeliness of the muse's homecoming, after a round of daily shopping , makes Verhausen uncomfortable and becomes the catalyst for his denigration of the woman who he otherwise exalts in his paintings.

In Rhys's *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie,* the woman artist discounts Julia's reality and gives scant credence to Julia's possibly having a narrative of her own to tell. Similarly, in 'Tea with an Artist', Marthe , Verhausen's model and mistress, remains suspended between his sublime art and her ordinary , mundane reality. Rhys's enquiring glance is trained more towards Verhausen whose extravagant painterly presentation of Marthe clashes with his chuckling dismissal of her small-mindedness- "When I am dead Marthe will try to sell

them and not succeed, probably…Then she will burn them. She dislikes rubbish, the good Marthe." In a reprisal of the mind-body dualism, Verhausen views her physicality through an aesthetic prism but belittles her intellect and understanding. In pronouncing that to her his work is "rubbish", he lets slip the unadorned truth about the purportedly 'intense', exalting, artist-muse connection. In fact, he looks distinctly uncomfortable once Martha enters the scene, and the narrator sniffs the "antagonism" in the air. The aura of " modernist mentoring" is evoked and punctured in various pieces by Rhys, as also here. His embrace of alterity- he has picked her up from a brothel- and his pious homilies about the virtuousness of fallen women only go so far, then. The narrator on the other hand assesses her as armed with the necessary qualities that would help her survive in the urban jungle. She notes that the woman whose lack of training limits her to " small horizons" seems capable nevertheless of " quick, hard judgements." No glib judgements are passed on the girl .She is only shown to display signs that bespeak her enculturation-with her knowledge of sexual barter, the narrator's last glimpse is of her caressing Verhausen's cheek with a "certain sureness" of touch. She leaves the couple gloating over Marthe's purchase of artichokes , with Verhausen "looking pleased and greedy", and the greed can be variously read as artistically appropriative, sexual or simply gastronomic. This is a typical Rhysian maneouvre- moving from the spectacular to the quotidian and prosaic. Thus Rhys constantly pits the worldly and material against the sublimely artistic, so that the tantalizing figure in the painting holding a glass of "green liquer" gives way to the original coming in from outside , carrying a bag full of "green groceries". Rhys offers a wry reading of the gender imbalances that underpin narratives of bohemia.

Rhys even more than Mansfield remained precariously poised vis a vis the modernist coterie- in a relationship with Ford, she certainly partook of the atmospherics of modernist experimentalism, in art as in life. But as has been the overall argument of this study, her addendum to modernist iconoclasm is best appreciated if one looks at her as retaining a disaffiliation from the master-narrative of high modernism.All of Rhys's protagonist who have an experience of artistic circles, such as Julia Martin, both in her role as model for a sculptor and in her comments on her (former) lover's connoisseurly pursuits,seem to be at the fringes of the art establishment. In a story such as 'At the Villa d'Or' Rhys"s woman protagonist , "Sara of Montparnasse" as she is described at the beginning of the story, clearly occupies an uneasy relationship with the art world-dependent on its patronage yet uncomfortably aware of its hypocrisies and pretentiousness. The opening words are a direct comment on how in the modernist period, locations defined and underpinned artistic worth, whether it be Montparnasse or Bloomsbury or as another site of modernist high jinks that Sara compares her present location to - The Golden Calf. Peter Brooker's *Bohemia in London* has an entire chapter on how The Cave of the Golden Calf became an important club for art congregations of the bohemia. Its brochure, an extension of modernist manifestos as Brooker points out announced-" We want a place given up to gaiety, to a gaiety stimulating thought , rather than crushing it". The eponymous calf formed the centrepiece of the decoration and the "animalistic" atmosphere was accentuated by painted scenes of jungle and hunting. The cabaret of course was a reminder of the ubiquity of the libidinal in the experimental flights of the 'high Bohemia'. Recent work such as Christopher Reed's *Bloomsbury Rooms*(add Lyon in note) has shown how modernism had a strong atmospheric bias, so much that the interiors(and even the facades) of its creative

sites such as Bloomsbury that is the focal point for Reed, were calculated to discard the conventional and to suggest the sensual and the breakaway.

With her allusion to the Golden Calf,Rhys points to how modernist coteries envisaged their rebellion in spatial terms. Thus the "sumptuous" decor of Mrs Valentine's house as also her arranging herself on the sofa with her five Pekinese around her(perhaps a nod in the direction of 'The Calf's' superb patroness Frida Strindberg and her cultivation of the voluptuous) are details that satirically point towards Rhys's ironizing of the self-narrativization of the arty Bohemia. From the luxurious depths of the plush arm-chair in which she finds herself seated, Sara finds the world carrying a promise of ' coffee, peace, optimism"(pg 73). As a 'find' Sara is mined by rich patrons, who like Mrs Valentine pride themselves on their eye to spot talent. But that there are rules of belonging, hierarchies and unwritten codes is contained in this sly reference-" ...Mr Pauloff , a little Bulgarian who lived in Vienna, occupied a sumptuous bedroom on the second floor. He painted. Sara, who sang, was installed on the third floor, though as she was a female and relatively unimportant, her room was less sumptuous"(pg 75). Substantiating the narrative voice's claim that Mrs Valentine was " A romantic, but only on the surface"(pg 75), this points to how such artistic mentoring far from being free-spirited or non-utilitarian, worked along carefully calibrated lines.The story plays off Mrs Valentine as the high priestess of art as against her businessman husband who finds beauty and art in bottles since he started off his career in a chemist's shop. In his sexual interest in Sara, the erotic as the subtext of the bohemian is reiterated. Thus both the man and the woman are seen as pursuing bohemian atmospherics for their own ends-the wife as a way out of marital monotony and the man as lending refinement to his moneyed existence.

If most self-privileging accounts of the Parisian bohemia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century marked it as a bustling community of intellectual fervour and artistic freedoms, Rhys depicts it somewhat differently. Similarly, Mansfield too looks at the Blooms Berries from the positionally of an outré figure, and is able to delve into the faultlines of its articulations of heresy. The plush interiors of Bertha's bourgeois salon in 'Bliss' becomes the locus of Mansfield's wry look at modernist sites such as Bloomsbury. Mansfield's conflictual and divided relationship with Bloomsbury is figured in 'Bliss' in terms of the split between Bertha and the rest of the arty set. Bertha's toying with Bloomsburian notions is seen as gendered and personalized, as opposed to the facetious and parodic Bohemianism of the others. Mansfield's edgy positioning vis a vis the Bloomsburian insiders rendered her recalcitrant to its expansive gestures- the earthbound nature of her vision resisted their etherealized flights and stubbornly brought the unsublime corporeal into the frame. Again, in 'Bliss' this is presented more from the inside in Bertha's revolt against civilization's wanting to keep the body shut in a case like a "rare, rare fiddle", her desire to open out her body to taste the 'brimming cup of bliss'31. Mansfield reserves her wickedest satire for the poseur-guests at Bertha's party. Koppen speaks of the sartorial derring do of the Bloomsburians as a crucial facet in their self-invention.24 As the Norman Knights enter, the narrator lingers over the attire sported by Mrs Norman Knight, a bright orange coat with a procession of monkeys embroidered on its hem. The coat comes off to reveal a dress a vivid yellow, made out of scraped banana skins. If one recalls Vanessa Bell's account of Duncan Grant's inspired visualization of her studio at Gordon Square as a giant tropical forest25, or if we turn for a minute to Eric Hobsbawm's reminder of how tropical fruits like banana flooded the imperial city26, one sees how the riotous excess

built into her look visually elucidates Janet Lyon's reference to an imperializing cosmopolitanism.27 The lady follows up the visual challenge with this remark- "...Why!Why!Why is the middle class so stodgy-so utterly without a sense of humor!...For my darling monkeys so upset the train that it rose to a man and simply ate me with its eyes. Didn't laugh- wasn't amused-that I should have loved. No, just stared- and bored me through and through."28Writing against the backdrop of empire, Mansfield would want us to take note of the imperial-racial registers of both the design elements and the phobic hostility with which it is received. Recent work on colonialism has revealed that with imperial progeny and the empire's material spillover dotting the imperial corridors, the colonial gaze was transplanted into the metropolis. While the passengers on the train enact its hysterics, Mrs Norman Knights parades her willingness to plunge into the diaphanous folds of the imperial fabric. Modernism's fascination with cultural difference is legendary-what these moments make us ask is-did that necessarily entail a dialogue between cultures?

