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The politics of the dreamscape

Rogoff, S.N.

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Chapter 4

Roth, Jung, Rhys: Dream-Texts Integrating and Disintegrating

Introduction

The formation of the dream-text as a representation of the dreamscape is a political act, one infused with the dynamics of power on both macro- and micro-levels. As I described in the previous chapter on Freud, the assertion of regimes of power into what then becomes the conquered *territory* of the dream is critical to the development of psychoanalytic dream analysis and to psychoanalysis in general. A key moment in the conquest of the dreamscape, exemplified by the case of Dora's first dream (the dream of the jewel-box), is the expropriation of the dreamscape as narrative dream-text. This imbues the dream-text with special status, which invites exegetical attention. In other words, the dream-text already contains its interpretation—or at least the promise of interpretation—even if the interpretation remains implicit. In Freudian theory, the dream-text has an integrative function; it merges the event of the dream with an understanding or situating of that event, the field of the dream with the landscape of “reality,” and the dream-I with the dreamer-I, thereby proposing the psychological subject.

Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939) contains a single seemingly clearly delineated dream-text, what I call the “Exhibition dream,” which most critics consider of central interpretive importance for determining meaning in the novel. However, this focus on the delineated dream-text in the sense of Freud's “specimen dream” or Dora's dream of the jewel-box obscures two important textual features. First, the “Exhibition dream” is not, actually, clearly delineated but emerges out of and back into the narrative in a paratactic way consistent with the rest of the novel. As such, the status of the “Exhibition dream” as dream-text is unstable. Second, and more importantly, a focus on the “Exhibition dream” diverts attention from considering the novel as a whole as a dream-text, though in ways fundamentally at odds with the Freudian version of the concept. While the Freudian dream-text is integrative, the dream-text of *Good Morning, Midnight*, I argue, trembles on the cusp of disintegration, falling apart into emptiness, scattered pieces, and a total lack of coherence. This tremble of disintegration gestures toward the type of primordial chaos I have discussed in relation to the serpent as representative of the “deep” in the Garden of Eden, and to the potential for the radical fracturing of selfhood I identified in Robert Frost's “After Apple-Picking.” The result of this tendency toward

disintegration is not only a resistance to meaning but the radical impossibility of both interpretation and meaning—making *Good Morning, Midnight* what one might call an anti-dream-text and Sasha Jensen, the novel's narrator, the anti-Dora. If this is true from inside the text, from outside it seems that the radical rejection of interpretation and meaning points, instead of forward to interpretation, backward to a primordial, pre-textual state of existence, that is, to the shadowy world of the dreamscape itself.

In the previous chapter on Freud, I argue that the translation of a dreamscape into a dream-text in the psychoanalytic system contains a number of structural hierarchies, most importantly, the assertion of the power of the analyst over the patient and the claim of primacy for the psychoanalytic method over competing interpretive paradigms. In my analysis of Dora's jewel-box dream, I demonstrated that a core authoritarian impulse of Freudian dream analysis is the notion of total explication or wholeness, which conforms to patterns of late 19th century quests for completeness prominent across the European scientific and academic spectrum. Freud's composition of Dora's first dream, together with his interpretation (the two cannot be separated), forms an integrative whole that is meant to be hermetic. The result is a bewildering and convoluted web of related symbols and meanings. This structure, then, replaces the dreamscape as the fully formed dream-text.

Before getting to Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*, this chapter discusses two additional dream-texts in order to analyze strategic uses of the dream-text as an integrative force beyond the model of Freudian integration. It is this instrumentalization of the dream-text that I argue Rhys's novel first purports to follow with the "Exhibition dream" and then undermines with the disintegrative thrust of the work as a whole. In doing so, *Good Morning, Midnight* challenges the dominant and authoritarian model of Freudian and other types of dream interpretation, and asserts a counter-position, the emancipatory possibilities of disintegration. The two dream-texts I discuss below are Neil Klugman's "Island dream" from Philip Roth's novella *Goodbye, Columbus* (1959) and the sequence of dream reports from Carl Jung's "Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy" (1944; revised 1952). With Roth, my aim is to show how the integrative functions of the dream-text were deployed in popular literature (Roth's collection won the National Book Award in 1959). Carl Jung's piece on dreams and alchemy, on the other

hand, represents one of the most sophisticated and complex uses of the dream-text in the quest for wholeness or totality in post-Freudian modernism (Pietikainen 529).⁶⁵

The “Island Dream” in Roth’s *Goodbye, Columbus*

In *Goodbye, Columbus*, Philip Roth introduces Neil Klugman, a lower-middle-class Jew a few years out of college who lives with his aunt and uncle in the increasingly economically distressed New Jersey city of Newark. Neil, the novella’s narrator, is bright, a former philosophy major (though the *klug* or clever/smart of Klugman is meant both sincerely and ironically), and now works as a reference librarian in Newark’s Public Library, a job that offers little promise of elevating him beyond his current socio-economic station. One summer, Neil successfully pursues a Radcliffe student, Brenda Patimkin, whom he meets while accompanying his well-to-do cousin Doris to a suburban country club, where Doris is a member. The Patimkins are wealthy; the father is a “self-made man” who landed lucrative defense department contracts during WWII and in so doing transformed his small operation selling kitchen and bathroom sinks into a major distribution business. As a result, Mr. Patimkin made it out of Newark, and the Patimkins became part of a massive flight of newly created middle and upper-middle class families out of U.S. cities and into the burgeoning suburbs.⁶⁶ This dualism, the weakening and increasingly impoverished city and the strengthening and increasingly wealthy suburb, forms the backdrop for *Goodbye, Columbus* and branches off into related other dualisms: rich/poor, Jew/goy (or non-Jew), black/white, deep/superficial, spiritual/material, the preservation of cultural identity/assimilation into a homogeneous American (white, Christian) middle class.

As the summer passes, Neil and Brenda start having sex. They spend their time together always in the suburbs, never in the city, and Neil becomes a frequent guest at the Patimkin house. Toward the end of the summer, Brenda invites Neil to spend his vacation there. Though Neil is officially stationed in the guest room next door to Brenda’s brother Ron, he spends his nights with Brenda in her room having sex and then retreating back to his quarters at dawn. During one such dawn, before breaking away from Brenda, Neil has the following dream, the “Island dream”:

⁶⁵ The ideal of wholeness or holism was a powerful force in German sciences in the late 19th and into the 20th century. See: Harrington (1996) and Ash (1995).

⁶⁶ The phenomenon of the development of American suburbia is examined in, for example, Rome (2001).

One morning near sneaking-away time I had a dream and when I awakened from it, there was just enough dawn coming into the room for me to see the color of Brenda's hair. I touched her in her sleep, for the dream had unsettled me: it had taken place on a ship, an old sailing ship like those you see in pirate movies. With me on the ship was the little colored kid from the library—I was the captain and he my mate, and we were the only crew members. For a while it was a pleasant dream; we were anchored in the harbor of an island in the Pacific and it was very sunny. Upon the beach there were beautiful bare-breasted Negresses, and none of them moved; but suddenly we were moving, our ship, out of the harbor, and the Negresses moved slowly down to the shore and began throwing leis at us and say “Goodbye, Columbus ... goodbye, Columbus ... goodbye...” and though we did not want to go, the little boy and I, the boat was moving and there was nothing we could do about it, and he shouted at me that it was my fault and I shouted it was his for not having a library card, but we were wasting our breath, for we were further and further from the island, and soon the natives were nothing at all. Space was all out of proportion in the dream, and things were sized and squared in no way I'd ever seen before, and I think it was that more than anything else that steered me into consciousness. (52-53)

Neil's dream-text draws together key thematic and narrative elements of the overall story he is telling, and in so doing sets up interpretive structures for the work as a whole—both the story up to that point (the dream comes at the novella's mid-point—like in Blake's *Job*, Goya's *Caprichos*, and Freud's *Dora*) and the entire novella.