What Mansfield brings into the story with the entry of the arty clique is "the unremitting newness of modernity"which is portrayed in all its cannibalistic zeal, borrowing from other, (ironically) older cultures and art forms.29 In her almost filmic description, Mansfield draws on her own experiences of being witness to Bloomsbury high jinks. Alison Light reminds us for instance that "The Stephen siblings were not Bohemians glorying in...eating scratch meals" and that their bohemianism existed in uneasy conjunction with a thorough "dependence' on servants.30 With her own brushes with poverty and deprivation, Mansfield in her of/not of position, could catch these ironies better.

Quartet is of course Rhys's most sustained analysis of Parisian avant gardism. . Rhys was a figure plagued by non-belonging, yet as a one time lover of as high-profile a figure as Ford, she was also on the fringes of the metropolitan art-scene and as such, would certainly have been witness to its matrix of coteries, clubs and manifestos. Inor Junyk speaks of how the increasingly multicultural milieu of the first quarter of the twentieth century was " seen as the heroic era of Parisian modernism". He also notes that the foreign artists flocking into "the profoundly international enclaves" of Paris channelized the exuberant onrush of experimentalism towards producing " new forms of art and society that rejected purity, homogeneity and stability in favour of ...open forms of identity". This is the surface text of the lives of the representatives of bohemia, Heidler and Lois, in the novel. And yet what Rhys looks at is how the anti-establishment becomes an establishment in itself.

It is this paradox that characterises Lois's and Heidler's attitude towards Marya. They seem to fluctuate between casting her as the exoticised , unknown quantity and mocking her for clinging to sentimentalized attitudes, and hence annoyingly given to "drama" as Lois says(unrefined in its intensity as against the performative finesse of Lois and Heidler) , instead of participating in the ease and excitement of 'open forms of identity". But that posture is problematized by Marya's insight into how certain errancies are sanctioned and in fact actively courted but ones that ruffle the implicit codes of these 'bohemian' circles invite excommunication. The Heidlers' and their ilk conduct their transgressions with a managerial efficiency. Thus it is that a Countess for some undefined infringement of these tacit codes is cut off with a certain juridical relish-"as though they had sacrificed to some tribal god". Even as the Heidlers' sneer at Marya's untutoredness, Marya begins to read the internal fissures in this version of free spiritedness.

In fact, from the beginning even as the Heidlers sense and encourage Marya's off-centre positioning, they also seek to check those aspects of her personality that do not conform to their script and that could prove an obstruction to its smooth playing out. In getting drawn into their narrative of staged cosmopolitan adventurism, Marya, contrary to her articulated desire to experience "joy…like some splendid caged animal roused and fighting to get out', is sucked into an alternate system of chaperonage. The Heidlers wish to convey the impression of unconventionality, dutifully taking their cue from the freewheeling atmosphere of the Parisian bohemia, yet their assertions point in the opposite direction. As Marya models for Lois, Lois works to contain the various characters that populate the cultural canvas into categories- " She liked explaining, classifying, fitting the inhabitants…into their proper places in the scheme of things. The Beautiful Young Men, the Dazzlers…the Freaks who never would do anything, the Freaks who just possibly might." Lois's taxonomical zeal is a return to Rhys's recurrent theme of the Anglo-Saxon technologies of containment but equally significantly, it is an unmasking of the Heidlers' claim to non-conformism. They have built their reputation on this impression of their being aesthetic adventurers and how that extends to their non-conventional personal life. As patrons of freaks, as spotters of as yet untapped talent and through their arty soirees, they fit in with the culture of the bohemia. Rhys however effects her expose by underlining how their 'experimental' marital arrangement depends on conformity from the third party, in this case Marya. Sean Latham points to how Lois counsels Marya- "Lois…reassures Marya that anything so conventional as monogamy or marriage is merely a Victorian artifact and that she is making too much trouble about the unusual affair". Latham also observes how this "adherence to bohemian sensuality is almost immediately given the lie". The advice to comply comes not just from Lois but also from Heidler. His argument is for a clinical grasp of these affairs-" 'You are so excitable yourself', declared Heidler. ' You tear yourself to pieces over everything and of course your fantastic existence has made you worse. You simply don't realize that most people take things calmly….They have a sense of proportion and so on'". His citing of Lois as not excitable is meant to teach Marya that exemplary code of deportment. At the same time, his ascribing a fantastic background to Marya as also his and Lois's continued reference to her excitableness, her wildness, slot her as the exotic other.

Heidler seeks out Marya's otherness but at the same time pathologizes it. In the Parisian milieu that seems to be conducive to transgressionist excesses and a breaking of taboos, Marya is invited to break from the over-codified, to be "modern" and to experience adventure, the yearning that defined her original quest. But she discovers soon that the break from norms is to be conducted in the most coded manner- and with a certain savoir faire, where these complex human alignments are to unfold with artistic(artful?) calibration. Miss De Solla mentions to Marya about Heidler's having had a breakdown, perhaps another nod towards bohemian edginess. Marya's reading of him is rather different-she focusses on his radiating a placidity, 'sturdiness' and 'healthfulness' that seems to be directly related it is implied by the text to his domination of others-such as when in the very first meeting Marya feels the iron grip of his hand on her knee(pg 12). There is an implication there that the subtext of the system of patronage that Heidler runs with such flourish is the alliance between the artistic and the libidinal .

Rhys cleverly deconstructs the 'bohemian' flair of the men in the novel, one of the continuing strands in the text.For instance though Stephan's self-image is that of a

vagabond there is much in him that suggests utilitarian calculatedness-such as this passage where he prides himself on his acceptance of Marya as a sign of his non subscription to societal orthodoxies-" But he was without bourgeois prejudices , or he imagined that he was, and he had all his life acted on impulse, though always in a clear and businesslike manner"(pg 17).

Stephan's 'business' relies on his sourcing of obscure objects , passed off as royal heirlooms, or imperial exotica, which make them that much more alluring for the buyer. Thus the novel focusses in a sustained way on the connection that Rhys sees between these Parisian art circles and plunder , of minds, talents, native forms and objects , foreign bodies etc(**quote Sweeney in footnote**). And Seiglende Lemke's observation of how the avant gardist formations in Paris set out to make insurrectional forays into bourgeois notions of propriety by embracing tabooed objects-African masks and prostitutes- is reflected in Heidler's casting Marya as the 'savage'.

Rhys and Mansfield often combine their qualified depiction of modernist highbrows with their examination of the gendered subtext of modernist self fashioning .A story that has great fun with the high jinks of male modernism is 'Mr Reginald Peacock's Day'. The story offers a reading of marriage as a trap, a succubus that drains creativity out of life. Reginald Peacock's day begins with his wife's raucous, unmusical, rumblings, indicating how he sees the martial as a bind . Urmila Seshagiri makes an important point when she says that the short story being Mansfield's only favoured form, her work could invite grumblings of insubstantiality and thinness but Ezra Pound's two line poem continues to be a revered piece of art. The reference to Peacock's day in fact sets in motion the trope of modernist literature finding its inspiration in the ordinary rush and tumble of one day-*Mrs Dalloway*, *Ulysses*, would be the canonized novelistic masterpieces through which modernist literature's finding its muse in the mundane becomes a part of critical lore. Mansfield's story would be an interesting test-case for the same leitmotif- how the peep into this one day in the life of Reginald Peacock, lays bare gender hierarchies, both age-old as also specific to the avant-garde milieu.

As in 'Tea with an Artist', the domestic and the aesthetic are fractiously yet seminally intertwined in Peacock's existence as an artist. The musician seeks to aestheticise every aspect of banal existence- even the act of getting up in the morning must be a languorously decorous one, erotically volatized by fantasies of his female pupils, his many muses- " one ought to wake exquisitely, reluctantly, he thought , slipping down in the warm bed. He began to imagine a series of enchanting scenes, which ended with his latest, most charming pupil putting her bare, scented arms around her neck..". He bristles with outrage at the patently uncreative, uninspiring, start to the morning-being woken up by his wife as she moves about at her tasks, in an overall with a handkerchief around her head. It is the prosaic reminders of her domestic labour that offend his artistic sensibilities more than the actual fact of that labour. Mansfield establishes in these initial paragraphs modernism's, more specifically male modernism's , looking at the 'feminine', here vis a vis the marital, as arcane baggage that needed to be cast off to approach artistic plenitude. As Linda A Kinnahan notes, male modernists like Pound vocalized a suspicion of the feminine, of getting sucked into its " emotional slither" and into its 'messy', 'sentimantilistic' bog, which would only detract from the pursuit of a robust poetics. In Mansfield's story, this becomes the grounds for Mr Peacock's chafing against the emotional drain of marriage- "the truth was that once you married a woman she became insatiable". The marital and the

domestic are seen as depotentiating the potent inventiveness of the male artist. Mansfield's terminology is carefully chosen- "with every throb he felt his energy escaping him". Given the heavily eroticized nature of his artistic 'transactions', this bespeaks how the domestic impedes the libidinally charged outflow of the male artist.

Mansfield makes the split clear-the grandiose aspirations of the male artist are pitted against the trivial that resides in marriage. Reginald Peacock tries to elevate into artistic interludes the most mundane daily rituals- apart from his desire to awaken with a luxuriant flourish, he makes his bath a time to polish his musical skills- interestingly he chooses lines from a George Meredith poem that show the poet dreaming of his sweet love being pressed into shape by her mother- as she 'tends' the daughter in front of the 'laughing mirror', accomplishing the disciplining of her feminine exuberance by tightening her stays- who envisages a time when the 'wild thing' will be 'wedded'- the lines speak cleverly not only of Peacock's penchant for romantic dalliances, but also of his desire to tame his 'untamed' wife. The way his voice climbs several notes on the word 'wedded' is indicative of how his conception of marriage is linked to the idea of female subordination .In spite of his self declared forays into the unconventional registers of the boheme , he remains bound by convention. The class bound nature of his vision of artistic improvement is ironized when he exhorts his son to wish him good morning and to formally shake hands with him, in a bid to transplant a lesson in decorum he picked up from an aristocratic patron. There is a scene later in the story when he overhears his wife and son bonding over the child's sharing his imaginative discoveries with his mother. These only have a soporific effect on Mr Peacock-"he dozed". Mansfield is having great fun here with the divisions of highbrow and lowbrow, with his own lessons in refinement to his son standing counterpointed against his disinterest in the childish prattle of mother and son.

The ardent adulation of his female pupils is based on his ability to present art as an 'escape from life'. While we have begun now to respond to how modernism responded to the material facts of urban existence, we cannot completely reject the idea of how the high modernists have a tendency to sample and then process those quotidian discoveries in Olympian solitude. It is that conception of art as providing a glimpse of rarefied realms that is the implication in the story. One suspects however that Mansfield is also hinting at how Peacock's pitching his singing lessons somewhere at the borderline of romantic assignation and an initiation into music, implies another kind of escape too. With the hints of the erotic as charging up these encounters, the many songs of love that Peacock and his pupils practice together make possible his (perhaps their) " exultant defiance' of the staid claims of the marital. In his encounter with Countess Wilkowska in particular, Mansfield plays upon the contemporary fascination with the foreign.

At the end of the story as he re-enters his house, floating on the wings of triumph, both artistic and romantic, he finds himself chafing against the familiar, after his soaring forays into the unfamiliar, vis a vis class, nationality etc. There is a moment when he seeks to reconnect with his wife, but it comes to nothing as he finds himself repeating what he says to all his women friends-" Dear lady, I should be so charmed…".

Mansfield shows Reginald Peacock's artistic self-definition fluctuating between a chafing against worldly conventions and a quite worldly desire to make cultural capital of his accomplishments. This becomes of critical purchase since Mansfield and Rhys, in most of their depictions of the artistic backdrop against which and about which they wrote, satirize the vain self-constructions of these artistic formations and the elitism and classism, and in

this story, the problematic gender configuration, that formed the undercurrent. While Mansfield keeps her satirical insights in this story frothy, Rhys's are more acid-laden.This issue comes to a head in the reminiscences about her days as a ghost writer that Sasha shares with Rene in *Good Morning, Midnight*. It is vintage Rhysian irony that the one scene which reveals one of Rhys's women as a writer(as opposed to her many readers) is where she is ghost writing for a woman whose writing hovers suspiciously close to a genealogy of modernist tropes-" Persian garden. Long words. Chiaroscuro?" The woman wishes to write an allegory that is set in a Persian setting. And Sasha's aside on how she needs to get the "centrifugal flux" to culminate in the Persian garden cannot be read as innocent of Rhys's awareness of modernism's outward movements. With a self-reflexive glance at her own writing practice, Rhys portrays with irony how Sasha is exhorted by the woman to use long words if she knows any and delicately told off for writing the stories in "words of one syllable", a direct echo of how Rhys in one of her letters spoke of her own" one syllable mind"(Rhys Letters pg 24)."

The question in Rhys comes back again to writerly wherewithal- Sasha's writerly space is ultimately a room that is hardly her own-the rich authoress enters at will and expects Sasha's quill to move to her commands. Sasha is supposed to add the necessary writerly flourish to the woman's exoticist fictional wanderings. Noting how the woman's centrifugal quest as an artist is paralleled by the panorama of collectibles that she fiercely guards, Sasha comments- "They explain people like that by saying that their minds are in watertight compartments, but it never seemed so to me. It's all washing about, like the bilge in a hold of a ship...Fairies, red roses, the sense of property- Of course they don't feel things like we do- Lilies in the moonlight...Samuel has forgotten to buy his suppositories-Pity would be out of place in this instance- I never take people like that to expensive restaurants...Nevertheless all the little birdies sing- Psychoanalysis might help. Adler might be more wholesome than Freud...English judges never make a mistake-The piano is quite Egyptian in feeling...". It is significant that writing a novel set in Paris, Rhys wrenches us away from the heady narrative of Parisian artistic communities transgressing social and cultural norms and chooses to write of an author in whom a crude and petty worldliness, a taste for aristocratic décor, a faith in English institutional authority vie with her creation of an artistic persona through her eagerness to speak the psychoanalytic parlance of her time, her nod towards the ex-centric(fairy stories of Persian gardens), her cultivation of an anti-insular knowledge of things global, and how this mix that swills around ultimately remains beholden to Rhys's schematics of the high and the low, the lilies in the moonlight as against the material exigencies implied by suppositories(going back again to where Rhys would clearly place herself vis a vis the "aesthetics of respectability").

If Rhys depicts a Parisian writer who seems far away from the life and times of the bohemia, then Mansfield's depiction of Raoul Duquette in 'Je Ne Parle Pas Francais' is almost an anti-narrative to the freespirited imaginativeness and unworldly incorruptibility of the artistic set. Perhaps as a throwback to her own outsiderness, it is through that quintessential outsider, pariah figure, Raoul, that Mansfield unleashes her readerly excoriation of modernist tenets.