The “little colored kid from the library” refers to a boy (age unclear), who earlier in the summer comes into the Newark Public Library and asks to look at art books. Neil directs him upstairs and later finds the boy engrossed in a collection of reproductions of paintings by the French artist Paul Gauguin. The boy starts to come to the library often after that first day, and each time he goes straight for the art stacks to leaf through the Gauguin prints. Neil takes a particular interest in the boy and especially in the boy's passion for the Gauguin prints, at one point claiming, “Over the next week and a half there seemed to be only two people in my life: Brenda and the little colored kid who liked Gauguin” (33-34).

The island in Neil's dream is a reference to the Pacific island of Tahiti, where Gauguin painted his famous depictions of a life of "primitive" pleasure and simplicity. Noteworthy here is the contrast the boy draws between his life in Newark and a fantasy inspired by the Gauguin paintings. When Neil is sent by his suspicious boss to check on what the boy is doing, the boy says to him, "These people, man, they sure does look cool. They ain't no yelling or shouting here, you can just see it." After showing Neil a print of "three native women standing knee-high in a rose colored stream," the boy exclaims, "Man...that's the fuckin life." The boy then asks Neil if the painter, Gauguin, is white or colored. When Neil tells him Gauguin is white, the boy adds, "I knew that. He don't *take* pictures like no colored men would..." (26). Neil immediately takes up the paradisiacal space of Tahiti as symbolic of suburban life. Directly after this discussion with the boy in the library, he muses, "I sat at the Information Desk thinking about Brenda and reminding myself that that evening I would have to get gas before I started up to Short Hills, which I could see now, in my mind's eye, at dusk, rose-colored, like a Gauguin stream" (27). Immediately, then, we have the integration of the boy's fantasy with Neil's, both of which are recalled by the dream-text's island.

Prominent in the dream-text are the "beautiful bare-breasted Negresses," representatives of the female characters in Gauguin's paintings. For the boy, they represent a life of pleasure and relaxation impossible in Newark. The calm—even "silent"—life of pleasure on Tahiti contrasts with the intensity of Newark life on just about every level; and it is this contrast, representing an alternative existence for the boy, which fuels his escapism and draws him to the book each day. For Neil, too, loudness or lack thereof has spatial significance. The loquaciousness of his Newark relatives contrasts with the relative quiet of the Patimkin dinner table.

The words "Goodbye, Columbus" refer to a record being played by Brenda's brother Ron. Ron was a high school basketball standout and went to play college basketball at Ohio State University, located in Columbus, Ohio. The record is an audio yearbook of his senior year at Ohio State and offers a stark reminder of how seamlessly the Patimkins have molded themselves into the white Christian suburban class. The cognitive dissonance of the Tahitian woman (the boy's fantasy) singing "Goodbye, Columbus" (Neil's fantasy) is easily overcome in the dream-text.

In the dream-text, Neil reproaches the boy for "not having a library card." One day, while Neil is working at the reference desk, a man tries to check out the boy's favorite book of

Gauguin prints. Neil refuses the man's request, saying that the book has a hold on it by another patron. The man, unhappily, leaves the library only to return later in the summer with the same demand: he wants to check out the Gauguin book. Neil again lies, saying the book is still out and tells the man that he will contact him by phone once it comes back in. The man is indignant. Neil feels some impulse to protect the boy. Later that day, he approaches the boy and tells him to get a library card and to check out the book of Gauguin prints, otherwise someone else will check it out. The boy is incredulous for many reasons. He does not want to bring the book home in fear that it might be destroyed there and likes coming to the library to escape the scene at home. The book has not left the library all summer and the boy doubts there is much demand for it. Finally, the boy is suspicious of Neil's motivations, thinking that Neil, like others at the library, simply wants to get rid of him. As Neil reports, "'Man,' [the boy] said, squinting at me, 'why don't you want me to come round here'" (43).

The dream-text's motifs can be easily interpreted in the context in the novella. The "pirate"-like ship is an obvious symbol for the city of Newark. Late 1950s Newark and its suburbs, the setting of novella, is critically important for Neil, and he constantly talks about the changes he is witnessing in the city and the surrounding areas between his generation and that of his parents. For Neil, one change is most noteworthy: Jews are leaving Newark behind for life in the suburbs. The Jewish character of the city is weakening and the subculture of urban Newark Jewry is disappearing as a consequence of postwar prosperity and the strong drive toward assimilation. The American urban salad, an interweaving of identifiably different ethno-religious groups, is transforming into a suburban American stew, a homogenous blend of cultural uniformity or conformity built primarily around material expressions: house, lawn, car, clothes. As a result, those left in the urban centers like Newark are increasingly distant and less comprehensible to those in the new suburban culture. The failure of understanding between Neil and his aunt Gladys concerning Neil's vacation in the suburbs captures this cultural divide.

The pirate ship is an apt metaphor. The city, like the pirate ship, seems like something antiquated, an anachronism. It is culturally misplaced, failing to relate to more conventional (suburban) society—the society on shore. This distance between ship and shore—between Newark and its "other" (a vague fantasy for the boy, the suburbs for Neil)—can only (and must inevitably) widen. There is no force that can bring them back together—and indeed if such a reconnection could be imagined, it would be a threatening or imperious one, one of attack

(pirates storming the port). On the other hand, such an attack is bound to occur as a result of the pull of cultural homogenization and the ubiquitous image of the suburban middle class lifestyle as the symbol of the American dream. Neil captures both the separation of city and suburbs, and the pull or lure of the latter when he reflects on Newark during a drive to Mr. Patimkin's warehouse in the city:

Patimkin Kitchen and Bathroom Sink was in the heart of the Negro section of Newark... The neighborhood had changed: the old Jews like my grandparents had struggled and died, and their offspring had struggled and prospered, and moved further and further west, toward the edge of Newark, then out of it, and up the slope of the Orange Mountains, until they had reached the crest and started down the other side, pouring into Gentile territory as the Scotch-Irish had poured through the Cumberland Gap. Now, in fact, the Negroes were making the same migration, following in the steps of the Jews, and those who remained in the Third Ward lived the most squalid of lives and dreamed in their fetid mattresses of the piny smell of Georgia nights. (64)

Newark, even for Neil, is the place for those who cannot or will not escape, for those who won't follow the beaten path of migration. In the eyes of John McKee, Neil's colleague at the library, the poor blacks remaining in the city create the living conditions they deserve—just as pirates create the conditions of a pirate ship. While expressing his nervousness to Neil that the little black boy will mess up the art books, McKee says, "There is touching... and there is touching. Someone should check up on him [the boy]. You know the way they treat the housing projects we give to them.... They threw *beer* bottles, those big ones, on the *lawn*. They're taking over the city" (25, italics in text).

Newark, the pirate ship, is coded as poor and black—black, of course, being the color of the pirate flag. The racial element of this transformation is clearly on Neil's mind throughout the story and appears as one of the primary impulses in the dream. The fear of being coded as black, of having Newark's blackness stain Neil's whiteness, resounds throughout the novella. Neil first encounters Brenda when she asks him to hold her glasses while she swims at the country club pool, casting Neil in a subservient or "black" role right away (2). Neil calls Brenda in the evening on the telephone, reminding her that he held her glasses by the pool. She asks him what

he looks like and Neil responds that he is “dark.” Immediately, Brenda asks, “Are you a Negro?” (5). When Neil and Brenda meet later at night, Brenda asks what Neil’s cousin Doris looks like. When Neil says she is “dark,” Brenda again thinks about Doris being black—though Neil cuts her off before she can say it. For Neil, his association with the urban world of Newark, together with what this implies about his socio-economic status, codes him—or at least he imagines it does—as black or at least as containing blackness. When asked to babysit Brenda’s little sister Julie one night at the Patimkin house in Short Hills, Neil muses that he “felt like Carlota,” the Patimkins’ black maid (28).