As a master mimic and reader of his times, Raoul is invested with the combative readerliness that I wish to foreground in Mansfield's work. His entire persona is built on inventing for himself a complex, layered enough backstory to guarantee entry into the art

circles of his times.His image of himself as the custom official rifling through hidden caches is a deliberate toying with the modernist novel's epistemological provenance- its excavation of the buried,whether it be the terra incognita of Woolf's tunnelling process or Freud's projecting himself as a conquistador. The zealous embrace of the labyrinthine by the canonical modernists is at one level trivialized by Raoul's sleazy images. And yet one cannot shrug off the feeling that the writer wants us to look beyond the crassness of his observations. Mansfield's own eager acceptance of the label of lowbrow and upstart suggests that there is a subversive vision that she gives to her protagonist, who both enacts modernism and yet the glee with which he performs it becomes a conduit to marking its blindspots. The solipsism implied in modernism's " generic inwardness', its drawing of its creative energy from a connoisseurship of heightened mental states,is grotesquely reflected in Raoul's voyeuristic cannibalizing of the lives of others for literary mileage. Mansfield recounts Raoul's abasement sans frills- he does however provide an insight into the vanitas of the artistic milieu he so darkly and macabrely mirrors. To that extent, this story lends itself to being interpreted schismatically-even as the reader is drawn into evaluating the morally compromised protagonist, the protagonists's own evaluations of the surrounding ethos take on a critical resonance.

In his self-specularity, in the unabashedness with which he fits himself out to make a mark as a modern, he mimes modernism's self-fashioning. Mansfield lingers over the description of Raoul's room,and makes the looking glass and Raoul's luxuriating in front of it the focus. Raoul's strolls and wanderings through salons and soirees with women recumbent on cubist sofas culminate in the moments when he stands in front of the looking glass, fitting himself out to be a worthy contender for the "modernist honorific"(Joshua Esty). It is only through being a master reader of his times that Raoul writes himself into being. Speaking to the "radiant vision" that stares back at him, Raoul fashions himself as the writer of the "submerged world". His comments seem saturated with malice and entirely self-gratificaory venom- and yet there is the voice of the writer lurking in his comments.In one of his asides he says of stray observations made in the course of his peregrinations- "one never knows when a little tag like that may come in useful to round off a paragraph", surely a sceptical glance at how the quotidian became very often a conduit to the epiphanic in modernist novels. He speaks of his moment of 'geste' coming upon him suddenly in his haunting of cafes-when among the cliched scrawls and stock love phrases scrawled on the pink blotting paper, soggy and limp, "like the tongue of a dead kitten", he chances upon that stale little phrase-'je ne ..'. Raoul seems to imply a moment when the dead limpness of narrative , its unvirile flaccidity, imaged in the tired notings inscribed onto the limp blotting paper ,pulsates into life as his eyes alight on that phrase.The femininity of that note of helplessness restores his confidence in his creative mastery. Since the phrase is associated in the story with Mouse, figured throughout in tropes of passivity and emotionalism, that the phrase leads Raoul to a sense of his creative prowess suggests how modernism's move towards a more robust aesthetic was coded along gendered lines. Can one read this, given the gendering,as an allegorized reference to modernism's triumphal distancing of itself from the uninitiated mass? In heavily libidinized imagery, Mansfield points to modernism's many claims to invigorate the literary scene, to inseminate it with surcharged vitality- the limpness and bagginess to be replaced by fecundation- expressed inimitably by Pound thus-" driving any new idea into the great passive vulva of London".Fittingly the kick of that epiphanic instant reconfirming Raoul's artistic self

valorization is described as an almost post orgasmic high—" And up I puffed and puffed, blowing off finally with : 'After all I must be first-rate. No second rate mind could have experienced such intensity of feeling'".

Mansfield points to the appropriativeness of modernism along the lines of both gender and race. Urmila Seshagiri notes that Raoul's attribution of his authorial talents to clandestine sexual trysts with the African woman can be linked to Mansfield's offering a "retrospective view of the varied racial formations that enabled avant-garde development". He scarcely nods in the direction of his family background, saying he sees no point in mentioning it, but does circle back continually to the heavily sexualized nature of his brush with the African woman.Mansfield arranges almost a setpiece of racial stereotypes- the frizzy hair, the buxomness , the sexuality oozing from every pore- as Raoul speaks of how his childhood was " kissed away" under the caresses of the woman. Mansfield's complex depiction of Raoul makes his statements reek of distorted emphasis such that one wonders how much is self-construction and how much is approximative to the truth.For instance when he says-"I was tiny for my age and pale with a lovely little half-open mouth-I feel sure of that". Lending himself the requisite degree of enigma through brushes with the forbidden, Raoul is Mansfield's dark paean to modernist self-birthing- the contemporary cults of artistic self-cultivation lurk in such statements as this-" I have no family;I don't want any... In fact there's only one memory that stands out at all.That is rather interesting because it seems to me now so very significant from the literary point of view". From here on, having established a back story that adds a murky depth to his 'character', he stakes his claim to the writerly via his insight into the subterranean animalisms that undergird civilization- "I am going to write about things that have never been touched on before".The encounter with the African laundress is seen as the enabling condition for his forays into the uncharted a la Kurtz, in a reprisal of modernism's courting of the primitive as a conduit to visionary expansion.

To conclude, while Mansfield and Rhys wrote within the rubrics of modernism, their interstitial location ensured they weren't completely taken in by its expansive flourishes, its liquefying malleability. The materialist vocabulary and iconography of the colonies permeated the avant-gardists' lifestyle, yet the visceral histories associated with the origins of these objects were written out of the script.This section has attempted to examine the thin line that Mansfield and Rhys tread(Mansfield more of a participant than Rhys) as both players in and caustic readers/recorders of the conversational, performative and ideational exuberance of these avant garde groupings. From their inside-outside location, they read astutely the coterie nature of these formations.

Walking A Fine Line: Women, Mobility, Adventure

Not only is an itinerant mode of existence at the heart of the work of these two writers, but travel is crucial to their diagnostic insights. Mansfield's ' A Truthful Adventure' is one of her many compendium of stories revolving around the woman traveller. These are Mansfield's versions of the adventure story, and the question of gender is quite the moot point. Like Rhys, the realm of adventure is the city. The protagonists are mostly young women who often find themselves trying hard to negotiate through unfamiliar territory, and the hostile, obstructionist, element is more often than not a man. 'A Truthful Adventure' opens with the central character reading of the intoxicating promise of Bruges from a guide-book- which true to form dwells on the quaint, the antiquated, the fantastic and the enchanting. At this stage, the narrator, weary from the journey, finds the claims of

the guide-book reassuring Thus Mansfield sets up the woman as a reader yet it is quickly made clear that she is not a compliant one-she already dreams of spending her time in luxuriating in an individualized mode of travel, not necessarily the touristy one of the guide manuals. The narrator receives her first reality check when the landlady of the hotel announces with considerable relish that there is no room to let, and that those arriving for a short stay would find it doubly hard to find one, looking meaningfully meanwhile at Katherine's small bag. Under her withering gaze both the traveller's suitcase and her expansive dreams of adventure seem to "dwindle". Finally able to convince the owner of her plan to stay long, she is offered a room at the lady's private house. Stopping to have dinner- omelette and coffee- in the hotel's dining room, the young woman comments on how the mirrors there reflect a dismal, endlessly multiplied, tableaux of "unlimited empty tables and watchful waiters and solitary ladies finding sad comfort in omelettes". The registers of adventure are certainly measured against gendered conventions in this image. The traveller finds herself in a room that is determinedly,oppressively pink down to its last details, as if to emphasize how her adventurous foray asks for a necessary and tricky navigation between compliant femininity and womanly autonomy.

'Katherine' continues to find it hard to navigate between the pre-inscribed(the tourist manuals) and the individual. Egged on by the glorious descriptions in the guide books, she decides to hire a boat-but resistant to routes already laid down, she insists that she wishes to go solo since she would like to chart her own course- " I wish to go alone and return when I like". When persuaded by the boatman that as a newcomer to the place, she could not find her way around, she agrees to hire a guide but again with an important rider-" Then I will take one on the condition that he is silent and points out no beauties to me". Having won at least partly this battle over space, or so she thinks and finally handed over to 'Pierre' , she seats herself in the barge only to have her space again invaded, this time by a couple who are suddenly seized by an overpowering desire to join in. Her fierce need to self-script her journey dodders as she finds the script taken out of her hands-Pierre assures the couple that "Mademoiselle would not mind at all". Again, he enquires of her whether she wishes to see the Lac d' Amour and while she looks undecided, the issue is taken out of her hands by the reply of the couple. When Madame falls into the water while stepping out of the boat, it is Mademoiselle's rashness that is blamed and Pierre displays a "loathing" for her refusal to be tutored and to duly follow the script.

Emily Ridge's fascinating article on 'The Problem of the Woman's Bag' is extremely pertinent to a discussion of the leitmotif of women voyagers at the turn of the twentieth century up until the early decades of the century. Ridge argues that the woman's portmanteau became an evocative symbol of women's new found freedom but she puts in the proviso that her argument cannot invest in a uniformly exhilarative sense of emancipatory mobility since the question of class must be borne in mind. In the exchange between the hotel owner and the woman voyager, the landlady tries to ascertain her money power from the number and size of her luggage items, and feels a little less sceptical about letting her a room when assured that the young traveller has a "larger box" waiting at the station, even as 'Katherine' is secretly assailed by doubts about whether she has enough clothes to last her a month. Ridge notes-"To be sensitive to the semiotic powers of luggage is to be sensitive to the social standing of the luggage owner". Thus Ridge argues that just as the bag was an unstable signifier, so too was the figure of the New Woman. Pertinently for the story under discussion, Ridge asserts that the woman with the bag signalled " her

assertion of autonomous self-control and desire for adventure". The woman in the story, presumably constrained for resources , and acutely aware of the judgemental sneer("loathing") cast her way from a society that looks askance at the spirit of adventure when displayed by a woman from not quite the upper echelons, thus becomes as much a reader of societal attitudes to women's travel as of the sights and delights of Bruges. She tries throughout to resist subservience to the etched and the inscribed.

One does not quite know how to read the concluding episode of the story since this would be ostensibly at odds with her striving for autonomy. She runs into a friend from her New Zealand days and the girl declares, in the same breath as she introduces Katherine to her husband and announces that she has a baby, that they are "frightfully keen on the suffrage". This is another model of the new woman-where Ridge's article looks at the lone woman traveller as signifying the turn of the century gender redefinitions, her primary example being Ibsen's Nora, this is an instance of progressiveness from within the marital structure. Guy and Betty urge the narrator to see the wonders of Bruges with them, and their talk suggests that they have ingested the existing literature on the place enthusiastically. When the narrator turns down this invitation, they urge her to at least thrash out the suffrage issue with them over dinner, since Betty remembers that Katherine was always keen on the future of women.Singularly reluctant to participate, Katherine scoots, but not without a significant glance at the ubiquitious guide-book peeping out of Guy's pocket. Does this also explain the scepticism in her tone when Betty declares that being in a different place puts things in a new light? Is Mansfield again displaying a suspicion of the incorporating power of prior scriptings and master narratives, whether from the point of view of travel or when talking of suffrage? Does the narrator wish to preserve autonomy over her belief in women's rights and not structure her rebellion in accordance with a pre-inscribed master-discourse?

From their exilic and liminal position, these writers offer an astute reading of the chinks in enshrined scripts/structures. This wariness extends even to potentially affirmative structures such as suffragism in Mansfield's story.

Mansfield's and Rhys's canvas is replete with the figure of the unchaperoned woman but again this does not necessarily translate into an emancipatory scenario. Particularly in Rhys, the women adventurers are eventually found in incarcerating structures such as sanatoriums, so that the adventure part remains mostly pre-textual. The reader is usually confronted more with the bleak aftermath of their solo sojourns. While their attempt to go against established conventions only entraps them in doubly repressive scenarios, it gives them a direct insight into the inhumane workings of the machine. Rhys invests her women with a readerly acumen. This also belies critical interpretations that see Rhys's women as supine. If one looks at a story like 'Outside the Machine', which incidentally is as far from the adventure format(as traditionally conceived) as can be, one is placed in a community of women, and it is, typically, the unmoored ones that draw Rhys's attention. Inez Best is quite the obverse of the New Woman-defeated, suicidal, haunted. Yet the reason why I want to look at this story is because the critical axes found in Emily Ridge's article curiously applies to it in many respects. I also want to emphasize that I use the term 'adventure' in the broader sense of a challenge(real or perceived) to societal norms, that is, to understand that most of the women in her fiction are unmoored, alone, unaccounted for and at a remove from the familial.

The story opens with the reader getting acquainted with Inez Best through the contents of her bag- the matron frowns upon her dependence on the make-up articles ranged on her

bed table-" rouge, powder, lipstick and hand-mirror". Though she tries to explain that these articles are there to lift her flagging spirits, for the women who sneer at her from within their entrenched world-view, this only confirms her dubiousness. Obviously alone and with an out of the ordinary back-story, she would fall into Ridge's elucidation of the morally suspect configuration of the 'adventuress'. Ridge quotes Alexandra Lapierre to underline that while male adventure marked a point of departure and self-assertion, the term adventuress carried pejorative connotations of "ambitiousness, intrigue, mercenary sex". Ridge adds that "the idea of a woman's travelling light was thus transformed from a literal sense of physical mobility to a metaphorical sense of moral questionability". Inez Best travels 'light'-she carries primarily make-up articles in her bag and otherwise seems shorn of articles that from the societal point of view suggest anchorage. It is a different matter whether Rhys's women venture out by choice or as a result of being bereft of choice-though we do have clear statements from Julia Martin or even Anna Morgan on their shunning the safety of the familial structure, with Julia of course speaking of her yearning for novelty that held her in a vice-like grip. If Conrad as John Marx points out made cultural capital out of the painstaking work he had to do to salvage the adventure tale from getting mired in the bogs of mass culture, then Rhys re-casts the format from the point of view of women caught between a desire for autonomy but with scant access to it.

Through the briefest of references Rhys acquaints us with Inez's reveries revolving around trees and smooth water or in moments of anguish, the ward becomes "a long, grey river; the beds were ships in a mist…".Not only is the imagery of movement evoked but perhaps we are again back to Rhys's women being of undefined backgrounds whose Englishness itself is thus a matter of debate- " An English person? English, what sort of English? To which of the sixty-nine subdivisions and thousand-and-three sub-subdivisions do you belong?(But only one sauce, damn you)". These are the most familiar axes along which Rhys's protagonists 'venture'- as outsiders, they journey into metropolitan hubs, and their eventual embitterment not only makes for a counter-response to both the male as well as the imperial adventure tale, but also makes for a piercing insight into the regressive thought patterns of these centres of progress and civilization. For instance Inez Best though struggling to keep her hold on life at one level, sees through the manufactured workings of the bulwarks of social stability- marriage, religion etc. The visit from the pastor sets rolling the "interminable conversation" inside Inez's head, as she sees the defenses of the powerless not fortified but cast in doubt by the clergyman- self-pity leads nowhere, cynicism is passé and rebellion –that is futile as also the greatest sacrilege of all, since it shows an infirm faith. The story directs a counter-sneer at the discriminatory sneer of the respectable and the 'normal'- when a deeply troubled woman at the facility, Mrs Murphy, tries to kill herself, the spokeswoman of societal decorum, Mrs Wilson announces-" Oughtn't a woman like that to be hung?", this since the woman has a husband and children and so mental illness in a married woman is seen as a sign of dangerous, irresponsible, indulgence, a dereliction of the wifely and maternal role.