The figure of the urban Jew as “black” is not only a product of Neil’s paranoid imagination; rather, it is informed by a long history of racial thinking. European racial-political thinking had linked the racial types of Jew and black together, a link that carried into American society during the waves of Jewish immigration in the late 19th century until the First World War.⁶⁷ The “stain” of blackness imagined by Neil both in the dream and in the novella as a whole contrasts with the whitening of Jewish suburbia. The coding of black Jews and white Jews—Newark Jews and suburban Jews—becomes a means of describing culturally “authentic” Jews (like aunt Gladys) and a new class of country club Jewish WASPS. Critics of the story often locate the central conflict in the story precisely here: between the authentic, rooted old-world American Jews and the conformist, assimilated suburban Jews (France). This narrative fits into a broader narrative of American suburbanization, conformity, and the superficiality (emptiness) of the quest for material prosperity, especially through consumer culture (Jackson). In the critical literature on the story, the issue of race relations is marginalized, and yet, as we have seen in the above interpretation, it forms the center of the dream-text. In other words, Roth’s novella is not only a critique of a new kind of Jewish suburban life, it is also (and centrally) a portrait of the emerging dynamics of the new American metropolitan territory, foremost its shifting racial dynamics.

⁶⁷ Sundquist writes, “Although the Nuremberg Laws might be traced circuitously to the anti-Semitism of medieval and early modern Europe, the perversions and predatory behavior ascribed to Jews by Nazism were derived more directly from works of nineteenth-century racial science that tended to group Jews and blacks together in their proscription of miscegenation. Jews were deemed a dangerous mongrel race, carriers of pestilence and disease, including tuberculosis and syphilis, and their propensity for hybridization, resulting in pathological ‘blackness,’ was said to derive from an intermixture of Negro blood or their descent from African tribes” (183). See also, Goldhagen 7-15; Mosse 105-12; and Gilman, *The Jew’s Body* 99-102, 171-176. For a critical analysis of the black-Jewish thesis, see HaCohen (2018).

In Neil's mind, racial categories (or at least racial terminology) are more fluid than in Brenda's. Jewish Americans in the post-WWII world had been by and large accepted into the white American establishment, especially if they were willing to shed the more overt aspects of their ethnicity and to blend in (like the Patimkins) (Sundquist 20). The same opportunities were not available to black Americans. Later in the story, days after the dream, Neil is asked to pick up some things at Mr. Patimkin's office in Newark, still the home of his distribution center. At the warehouse, Neil encounters Ron overseeing a group of black workers unloading a truck of sinks. The workmen all want to take a lunch break at the same time, but Ron is pushing for them to take breaks in shifts. Mr. Patimkin, managing in an older style, overrules his son and allows the men to eat lunch together, telling Ron, "No fancy deals here ... we all go to lunch at once." After Ron leaves, Mr. Patimkin talks with Neil; and the two bond, at least superficially, over shared roots in Jewish Newark. Brenda's father goes so far as to favorably compare Neil to his children, calling them *goyim*, or non-Jews. But this is no straightforward insult, for they are *goyim* because they can be *goyim*, that is, because he has succeeded in business to such an extent that his kids are now part of upper-middle class American (WASP) society. While Mr. Patimkin feels nostalgia for Neil's world, and still has one foot in it himself, he does not want it for his children. Quite self-consciously, he has broken this link with the past. Nonetheless, he remains a transitional figure—both an upright member of the Short Hills community and a man who purports to understand his black workers. Neil, too, is a transitional figure—he is together with the black boy on the ship, yet he is the captain.

The dream-text represents the fading away, for Neil and the black boy, of the idealized community—foreshadowing later plot developments in the novel: the boy's loss of the Gauguin book to a library card holder and Neil's loss of Brenda. In the dream, the boat is in a Tahitian harbor, which represents the boy's fantasy of a peaceful, safe, and relaxed realm. The women sing "Goodbye, Columbus," which represents the suburban country club world in which Neil is living during his summer vacation. Both of these worlds prove ultimately unreachable. As the boat drifts away, the women move down to the shore and throw *lais*, an invitation to return extended precisely at the point return becomes impossible. This is the false promise—a symbol of the one offered by the seeming sanctuary of the "public" library (which is also a place of power and surveillance) and the one offered by Brenda when alluding to the possibility of

marrying Neil. Neil's fantasy of living in the upper-middle class world of Short Hills appears as fantastical as the boy's daydream of living in Tahiti. They are both mirages, forms of escapism.

Despite Neil's fear of Newark imprinting its "stain" of blackness on him, in the dream he knows that he is the captain and the boy his first mate, meaning that there is a hierarchical relationship between them, an allusion to hierarchical conceptions of race in Newark and suburbia. This hierarchy contains tension and conflict. The boy might be subordinate in rank, but he does not act in a subordinate way and proceeds to cast the first words of blame—to threaten mutiny. Neil returns the blame, condemning the boy for not operating properly within institutional regulations (the library card) and thus somehow sabotaging their joint enterprise. They are not a crew working together; they are combatants, who are made hostile not necessarily out of hatred of one another but by shared circumstances, frustrations, suspicions, and fears. Disappointment and disillusionment are projected onto each other rather than onto the idealized world that recedes from them.

The "Island dream" acts as an integrative force both narratively and thematically. From a narrative perspective, the dream traces the arc of Neil's relationship with Brenda. The dream marks Brenda as an object of desire—like Gauguin's Tahitian women. The visual subtext of Gauguin's scenes is a history of (sexual) longing for a "primitive" native by an outsider—precisely the view Neil has of Brenda (Welten 3). Like Gauguin's women, Brenda is placed in a seemingly utopian context, which further conflates Gauguin's Pacific with suburban Short Hills (Knapp 57). In addition, the dream-text shows that even at the height of Neil and Brenda's mid-summer love affair—and only hours after sex—Neil dramatizes the relationship's demise. Though he fears outwardly from the beginning of the summer affair that Brenda will break it off or that Brenda's world will reject him, deeper down he sees these worlds as incompatible—as fundamentally separate with Neil on one side, Brenda on the other (just as in the dream-text). His jaunt in the suburbs, the dream-text tells us, is like the little boy's thumbing through Gauguin reproductions in the library, a combination of wishful thinking and willful obliviousness to reality. The narrative unfolds precisely as foretold in the dream-text. Brenda leaves Short Hills in the fall to begin the next semester at Radcliffe in Boston. Neil goes to visit her, only to discover that Brenda's mother has found her diaphragm and that both she and Mr. Patimkin have demanded an end to her relationship with Neil. Neil believes that Brenda left the offending sexual apparatus in a discoverable spot in order to precipitate the ending of the relationship,

hence supporting his initial belief (confirmed in the dream-text) of fundamental incompatibility or separateness.