If unchecked mobility in a woman in Ridge's formulation and given the hold of prescriptive gender categories, amounts to delinquency, then Rhys's women are certainly a dark variant on that theme. As women cast adrift, either adventuring is the starting point of their slide into infamy, as in the case of Julia, or their delinquent, dubious, status is the consequence of their nonbelongingness, as in Anna Morgan, so that they are perceived and bracketed as sexual adventuresses. Though this brooding underside to the masculine adventure tale does

not translate into sublimity, it is the un-sublime poetics of protest it catalyzes that become the writer's marked achievement. As the voyaging motif as centred in the city devolves into its lowermost point in Rhys, with sites such as lavabos figuring prominently, we encounter female adventure at its nadir. Certeau is relevant here when he says-" From the nooks of all sorts of 'reading rooms' (including lavatories) emerge subconscious gestures, grumblings, tics, stretchings, rustlings..." Also perhaps by choosing to focus on the site of the lavatory, Rhys is hinting at how colonials in the eyes of their metrocentric English compatriots were " human refuse". In 'Outside the Machine', the hospital ward where death lurks, becomes such a reading room, where cultural orthodoxies are microscopically excoriated. The story's title is extremely significant since one of the primary components of the modernists' self-image was their desire to be seen as functioning outside of and retaining a critical distance to the machinery of the establishment. On the other hand, ironically, the most-focussed on aspect of Rhys's work is how far her women are sucked into the machine, with most critics dwelling on their masochism and low self-image. Though this is certainly one way of studying her female characters, what this study strives to highlight is that the experience of victimization does not take away from their capacity to disrobe and 'unmask', albeit from the margins.

Thus, two things need to be kept in mind-one, that in story after story, Rhys deliberately chooses the non-marital, non-domestic space for her women- not always, but in most cases. Though her choice of space does not necessarily make for salutary emancipatory scenarios, it at the same time is a considered choice. we are shown how a man's escapades, if ending in tragedy can be looked at tolerantly,even heroized, but the same act in a woman cannot be condoned-it only re-confirms the unnaturalness of her going off the societal grid in the first place-" It seemed that they knew all about Mrs Murphy. ..And what a thing to do, to try to kill yourself! If it had been a man, now, you might have been sorry. You might have said, 'Perhaps the poor devil had a rotten time.' But a woman!" I think that Rhys writes an epitaph to the traditional adventure tale here, thus registering her acute awareness of the discriminatory sneer of gender orthodoxies- death by way of male volition gone wrong, even if self-perpetrated , is admissible, but in women, bound to a pre-written script, it is grossly anomalous. In these statements of condemnation, the transgressive for women is foreclosed. Thus my own self-doubts about whether to even employ the adventure format as viable in a discussion of Rhys linger, yet if female adventure is about recalcitrance(whether by way of scepticism or rupture) towards the institutional, then looked at from a different angle, Rhys's works are institutionally profane. She treads between the paradigms of the New Woman and the Fallen Woman. Though her works conspicuously lack what Jane Garrity calls the " renegade dynamism" of feminism,in the ferocity with which which they represent the grip of institutionalized structures, they cut them open from within.

If adventure is relocated in the metropolis, then the mode of flanerie would be an important constituent. Parsons mentions that what is of essence to the figure of the flaneur, male or female, is a " lack of place in bourgeois society and an aura of isolation". It is interesting to note that even Rhys's married protagonists seem to convey the impression of being unimplicated in a structure and their origins and antecedents lack fixity. In *Quartet*, Miss De Solla has doubts about Marya's marital status-" Is she really married to the Zelli man, I wonder?" She also seems momentarily shocked when Marya tells her that she is entirely unacquainted with the community of English expatriates in Paris. A little later in the text, Heidler feels compelled to doublecheck with her-" But you are English-or aren't you?"

These are some of the significant and tactical contradictions of Rhys's work then- her fiction is an arena where women are compulsively mobile yet incarcerated, where the iron grip of disciplinary grids is most felt and yet also corrosively undone, her women are sucked into the machine yet retain enough of a critical voice to unravel its workings.

In her relentless portrayal of 'respectability' cutting its teeth on the disreputable, Rhys shows the declining graph of adventure. For instance in *Quartet* , Marya's desire to go on stage begins at the level of the transgressive but soon settles into a mechanical predictability-" Gradually passivity replaced her earlier adventurousness. She learned, after long and painstaking effort to talk like a chorus girl, to dress like a chorus girl and to think like a chorus girl-up to a point. Beyond that point she remained apart, lonely, frightened of her loneliness, resenting it passionately". Her women understand the social imperatives of role-playing, yet this also makes dissection of these their 'performative' field. This would imply that ingestion does not translate into absorption-their critical faculty, the interminable inner skirmishing with outer text, is the tactical space for creative resistance, to invoke Certeau. And that of course includes excoriating the marital structure-such as at the outset of the novel, when we are told that Marya's husband, secretive and unforthcoming,and involved in the most 'sordid' transactions himself, objects " with violence to these wanderings in sordid streets". This is vis a vis the fact that it is the underbelly of the city that Marya prefers to explore in her peregrinations-"shabby parfumeries, second-hand book-stalls, cheap hat-shops, bars frequented by gaily-painted ladies and loud-voiced men, midwives' premises..." Richard E. Ziekowitz speaks of how " Marya constructs her own Paris-one at odds with the ordered , stable, masculine city that oppresses her".

Both Mansfield and Rhys seem to be probing the limits and possibilities of female freedom. As someone who starts off with all the excitement of a lone voyager, Marya in *Quartet* hopes to hold on to some of that abandon in her marriage- she feels that perhaps with a man like Stephan, " natural", as she describes him, this might even be possible . She in fact categorizes her life with Stephan as "haphazard", although it eventually turns out to be more haphazard than she bargained for. This randomeness is she learns not to be confused with freedom from the power equations written into marriage- in prison, her husband turns into a 'manager' of her activities and urges her to benefit from the 'help' that the Heidlers are proffering. He takes a rather utilitarian approach, which is quite at odds with his own surreptitious adventuring into dark areas. Lois says at one point that Marya must rise to the occasion and then she would be able to "row your little boat along". But by drawing Marya into an, by now rehearsed and refined, amorous arrangement, that possibility is also curtailed. The freedom that the Heidlers offer her is based on a self-serving rationale. Closer inspection reveals that their own attempts to retain a bohemian flavour even within marriage are rendered suspect since they in fact expect Heidler's timed indiscretions to work with clockwork efficiency and the 'irregularities' are part of a regulated and orchestrated script. Thus Marya's marital and non-marital voyages, segue between mobility and entrapment. Thus Marya's journey fluctuates between an atypical existence and a life that brings home an acute awareness of the gender traps that lurk in ostensibly libertarian scenarios. Most of Rhys's protagonists are on a journey- though the voyage is hardly one of liberation, it does portray astutely how the journey of these urban voyagers and strollers was " compromised and comprising".If Ridge comments on the gendered and classed gaze cast at women's luggage, Verma speaks of the space of the hotel and how a

woman would be received into it-" The hotel provides the space of anonymous, temporary encounters allegorically signifying the evisceration of sociality within the modernist city", and notes that the sexual politics would be exacerbated in the case of women without material belongings, male escort or social status.Mansfield and Rhys show the inter-negotiations between restrictive societal binds and moments of gender transition.

Rhys's work follows the female voyager from mobility to varying forms of enclosedness. Jeremy Hawthorn sees this pattern as inscribed into her writings, and the title of his essay indubitably establishes that, which show "rapid and geographical movement accompanied by increasing enclosure or incarceration". He traces in Rhys's fiction a shift from free movement to " soul-destroying solitary confinement". One has already seen this in a story like 'Outside the Machine'. But what needs to be said is that shrinking space does not preclude Certeau's "rumblings" of insubordination.These cast-offs of society keep the confrontationalist conversation inside their head going.In fact, when Mrs Murphy is sneered at by the sanctimonious voices , Inez's silent conversation with these repressive forces finds outward expression as she becomes the only one in the ward to stand up for the persecuted woman-" You hold your head up and curse them back, Mrs Murphy. It'll do you a lot of good".(pg 205). It is through those raw expressions of rage, internal and verbalized, that the un-sublime poetics of protest unfold in Rhys.