While the narrative integration catalyzed by the dream-text is powerful and determinative, the thematic integration is even more critical and points to the use of the dream-text to define and limit meaning, to reify categories and identities, and to block anarchic tendencies or potentialities. A core element of thematic integration achieved by the dream-text is the substantiation of the dichotomous and antagonistic categories of the Jewish urban and suburban social classes. This is primarily represented in the dream-text by the pirate ship/shore dichotomy and the fact that the ship is pulling away from the island, stressing inevitable (and passive) divergence despite the desires on, or expressions of, either side. The notion of divergence or separateness is posed in its most dogmatic form at the end of *Goodbye, Columbus*. Brenda has checked herself and Neil into a hotel under the pretense that they are a married couple, a trick she learned, she divulges, from having read Mary McCarthy. In the hotel room, the charade of marriage disintegrates when Brenda informs Neil of the diaphragm incident. Brenda shares with Neil the letters she has received from her parents. Her father's letter makes clear that the family, as Neil imagines, has always seen him as belonging to a class apart: "Of course," Mr. Patimkin writes to Brenda, "I can't say We weren't all surprised because from the beginning I was nice to him and Thought he would appreciate the nice vacation we supplied for him." He goes on to add, "As for your mistake it takes Two to make a mistake and now that you will be away at school and from him and what you got involved in you will probably do all right I have every faith you will" (91). Neil quickly jumps on this line of reasoning and presses Brenda to admit that she sabotaged the relationship: "'Goddamit,'" he says to her, "'I understand more than you think. I understand why the hell you left that thing lying around, don't you? Can't you put two and two together?'" (96). Neil's insistence on the inherent nature of the socio-cultural class division loops back to the novella's beginning: the country club (1), a suburban phonebook never used by Neil's aunt Gladys (3), Radcliffe (7), Brenda's nose job (9), the Patimkin's Volkswagen (17), and Brenda's comment that "money is a waste" for her mother because, "She doesn't even know how to enjoy it. She still thinks we live in Newark" (18). From beginning to end, the socio-cultural dichotomy is clear: an urban, authentic Jewish subculture confronts a rising, whitening, "American" suburban Jewish class, one deeply conformist, materialistic, and unmoored from its ethnic roots.

The force of this integrative quality can be seen by looking at scholarly responses to the text, which accept the basic framework of analysis given by the novella. A poignant example of this is the following conclusion by Patrick Silvey: “Neil has been rejected, but as readers we are meant to understand that this may not be such a terrible thing. He may not have gained the status of the Patimkins’ high-class American materialism, but he has retained his identity as a Jewish outsider” (64). Randall Wilhelm likewise stresses the fundamental disconnect between Neil’s world and Brenda’s:

While Neil may be able not to look closely at Gauguin plates in an art book, when Gauguin enters his dreams he slowly begins to take notice, even though he successfully represses the knowledge until later in the story. In fact, it is on Neil’s second “voyage” in the story, his trip to Boston to meet Brenda during the Jewish holidays, that the dream becomes literally “true,” and he has a final moment of clearing vision. Critics have discussed the ending of “Goodbye, Columbus” in varying terms, from blaming Neil to blaming Brenda to blaming both of the ill-suited lovers for their various shortcomings. Whichever position is taken, Brenda’s attachment to the material goods that her parents provide over Neil’s love is obvious, and it is this repugnant worship of all things material that finally opens Neil’s eyes as to the true nature of his “Polynesian maiden.” (55)

Both Silvey and Wilhelm fall into the integrative trap set by *Goodbye, Columbus*. The convergence of the novella, read through the dream-text, produces rigid categories and fixed identities that determine meaning. The clear victim of this paradigm is Brenda—rendered by both Roth and Roth scholars like Stanford Pinsker as the vacuous and materialistic “Jewish American Princess” (JAP), as objectified as Gauguin’s “negresses” (Waxman, n. pag.).⁶⁸

Equally rigid is the presentation of a second major thematic element proposed by the dream-text: the relationship between the little black boy and Neil. This relationship is marked by two components that exist in tension with one another: First, Neil and the black boy are

⁶⁸ In contrast to the presentation of Brenda as a JAP by both Neil and, following Neil, most of critics of the novella, Waxman offers a more sympathetic portrait of Brenda through a psychological reading of both characters. Interestingly, though, while Waxman finds a more sympathetic Brenda in this reading, she does not fundamentally shift the terms of the debate. She writes, “And Brenda Patimkin turns out to be less the arrogant and confident “Jewish Bitch Goddess” than the vulnerable young Jewish woman, yearning for autonomy and integrity while struggling to reclaim a place in her uncharitable mother's heart” (no p.).

presented as reflections of each other's socio-cultural circumstances, in other words the convergence of poor Jews and blacks in 1950s Newark, defined, in many cases, precisely in relation to the immediate other. However, and this is the second point, these neighbors are antagonists. As reflections, Neil and the black boy confront each other as categories—Neil is a lower-middle class Newark Jew; the black boy is symbolic of the impoverished migratory black urban class. In the dream-text, as in the novella as a whole, these barriers of categorization are repeatedly reinforced with no attempt to get beyond them. There is no recognition either in the dream-text or the novella that the thematization of such a reflection is highly questionable, for there are substantial differences between Neil's circumstances and those of the boy. Neil is college educated. He is, whether he fully accepts it or not, part of the new American "white" culture, which has now been expanded to include Jews. While he continues to live in Newark, other relatives, his cousin Doris and her parents, live in Short Hills and belong to the same country club as the Patimkins. If Neil rejects the suburbs, he does so for cultural/intellectual reasons and not because they are closed to him, despite what he imagines at the end of the novel. Undeterred by these fundamental differences, scholars have echoed the case for Neil's closeness to the black experience. Silvey, for example, writes, "The fact that Neil would feel like the Patimkins' African American maid makes it clear that he is very aware that his social class is likely much closer to Carlota's than it is to the Patimkins'" (63).

Despite the potentially caring (albeit hierarchical) parent-child relationship that develops between Neil and the black boy, clear divisions and derivative antagonisms persist between them (Schreier 116). In contrast to Neil's fading ethnicity, the black boy still talks with a strong southern accent, indicating that his family belongs to a migrant generation. The boy is afraid to take the library book home, indicating a threatening or violent environment there. He consistently talks of the great calm in the Gauguin painting in contrast to the noisy circumstances at home. While Neil can enjoy a romp in Short Hills, the boy has no hope of making it to his paradise, Tahiti. The boy refuses Neil's plea that he obtain a library card, because he fears institutions and the people who work in them, Neil included. Workers in the library harass and distrust him. So suspicious is he of the white people around him that he cannot recognize an ally (or potential ally) in Neil. As antagonists, Neil and the black boy fail to overcome rigid and formulaic categories and identity constructs. Neither is able to make an empathic leap and recognize the singularity of the other. For the boy, Neil remains a threatening representative of

power. For Neil, despite—or perhaps accentuated by—his own feelings of kinship with the black experience, the boy can only be a victim of urban black society, a victim (like Neil) of Newark. While Neil takes pride in his paternal “protection” of the boy’s access to the book of Gauguin prints, such an act seems insignificant given the challenges the boy faces in his everyday life. The dream-text (echoing the novella) presents this antagonism as structural—just as Neil’s separateness from Brenda is structural. However, the structural nature of the division between Neil and the black boy (like that between Neil and Brenda) can only be maintained if the social categories and resultant individual identities traced upon them remain intact.

The dream-text in *Goodbye, Columbus* integrates narrative and thematic elements to produce a coherent interpretation or meaning. The dream-text powers the case study, in this case Roth’s analysis of the impact of the rise of American suburbia to a culturally hegemonic position. Alan France sums up the basic outcome:

With growing interest in the historicity of literature and the continuing preoccupation with the 1960s, perhaps it is time to dust off a neglected-if minor-American classic, Philip Roth's novella *Goodbye, Columbus*. This work occupies the historically anomalous calm at the end of the post-war era but before the student revolt of the following decade. It is thus an excellent introduction to the problems of cultural identity and authenticity at the heart of that revolt, which was a treason not of young Klugmans but of young Patimkins. *Goodbye, Columbus* can help today's students see the poverty of a culture idealizing commodity satisfactions, one that continues to bulldoze ethnic and religious traditions to build the shopping malls and entertainment worlds of mass consumption.