No Sheaves to Bind

Both modernism and post-colonialism, the two primary vectors in my assessment of Rhys, can be said to be animated by a " purgative energy" yet with this substantive difference-the former invests heavily in the writerly whereas the inceptionary stages of post-colonialism are marked by its readerly disobedience, especially for those of Rhys's ilk, who find themselves cramped in the interstices. That is to say, modernism sneeringly elides the previously inscribed and purges society of its leaden weight, whereas the inception of the anti-colonial brings us determinedly back to the blinkered and inequitable in canonical literature, as the founding site of counter-discursive energy. The stories of Mansfield and Rhys exhibit this preoccupation with resistant readings/readers directly or through clever detours.

In a letter that Mansfield wrote to South African novelist Sarah Gertrude Millen, Mansfield spoke of her placelessness as also her being bound to New Zealand in the same breath-"Let me tell you my experience. I am a colonial...always my thoughts and feelings go back to New Zealand- rediscovering it, finding beauty in it, re-living it...I am sure it does a writer no good to be transplanted-it does harm. One reaps the glittering top of the field but there are no sheaves to bind. And there's something disintegrating, false, agitating in that literary life...I think the only way to be alive as a writer is to draw upon one's real familiar life...our secret life, the life we return to over and over again, the 'do you remember' life...". Admirers of Mansfield may not necessarily concur with this self-assessment, yet what strikes one is how her as also Rhys's 're-living' of their birthplace is never simply about reaping the glittering top of the field-their stories set in their colonies of birth resist being read as colonial romances. Though there is certainly nostalgia in their reminiscences,

the complex power formations prevailing in these peripheries of the empire do not allow for an idyllic presentation.

Their 'do you remember' life is reflected in their fictional narratives in all its particularity as in all its tension and violence, manifest or suppressed. Rhys's short pieces look back at the Caribbean component in different ways-there are those as already discussed that are set in the metropolises and with protagonists of Caribbean lineage. But there also ones that base themselves in the nuances of Caribbean life. Of these 'The Day they Burned the Books' is apposite to how Rhys's depiction of the Caribbean milieu is so shadowed by the fraught power relationships, gendered and racial, as to temper the nostalgia. The beginning of the story establishes the entrenched stratifications of Caribbean society- with the narrative filter being a Creole child's consciousness, who wonders about her friend Eddie's father.Her pronouncements on the man, reveal how even the child's psyche is shaped by these hierarchies. For her, he is a strange anomaly in the Caribbean since he is neither one of the " resident romantics" who fall in love with the Caribees moon nor does he fall easily within the bracket of a gentleman from the home country-he " hadn't an 'h' in his composition". His fringe position in the Creolized formations is exacerbated by his puzzling decision to marry a coloured woman, since the marriage only intensifies his innate sense of a divide between metropole and colony, as he subjects her to an unceasing torrent of abuse at her being a "half caste". It is the child who reacts against his father's bullish obeisance to the idea of England- he announces his refusal to celebrate the daffodils of English poetry, rebelling against how his father always goes on about them. His childlike assault on how all things English are blindly overvalued by the colonial expatriates is publically scandalous yet privately for the narrator it confirms her own discomfort with the stranglehold of Englishness, with all its complex rites of passage-for instance when she is told that those hallowed portals are barred for her since she is " a horrid colonial".

For the children of the expatriates, the locally born progeny are non-Western upstarts. To the narrator, Eddie's comments against the romanticisation of all things English, coming from that suspect position, seem even bolder. The narrator confesses that she has often "thought hard" about the thorny issue of belonging yet Eddie was bold enough to articulate his scepticism in public. It is in these details that Rhys slips in the issue of gender. Significantly, while Eddie opposes hierarchies at one level, his own private fantasies are built on exotic images from the East- the narrator tells us that physically Eddie was the quintessential English lad and on hot days he felt particularly 'energetic' and stimulated-this would be an indirect reference to colonialist literature's fantasies of abundance and fecundity of the sunny West Indies islands. Their childish playacting revolves around a scenario conjured by Eddie-"you can pretend you are dying of thirst in the desert and I'm an Arab chieftain bringing you water". The narrator comments that it was then that she learnt the "voluptuousness of drinking slowly". Eddie's fantasy scenarios result in the narrator's growing awareness of prevailing racial and gendered hegemonies. As a child born of an English father and a coloured mother, the overt narrative of Eddie's revolt from paternalism is problematised by his having inherited his father's divided attitude to difference- even when indulging in racial masquerade(Kalliney points out that this is what is thematized in *Kim* the book Eddie manages to retrieve from the library at the end), he retains the upper hand by instating himself as the authoritative figure. It is the women who are multiply disadvantaged in these complex colonial structurings- both Mr Sawyer and

Eddie seek to offset their own inferiorization in the colonial economy by casting women in roles of servitude.

The ubiquitous image of the colonial library predominates in the story- Mr Sawyer who doesn't strike one as much of a reading man has nevertheless built this sanctum in the house in an extension of his zealous transplantation of English values. The imperial library becomes the site of the tensions running in the family- Eddie reacts against his father but is extremely possessive about the library, thus reconfirming how his is a conflicted legacy, both chafing against his father's obsequious 'mimicry' and yet beholden to Eurocentric legacies of culture, and goes against his mother on that score. Mrs Sawyer's silence, commented on by the narrator in the earlier part of the story, turns into enraged expressiveness as she decides to consign her husband's prized possession to the flames. One could of course contend that in the metaphor of the conflagration, the last rites of an antiquated colonial binarism are quite literally performed ,laying the groundwork for a layered understanding of intermeshed trajectories. But such readings though anticipatorily reflective of post colonial debates on hybridity, should not depreciate the presentness of these stories which I think is what Rhys is getting at. It is the vignettes of violence and rage inscribed into these stories that resist sublimation into abstract theorizations- images such as Mr Sawyer yanking at his wife's hair, the explosive fury of the Mrs Sawyer finding expression in the bonfire of books, these convey a disturbing and visceral sense of the brutalizations wrought on the psyches of colonizer and colonized by the fractious atmosphere in the colonies.

A story like 'Goodbye Marcus, Goodbye Rose', again set in Dominica, brings to the fore a different category of violence-a young girl's sexual abuse at the hands of a much older man.An autobiographical piece, the story speaks above all of violation, a subject that with its varying applicability to the West Indian scenario, Rhys would have understood from within. The man in question is importantly an outsider-someone well-travelled and from his speaking of both his war experiences and his time in India, a part of England's colonial machinery. In the complex formations of Caribbean society, the girl is fascinated by his being much more knowledgeable about the metropole. For instance, when she asks him if he knows the Kew Gardens, her desire to impress him takes this form of displaying her own knowledge about the mother-country. It is his outsiderness that defines her entrancement by him and that then leads to the scene of violation.In this short tale of sexual abuse, the registers of gender and location both need to be taken into account to understand the girl's seduction at the hands of the outsider.As the Captain and his wife prepare to sail back to London,Phoebe wonders what made him so sure that " she was not a good girl".(pg 289). Is this to be viewed in terms of how tropical climates were associated with sexual laxity? These issues lie at the back of the story, and show how Phoebe's desire to not necessarily be a good girl, her scepticism of that model, gets caught up in her placement as a degenerate colonial. Rhys's stories ask these uncomfortable questions about race and gender intersectionality, and the distortions it breeds. Far from being idylls, then, Rhys's stories set in her native Dominica are disturbing vignettes of her growing up years there.