(83)

France is correct to point out the anti-establishment, anti-conformist perspective of Roth’s novella. The novella acts to challenge authority (in this case that of “mainstream” white suburban society) by inverting authoritarian hierarchies. Unfortunately, this strategy leaves intact the basic authoritarian structures—rigid definitions of class and race, as well as fixed and derivative identities. Perhaps most critically, the strategy of inversion retains the integrative approach to determining meaning, which drains the dream-text of its potential to challenge,

subvert, or otherwise disintegrate narratives and themes in order to destabilize fixed entities and thus challenge interpretive claims.

Goodbye, Columbus demonstrates the use of the dream-text in support of narrative and thematic cohesion. In the following section, I develop this notion of the dream-text as a integrative strategy in relation to Carl Jung's "Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy." This text, comprised of a series of dream-texts and commentaries, expands this integrative strategy to include additional dimensions—moving from the narrative and thematic level to the fields of psychodynamics and cultural/religious systems and history. Jung's case study is one of the most developed works of integrative dream theory, encompassing the text, the individual, and the world.

Carl Jung's "Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy"

In his "General Aspects of Dream Psychology," Carl Jung sums up his basic critique of the Freudian view of dreams. He writes, "The interpretation of dreams as infantile wish-fulfillments or as finalistic 'arrangements' subserving an infantile striving for power is much too narrow and fails to do justice to the essential nature of dreams. A dream, like every element in the psychic structure, is a product of the total psyche" (*Dreams* 63). Freud's basic mistake, according to Jung, was that he remained focused exclusively on the relationship between consciousness and the personal unconscious, the essence of Freudian psycho-dynamics. Though the goal of the Freudian approach was the establishment of as harmonious a whole as possible, this Freudian whole remained by definition fundamentally partial from Jung's point of view. Its partiality stemmed from its failure to move beyond the individual's personal psychological position and history to consider what Jung termed the "collective unconscious." Only by fusing the personal with the collective could the whole psychological essence of an individual be comprehended—or at least posited.

Dreams, for Jung, offer a unique window into the process of creating wholeness, a process Jung terms "individuation." In his "Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy" (1944; revised 1952), Jung endeavors to construct a coherent narrative of this process of individuation by arranging and interpreting a series of dream-texts. The resultant "novella" serves to radicalize the authoritarian tendencies of Freudian theory. The hierarchy between analyst and patient is magnified such that the patient loses any identifying features as a real

human being, appearing only as a pronoun and without any discernible physical or personal characteristics. In addition, Jung's interpretation not only employs the combination of scientific and hermeneutical approaches utilized by Freud, but it adds another layer of "expertise"—a deep and seemingly comprehensive academic knowledge of historical and religious traditions. These layers of specialized knowledge work together with the dream-text to promote both narrative and thematic integration. At the end of the article, Jung believes that he has succeeded in presenting the quest for individuation through the integration of the persona and the collective unconscious. He feels no compulsion to show the reader that his theories are correct, for example by mentioning their relationship to the life or psychological health of the patient. Rather, he asserts, matter-of-factly, the correctness of the case as the prerogative of the expert.

That the dream-text takes on an integrative function for Jung reflects his broader conception of the integrative dynamics of the process of individuation. The importance of the individuation process in Jungian theory cannot be overstated. It is a process that contains not only the personal and immediate social circumstances of a human being, but brings together the entirety of the world's intellectual, cultural, and artistic legacy. Jung writes:

All these moments in the individual's life, when the universal laws of human fate break in upon the purposes, expectations, and opinions of the personal consciousness, are stations along the road of the individuation process. This process is, in effect, the spontaneous realization of the whole man. The ego-conscious personality is only a part of the whole man, and its life does not yet represent his total life. The more he is merely "I," the more he splits himself off from the collective man, of whom he is also a part, and may even find himself in opposition to him. But since everything living strives for wholeness, the inevitable one-sidedness of our conscious life is continually being corrected and compensated by the universal human being in us, whose goal is the ultimate integration of conscious and unconscious, or better, the assimilation of the ego to the wider personality. (*Dreams* 78)

For Jung, the process of the collective unconscious demanding compensation for what is lacking in the individual's consciousness or what crystallizes as the individual's social "persona" takes place ceaselessly. However, because it is unconscious and, moreover, because it is not generated

by the individual's unconscious (like Freudian wishes) the dynamics of the compensatory mechanisms retreat into the very depths of the psyche. Shocks to the psyche or the "false wrappings of the persona" (*Collected Works* 123) can seem to the Jungian subject sudden and inexplicable. Jung's way into this invisible process of individuation is through the arrangement and analysis of the dream-text. "Dreams are the voice of the Unknown, that ever threatens with new schemes, new dangers, sacrifices, warfare and other troublesome things" (*Psychology and Religion* 21). And again, "...my experience is in favor of the probability that dreams are the visible links in a chain of unconscious events" (*Psychology and Religion* 38).

To understand an individual in the truest sense of the term, according to Jung, means being able to grasp the ways in which the "persona" or socially aware ego is confronted with impulses from what Jung sees as a universal and ubiquitous psychic reality—the collective unconscious. For Jung, the role of psychology is precisely to find the points of tension, friction, resistance, or rebellion at which the collective unconscious puts pressure on the persona. Gaining access to the collective unconscious, however, is tricky. About the influence of the collective unconscious on the psyche, Jung writes: "we find we are moving in a dark interior world that is vastly more difficult to understand than the psychology of the persona, which is accessible to everyone" (*Collected Works* 123). Jung believes to have found a spotlight into this "dark interior" in the form of archetypal images that appear in dreams, what he refers to at the beginning of "Individual Dream Symbolism" as "mandala symbolism"—the circular mandala standing in for the totality of the self, positing the ever-present relationship between a circle's center and its circumference (*Dreams* 115-116).

Jung's "Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy" demonstrates the way an analysis of dreams illuminates the dynamics between persona and the collective unconscious, ultimately driving toward differentiation and individuation of the self, or to put it another way: toward self-realization. To accomplish this goal, Jung takes what he considers a "coherent series" of dreams provided by a patient, claiming that the patient (and not Jung) is the "author" of the dream-texts, despite the presence of Jung's strong editorial hand:

With few exceptions all the dreams have been abbreviated, either by extracting the part that carries the main thought or by condensing the whole text to essentials. This

simplifying procedure has not only curtailed their length but has also removed personal allusions and complications, as was necessary for reasons of discretion. (*Dreams* 116)

From the outset, Jung's methodology is confounding. He proposes the existence of an "author" of the dream-texts as the subject of the investigation of the individuating process that can be traced through around 400 dreams. At the same time, he excises every trace of identifying information and most of the immediate personal context, which was key to Freud's analysis of Dora's dream of the jewel-box.

Two strategies underpin Jung's article on dream symbolism. First, he is intent to show the dynamics of the process of individuation through the dreams as a sort of visual diary or graphic novel. As such, the series of dream-texts Jung presents has a strong narrative thrust or plot. The plot structure can be summed up as containing the following basic components: initiating psychic dilemma, challenge, reaction, and crisis, eventually leading to resolution. These components do not occur only once, but repeat with shifting intensities. This repetition and intensification create the narrative force of Jung's account, and together are meant to dramatize the process of individuation. Second, Jung builds his analysis on the basis of a highly esoteric body of knowledge, ranging from (among many others) ancient Chinese and Hindu traditions to medieval Christianity, Kabbalah, and European alchemy. Meant to display the trans-historical and ubiquitous nature of imagery of the collective unconscious, Jung's account also acts to radically circumscribe the zone of legitimate dream interpretation by necessitating that it relate to the traditional archetypes that he identifies.