To look at some of the Mansfield stories set in New Zealand, one finds that they carry similar intimations of violence that as Majumdar suggests rupture through the quotidian rhythms of settler life. 'Millie' is an instance of such a story where as Majumdar points out, the "feminized tedium of the interior" is invaded by the masculine display of settler violence whose target this time is not the Maori indigene but the metropolitan intruder.

'Millie' opens on to a scene of a feminine domain- as the men fade into the distance, Millie's thoughts however linger over the masculine realm and her unflinching portraiture of the bloody terrain of their masculine wrangling shows her own imbrication in the settler ethos. But in characteristic Mansfield fashion, slowly a counter-narrative begins to emerge through Millie's reflections. Mansfield evokes the lassitude of Millie's domesticated existence and contrasts that with the expansive promise contained in the coloured print on the wall, that proudly exhibits the "flowery ladies" of English royalty sitting framed in the safety of the Union Jacks, whose lustre and might is preserved by the men in service of the Queen, who also incidentally figures in the print. The description is deliberately meant to evoke, in its antiquated stasis, a disseverance between life in core and periphery. Millie's existence is shown to be one of hardihood in keeping with the terrain and hence the figures in the print seem comic book in their decorousness to her. That picture is presented through Millie's eyes in juxtaposition with another, a wedding picture that in turn shows her in feminine attire but that aura is quickly dispelled by her subsequent matter-of-fact musings on her childlessness – she believes that her husband perhaps would be " softer" on the subject. Coming right after her gazing at the picture of Windsor Castle suggestive of Britain's imperial might, emblematized by the sweeping majesty of the Union Jacks, the subject of the maternal certainly leads one back to its overwhelming importance in the shaping of a healthy empire.

The subject of the management of maternity in the service of empire was discussed widely. It was alternately eulogized and pathologized, depending on whether the progeny were deemed fit to lead the imperial mission, and one cannot forget that the settler colonies were very often seen as the dump yards for the effluvia .If as Majumdar suggests, "white settler society tried its utmost to ensure the construction of a feminized domestic space" sheltered from conflict, then more can be read into the reference to the reproductive. Somewhat later in the story, there is a suggestion that Millie's maternal side responds to the English Johnny who seems little more than a boy. Is that a sign of her nostalgia for the home country, the severance never quite accomplished between centre and periphery? Thus the violence that undergirds the story is a sign of the many unresolved undercurrents that the empire gave rise to. Millie herself is complexly situated within that discourse- decidedly espousing the doctrine of disaffiliation on the one hand and yet subliminally drawn to older connections. That leads to her moment of going 'soft'- of rediscovering a residual allegiance to forms from which she explicitly distances herself. The story ends however with Millie responding with gusto to the hunting down of the young boy and the refined, homely, instincts of a moment ago giving way to the primitive joy of the chase-"They were after him in a flash. And at the sight of Harrison in the distance, and the three men hot after, a strange mad joy smothered everything else". Mansfield's depiction of New Zealand settler life is far from idyllic-she focusses like Rhys on the violence that throbs underneath and threatens to erupt , an idea that is thrown into greater relief by using the domestic space as the site that sees the unleashing of violent instincts. It is in these micro spaces that these writers find the political subcurrents that would be more theoretically dealt with by later writers. Janet Wilson sees in the traces of "disturbed psychology" and "radical alienation" of the protagonists of her New Zealand stories like 'The Woman at the Store' a sign of the ambivalent, contested, relations with the mother country.

The work of both these writers is "gorged with memory" but it cannot be fitted into a unproblematised ode to their place of birth and thus their compositions need to be

distinguished from the more evidently pastoralized celebrations. There is a focus on the beauty of these places yet the violence that simmers beneath and mars the landscape is registered in various ways. Rhys's descriptions are in fact marked by the corporeal immediacy the memories assume – such as in the way *Voyage in the Dark* which begins on this note, where Anna's olfactory recall of the West Indies is also an indication of the varied racial and class divisions that go into its make-up- from the smell of the streets where the black women sell fish-cakes to the frangipani of the plantations to the smell of the crush of patients waiting for medical attention outside a surgery. Mansfield's stories are sometimes more genteel in their chosen spatial circumference, since many focus on the lives of the upper middle classes in New Zealand but even these carry a note of dissonance for instance how 'The Garden Party' problematises the ambit suggested by the title and exposes the precariousness of the pastoral. The beginning of the story sets up a contrast between natural beauty such as that of the Karaka trees against the artifice of the marquee and the arrangement of the pink lilies ordered by the truckload. Laura as the central consciousness seeks to strike a balance between the spontaneous and the constructed. Mansfield suggests indirectly how the Sheridans seek to inject into their existence in the colony all the decorum and finesse of upper class English life. The death in the cottages at the end brings the same conflicts of settler life to the fore- the desire for self-definition versus the need to validate their prior Englishness, the forays into the unfamiliar and the new counterbalanced by a deference to the old, the natural landscape of the occupied terrain versus the compulsive need to 'transplant' English culture. As Laura and Laurie, the two more 'sensitised' members of the Sheridan family approach adulthood they often break the injunction against straying into the forbidden other world , since "one must go everywhere; one must see everything". Their 'prowls' make them shudder with discomfort yet the compulsion to broaden the realms of existence beyond the bourgeois impels them. There is a conjunction of the colonial and modernist frames as Laura's chafing against the constructed and her desire to embrace the untamed and the natural is both indulged and delicately ironised by the narrative voice. The reader is witness to Laura's trembling consciousness of her difference and simultaneously a sense of her genuine restlessness with the superciliousness of her family in clinging to the idyllic in the face of misfortune. To that extent, Laura reprises the idea of modernist voyages, with the backdrop of colonialism as the frame. Where Laura's family transplants an alien model of home into the unhomely, Laura attempts to engage with the alien, much like the modernists, yet her venture is over-determined by her background and also largely aesthetic in its contours.

The place of both Rhys and Mansfield in the postcolonial canon continues to be in dispute- yet what stands out in the work of these writers is that their schismed positionality ensured that they never presumed to speak for their place of birth but certainly and overwhelmingly spoke of it, not only in their indigenous tales but even through their metropolitan fictions. Mark Williams says of Mansfield's engagements with Maoriland that her fictional depictions "involved much more than a nostalgic return to the innocence of a colonial childhood and much less than a developed critique of colonial culture". Their claim is not for recovering the indigenous or the authentic, yet via their critique of the colonial journeys of modernism, they , as insiders to the colonial matrix, do establish that there is no one 'voice' that can encompassingly speak the indigenous, whether Western or non-Western. As Trinh T Minha observes, "For there can hardly be such a thing as an essential inside

that can be homogeneously represented by all insiders". This understanding can be recovered from the work of those eternal outsiders, Rhys and Mansfield.

Ruchi Mundeja

Notes

Woolf, *Night and Day*, pg 70

Pg 1 ibid pg 383-4

Benson, John and Laura Ugolini eds *Cultures of Selling: Perspectives on Consumption and Society since 1700* Ashgate Publishing Limited,2006

McCracken, Scott ' Voyages by teashop' – An Urban geography of Modernism in *Geographies of Modernism* , pg 86

Smith, Ali intro *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* Penguin Classics , pg xix

Mansfield, Katherine 'Pictures' pg 120

Murry, John Middleton ed *Journal of Katherine Mansfield* Hutchinson, New Zealand, 1984, pg 71

Thomas, Sue 'Revisiting Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Respectability' *English Studies* 94:1, 64-82, pg 69,66

Woolf, Virginia *Mrs Dalloway* pg 55-56

Rosner pg 117

Garrity, Jane *Step-Daughters of England: British Women Modernists and the National Imaginary* pg 57

Woolf, 'Oxford Street Tide'(Telegraph)

Abbott, Reginald 'What Miss Kilman's Petticoat Means: Virginia Woolf, Shopping , and Spectacle' *MFS* 38.2 (Spring 1992) pp 193-216, pg 195