The narrative structure of Jung's account is built on a confrontation between the collective unconscious and the persona, a conflict in which, in order to compensate for deficiencies or imbalances in the conscious persona, the unconscious forces its way into the psyche with psychic demands. In the subject's first dream-text, he "puts on a stranger's hat instead of his own" (*Dreams* 121). This act, for Jung, captures the beginning of the psychic drama: "As a general result of the exchange of hats we may expect a development similar to that in *The Golem*: an emergence of the unconscious. The unconscious with its figures is already standing like a shadow behind the dreamer and pushing its way into consciousness" (*Dreams* 122). In the second dream, the collective unconscious begins to emerge or to force its way into confrontation with consciousness. In this dream, the dreamer blocks "the light from those who

stand behind him, namely the unconscious components of his personality” (*Dreams* 122). Such a blockage seems not to be able to hold, for in the third vision the dream narrative has its first major point of confrontation, the first manifestation of psychic conflict. The dream-text reads: “*By the sea shore. The Sea breaks into the land, flooding everything. Then the dreamer is sitting on a lonely island*” (*Dreams* 112, italics in text). Jung interprets:

The sea is the symbol of the collective unconscious, because unfathomed depths lie concealed beneath its reflecting surface. Those who stand behind, the shadowy personifications of the unconscious, have burst into the terra firma of consciousness like a flood. Such invasions have something uncanny about them because they are irrational and incomprehensible to the person concerned. They bring about momentous alteration of his personality since they immediately constitute a painful personal secret which alienates and isolates him from his surroundings. (*Dreams* 122-123)

The “invasion” of the unconscious and the resultant feelings of isolation and even insanity provoke the first counteraction by consciousness in an attempt to defend the persona. In dream #4, the dreamer is enticed by a “throng of vague female forms” but cannot engage with them until he is able to “get away from Father” (*Dreams* 123). The appearance of the counterforce of the “Father” directly after the proposition of the “unfathomed depths” of the collective unconscious sets the stage for Jung to articulate in broad terms the quest for individuation:

The father, the embodiment of the traditional spirit as expressed in religion or a general philosophy of life, is standing in his way. He imprisons the dreamer in the world of the conscious mind and its values. The traditional masculine world with its intellectualism and rationalism is felt to be an impediment, from which we must conclude that the unconscious, now approaching him, stands in direct opposition to the tendencies of the conscious mind and that the dreamer, despite this opposition, is already favourably disposed toward the unconscious. For this reason the latter should not be subordinated to the rationalistic judgments of consciousness; it ought rather to be an experience *sui generis*. Naturally it is not easy for the intellect to accept this, because it involves at least a partial, if not a total, *sacrificium intellectus*. Furthermore, the problem this raised is

very difficult for modern man to grasp; for to begin with he can only understand the unconscious as an inessential and unreal appendage of the conscious mind, and not as a special sphere of experience with laws of its own. In the course of the later dreams this conflict will appear again and again, until finally the right formula is found for the correlation of conscious and unconscious, and the personality is assigned its correct position between the two. Moreover, such a conflict cannot be solved by understanding, but only by experience. Every stage of the experience must be lived through. There is no feat of interpretation or any other trick by which to circumvent this difficulty, for the union of conscious and unconscious can only be achieved step by step. (*Dreams* 124)

This step-by-step process is not a linear one. Forward thrusts by the unconscious are defended and pushed back by consciousness. This battle between consciousness and unconscious is staged as an intensifying dialectical conflict. Only a resolution to this conflict can achieve both narrative closure and psychic individuation; the two go hand-in-hand.

Jung's quest for narrative resolution relies on connections to a wide body of historical material, which relates to his core psychological concepts like anima, shadow, etc. In this specific case, the most important element of the historical-symbolic language is the mandala. Jung uses the term "mandala" in order to move beyond the visualization of the self as a mundane circular form. "The term 'mandala' was chosen because this word denotes the ritual or magic circle used in Lamaism and also in Tantric yoga as a *yantra* or aid to contemplation" (*Dreams* 169). Paraphrasing a Lamaic *rimpoche*, Jung continues:

He said that no mandala is like any other, they are all individually different. Also, he said the mandalas to be found in monasteries are temples were of no particular significance because they were external representations only. The true mandala is always an inner image, which is gradually built up through (active) imagination, at such times when psychic equilibrium is disturbed or when a thought cannot be found and must be sought for, because it is not contained in holy doctrine. (*Dreams* 170)

Jung concludes that mandala symbols "signify nothing less than a psychic centre of the personality not to be identified with the ego" (*Dreams* 172-173). In order to propose the ubiquity

of the mandala symbol, Jung, in the beginning of section II of the article, provides graphic imagery including a Shri-Yantra, a Tibetan World Wheel, the Aztec “Great Calendar Stone,” a 15th century Swedish mural painting by Albertus Pictor, a Lamaic Vajramandala, a Mexican calendar, the gem of a Roman ring, and a plate of two dragons eating each other’s tail from an 18th century scientific text.

The mandala symbol, representing the wholeness of individuation, forms the foundation of Jung’s analysis of the dreams. Upon this foundation, Jung stacks layers of specialized and esoteric knowledge. Though there are dozens of moments at which Jung weaves together a complex set of associations, I will present an example of the style, which I believe captures the flavor of the text. Here, Jung presents the following dream-text: *“In the sea there lies a treasure. To reach it, he has to dive through a narrow opening. This is dangerous, but down below he will find a companion. The dreamer takes the plunge into the dark and discovers a beautiful garden in the depths, symmetrically laid out, with a fountain in the centre”* (*Dreams* 191, italics in text). Jung’s analysis of this dream is among his most integrative:

The “treasure hard to attain” lies hidden in the ocean of the unconscious, and only the brave can reach it. I conjecture that the treasure is also the “companion,” the one who goes through life at our side—in all probability a close analogy to the lonely ego who finds a mate in the self, for at first the self is the strange non-ego. This is the theme of the magical travelling companion, of whom I will give three famous examples: the disciplines on the road to Emmaus, Krishna and Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, Moses and El-Khidr in Sura 18 of the Koran. I conjecture further that the treasure in the sea, the companion, and the garden with the fountain are all one and the same thing: the self. For the garden is another *temenos*, and the fountain is the source of ‘living water’ mentioned in John 7:38, which the Moses of the Koran also sought and found, and beside it El-Khidr, “one of Our servants whom We had endowed with Our grace and wisdom” (Sura 18). And the legend has it that the ground round about El-Khidr blossomed with spring flowers, although it was desert. In Islam, the plan of the *temenos* with the fountain developed under the influence of early Christian architecture into the court of the mosque with the ritual wash-house in the centre (e.g., Ahmed ibn-Tulun in Cairo). We see much the same thing in our Western cloisters with the fountain in the garden. This is also the

“rose garden of the philosophers,” which we know from the treatises on alchemy and from many beautiful engravings....

The crash to earth thus leads into the depths of the sea, into the unconscious, and the dreamer reaches the shelter of the *temenos* as a protection against the splintering of personality caused by his regression to childhood. The situation is rather like that of dream 4 and vision 5 in the first series...where the magic circle warded off the lure of the unconscious and its plurality of female forms. (The dangers of temptation approach Poliphilo in much the same way at the beginning of his *nekyia*.)

The source of life is, like El-Khidr, a good companion, though it is not without its dangers, as Moses of old found to his cost, according to the Koran. It is the symbol of the life force that eternally renews itself...and of the clock that never runs down. An uncanonical saying of our Lord runs: “He who is near unto me is near unto the fire.” Just as this esoteric Christ is a source of fire...so the alchemical philosophers conceive their *aqua nostra* to be *ignis* (fire). The source means not only the flow of life but its warmth, indeed its heat, the secret passion, whose synonyms are always fiery. The all-dissolving *aqua nostra* is the essential ingredient in the production of *lapis*. But the source is underground and therefore the way leads underneath: only down below can we find the fiery source of life. These depths constitute the natural history of man, his causal link with the world of the instinct. Unless this link be rediscovered no *lapis* and no self can come into being. (*Dreams* 191-194)

Jung’s collective unconscious, accessed mainly through dreams, represents perhaps the most ambitious of all modernist attempts to achieve wholeness in a non-metaphysical sense. The above synthesis is breathtaking in its ambition, combining alchemy, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and other elements to unpack a single short dream. The monumentality of Jung’s conception allows it to challenge the central Freudian principle—indeed the central principle of psychoanalysis—that of the power of the sexual libido. Only, it seems, an entity as vast and deep as the collective unconscious could shove aside sex as the central dynamic force for Jungian psychology.

The contest between sexual libido and collective unconscious—between Freudian (and post-Freudian) psychoanalysis and Jungian depth psychology—is just one of many issues of

power and authority brought up by Jung's approach to dream analysis. Like Freud, Jung's analytical strategy seeks integration. Dream analysis becomes a key tool for the establishment of narrative structure and narrative wholeness, including the presentation of new information, temporal bridges, conflicts, and resolutions. The integrative function extends beyond narrative to issues of content and meaning. For Freud, the integrative project revolves around the explication of dream symbolism in relation to current and past sexual desires. For Jung, integration means linking the personal with the collective through the history of religious and mystical expressions. Integration of this sort, while vast in its ambitions for completeness or totality, results in at least three authoritarian outcomes. First, the analyst becomes the dominant arbiter of truth, so much so that the analysand is either made into what amounts to a fictional character (Dora) or vanishes altogether (Jung's dream "author"). Second, the complexity of Jung's analytical process fosters a hierarchy much like that between a priest and a congregant. Jung, as priest, has access to universal realms while the patient (or reader) as congregant can merely receive the wisdom. If Jung's wisdom is rejected, it is done not out of disputation of Jung's evidence but by a rejection of the basic principles of belief itself. As such, Jung's approach necessitates conflict over dialogue—just as Freud's method necessitated Dora either accepting Freud's conclusions or breaking off treatment. Third, the end result of the analytical process is the proposition of a fully understood and differentiated individual, which can now be fully known.

Just as Roth's dream-text helps locate the individual amid a constellation of racial and socio-economic categories, thereby reaffirming their solidity and validity, Jung's dream analysis places the individual directly in the stream of trans-historical or ahistorical absolutes or archetypes—the central one being the binary of male/female, the male persona versus the female anima. "The persona," Jung writes, "the ideal picture of a man as he should be, is inwardly compensated by feminine weakness, and as the individual outwardly plays the strong man, so he becomes inwardly a woman, i.e., the anima, for it is the anima that reacts to the persona" (*Collected Works* 194-195). If the individuation process—the becoming whole—is built on a reconciliation of opposites, it is at the same time a powerful force of merging into the broader community, of finding a psychologically stable place in society, at once differentiated as a self and integrated into the collective. The very becoming of self, in other words, is achieved through the subsuming of the self into the totality while still remaining individual.

Jung's emphasis on the reconciliation between the individual and the collective consciousness is part of the broader Jungian search for cohesion and transcendent synthesis, both as a matter of individual psychodynamics and as a process of socio-historical transformation (Dohe 356). Jung's syntheses often depended on reductive or even mythic constructs, most famously his notion of the "Germanic," which fit squarely into the racial politics of 1930s fascism (Dohe 355). As Jung moved toward total integration and synthesis, the writer Jean Rhys pushed in the opposite direction, toward narrative fragmentation and disintegration, tapping the anarchist potential of the dreamscape for radical political expression.

The "Exhibition Dream" and the Politics of Resistance in Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*

It is not surprising that readers of Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* search for coherent and cohesive meaning(s), since the work is defined by ambiguity, fracturing, and abrupt shifting—both temporally and narratively. This quest for meaning rests primarily on the ways in which the text as a whole can be interpreted through an analysis of the novel's final scene. Two main lines of interpretation result from this process. The first reads the final scene as a culmination of narrator Sasha Jensen's decline or descent toward death—the fulfillment of a death spiral. By the concluding scene, this line of reasoning goes, Sasha no longer pushes back against death but comes to terms and accepts it as fate, even willing it in the final moments when she telepathically pulls a character named René (whom she thinks of as a gigolo) back to her bed, but then invites her deathly neighbor, the commis (traveling salesman), for sexual intercourse. The second line of interpretation moves in a related but opposite direction. Here, it is asserted that in this final scene Sasha overcomes the death spiral and is reborn through a combination of the exercise of her will and the joining of two deathly figures (Sasha and the commis) in sexual union.

The attempt to integrate the novel's final, bewildering scene with the entirety of the text to form coherent meaning depends, first and foremost, on a reading of what seems like the novel's single dream-text, Sasha's "Exhibition dream." While this approach has resulted in many impressive readings of the novel—some quite extraordinary—the tactic remains within the basic Freudian or modernist mode of appropriating, defining, and limiting the dream-text, thus further distancing it from its roots in the dreamscape. Whereas in Roth's *Goodbye, Columbus*, this strategy of integrating interpretation through the dream-text is obvious, in *Good Morning, Midnight*, the dream-text pushes back against its instrumentalization as an integrating force.

Instead of pushing toward integration, it retreats into the deeper fog of the dreamscape. This retreat casts doubt on all integrative solutions, no matter how skillfully constructed, allowing, I argue, for a broadening of the understanding of the notion of “dream-text” to encompass the novel in its entirety. The novel’s style, then, is that of a dream-text that seeks not reification and integration, but dissolution and disintegration. The novel as a whole, in other words, is retreating back into a pre-narrative state, the disorganized and ungraspable space beyond conscious reality—or into the dreamscape.

The case for the integrative force of Sasha’s “Exhibition dream” rests, primarily, on two pillars: the symbolic value of the exhibition—thought to be the Paris exhibition of 1937—and the appearance in the dream of a man wearing a white robe who claims to be Sasha’s father. Both of these symbols relate to what are considered the overarching or structuring themes of the novel: sexual power and patriarchy, economic distress and/or dislocation (which is bound to gender), the harshness of urban life (also gendered), and the radicalization of politics in 1930s Europe, especially concerning the status of minority peoples amid nationalist fervor.

Unlike Neil’s “Island dream,” which falls at the very center and turning point of *Goodbye, Columbus* and foreshadows the downward arc toward denouement, Sasha Jensen’s “Exhibition dream” comes in the first pages of the text. The dream-text is as follows:

I am in the passage of a tube station in London. Many people are in front of me; many people are behind me. Everywhere there are placards printed in red letters: This Way to the Exhibition, This Way to the Exhibition. But I don’t want the way to the exhibition—I want the way out. There are passages to the right and passages to the left, but no exit sign. Everywhere the fingers point and the placards read: This Way to the Exhibition.... I touch the shoulder of the man walking in front of me. I say, ‘I want the way out.’ But he points to the placards and his hand is made of steel. I walk along with my head bent, very ashamed, thinking: ‘Just like me—always wanting to be different from other people.’ The steel finger points along a long stone passage. This Way—This Way—This Way to the Exhibition....

Now a little man, bearded, with a snub nose, dressed in a long white night-shirt, is talking earnestly to me. ‘I am your father,’ he says. ‘Remember that I am your father.’ But blood is streaming from a wound in his forehead. ‘Murder,’ he shouts, ‘murder,

murder.’ Helplessly I watch the blood streaming. At last my voice tears itself loose from my chest. I too shout: ‘Murder, murder, help, help,’ and the sound fills the room. (13)

Scholars of Rhys’s work have focused quite a bit of attention on this dream-text as a key piece (perhaps *the* key piece) in their attempts to construct an integrative interpretation of the novel. While these interpretations are significant and compelling, they shy away from what is perhaps the dream-text’s most radical implication—its failure as an integrative device.

The motif of exhibition maintains a strong presence throughout *Good Morning, Midnight*, as many scholars have discussed. Cathleen Maslen links the exhibition motif with the notion of “commodity capitalism” (127). This connection occurs along two pathways. The first connection between exhibition and capitalism is through the object for sale—the consumer commodity. This connection, for Maslen, indicates a world that has been reduced to base economic relationships. Metaphysical notions like religion or even “humanist values” find no place in a commodity-driven consumer culture (Maslen, *Ferocious Things* 129). The second pathway that connects exhibition with capitalism has to do with the human relationships engendered by the exhibition or market context. An exhibition as a market event proposes the existence of an exhibited object and a consumer, even if this exhibited object happens to be another human being. The notion of the human as commodity, Sasha as exhibited object, informs Maslen’s reading of the novel. Sasha, for Maslen, resists and embraces the rules of commodity culture as both a consumer herself and an object of consumption or of a sadistic objectifying gaze. Maslen writes, “Thus, the preeminent ‘right of the corpse’—that is, the injunction that living women model themselves upon commodities—is identified in *Good Morning, Midnight* as an abiding premise of female livelihood and consumption in capitalist culture, rather than as an experience idiosyncratic to the protagonist” (133). The motif of “exhibition” thus points to a valueless commodification of life—the very ethos of capitalist culture. This concept allows Maslen to make an argument about the much-debated ending of the novel:

Yet because the commis is ambiguous, at once diabolical and piteously human-like, I would suggest that Sasha’s rather shocking submission to him must be interpreted more complexly than as signifying the “triumph of evil.” As René’s nondescript, negative daemon other, he would seem to represent (as far as it can be represented) the

melancholia of the commodity: that is, the “nothingness” that Sasha fears is the appalling secret that community fetishism and capitalist values conceal. However, if one considers that the commis’s “humanity”—not so much his “actual” humanity (which is in question) but rather his status as an archetype of human alienation, impoverishment and vulnerability, it is possible to discern a more polemical, socially conscious anti-capitalist thematic in Rhys’s text.... The spectacle of the emaciated commis in the corridor, ghost or real, might well remind Sasha that it is entirely possible to starve to death in full public view. The brutality of such a scenario, and its implications regarding the moral impoverishment of capitalist society, also echoes the shocking and tragic death of Sasha’s baby son, apparently from poverty and starvation. (146)

For Maslen, themes of market relationships, the commodification of human beings, and the power of the gaze can be traced to the initial dream-text. “In Sasha’s dream,” she writes, “there is no opposing the injunction to attend the Exhibition” (127). In other words, one cannot resist being included in the process of the commodification of life. Despite the seemingly objective nature of the capitalist social construct (“The indifferent crowd propels her [Sasha] helplessly toward it [the Exhibition]”), it “is clear,” for Maslen that “in the dream the idea of the Exhibition represents a violent, coercive ethos” (127). She continues:

Sasha’s dream, rather aptly, rescripts Nietzsche’s “market” as a staged commercial Exhibition, metonymically representing the world—indeed, the universe—as a “market,” populated only by commodities. Thus...Rhys’s exploration of a well-rehearsed modernist theme has an interesting specificity in that Sasha’s melancholic reflections discern a symbolic affirmation of “the death of God” in the modern commodity Exhibition. The defeat of humanist values (the murder of the Father) by the prerogatives and values of commodity capitalism is the point of departure for humanity’s nihilistic self-objectification and self-aestheticisation. At the same time, there can be no doubt that in a sense “the Father” lives on in modern capitalism, and in a hyperbolically paternalist form: that is, as an arbitrary, terrifying authority, completely invulnerable and stripped of all benevolence. (129)

Like Maslen, Mary Lou Emery sees the theme of exhibition as useful for proposing an integrative interpretation of the novel. The notion of exhibition in the dream-text, for Emery, foregrounds the social and political questions that the rest of the novel raises. She asserts that “the most important elements of this novel, which it shares with *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Voyage in the Dark*, are the inscription of social conflict within a dream-text and the protagonist’s continual efforts to revise, through her visions and through internalized voices, the meaning of a life imbued with that conflict” (148). The “social conflict” to which Emery is referring has to do with the rise of political extremism in Europe in the late 1930s. She claims:

The narrative of *Good Morning, Midnight* does not, in any explicit way, allude to these events. It concentrates instead on the intensely rendered perceptions of an isolated and marginalized woman who wages her own internal battles while inhabiting the violent and chaotic streets of Paris. But as her dream makes clear, these battles are not separate ones. The violence of the public world manipulates Sasha’s physical movements, directs her rituals, and threatens her psyche. (157)

Sasha’s dream-text, for Emery (as for Maslen), allows the reader to bridge and integrate the psychological and the social domains. This is especially true when it comes to the central figure that the dream-Sasha encounters in the dream-text, the wounded man who claims to be her father. The figure is described in the dream-text as a “little man, bearded, with a snub nose, dressed in a long white night-shirt.” The white night shirt is of particular importance, because it links the dream-figure to the commis. The commis appears throughout the novel as a threatening presence. At the end of the novel, he seems to enter Sasha’s room in place of René, whom Sasha has tried to lure back into her room after his attempt to rape her. Sasha decides to accept the commis and pulls the man down into her bed in what seems like a prelude to sexual intercourse. For Emery, the dream-text sets the stage for this climactic scene—indeed the final scene “realizes” the dream (170). The dream, like the final scene, “inscribes difference and disobedience, masculine wounds, accusations of murder that blur victim and perpetrator, feminine feelings of shame and guilt, and political oppositions of left and right to which there appear no alternatives” (Emery 147). The fascistic elements of the dream-text structure Emery’s interpretation of the final encounter between Sasha and the commis:

Like the order promised by fascism, [Sasha's] submission demands pain and sacrifice. It convinces Sasha of her own guilt...and makes her a willing victim of anonymous patriarchal forces in an act of literal self-sacrifice. If this final scene suggests birth, it is that of a machine with mascaraed eyes, an artificial woman like the shop dummies Sasha has cynically admired, and an automaton who dances to a debasing tune. Following the zombie logic of Rhys's other novels, *Good Morning*, *Midnight* portrays in its final scene death-in-life and the political-psychological powers that work such evil magic.

In the modern European society, the "self," unified and consolidated, gains the status of the sacred. The selves of Rhys's heroines, so tenuous and pluralized already, are sacrificeable. Though they stubbornly attempt to find, assert, and protect the voices of their multiplicitous selves, they are imbued with the violence of the society around them that, feeling itself threatened, requires victims. (171)

If the final scene represents the fulfillment of the dream-text, according to Emery, both final scene and dream-text gain their full meaning by being juxtaposed to the "carnavalesque" encounter between Sasha and the Jewish Russian artist Serge, an encounter that evokes in Sasha memories of her Caribbean childhood:

The happy ending that might have closed this novel takes place in its middle, with a glimpse of "somewhere else" in a vision of the sea and an opening door. Sasha cannot reenact the scene later because it depended upon a spontaneous community of marginalized individuals, acting in carnivalesque concert. The terrifying grey background of Sasha's vision, modern Europe on the verge of a war in which six million "marginal" individuals will be deliberately put to death, supercedes in the novel's ending the possibilities offered by its middle. The epiphany of the middle section, however, suggests the Third World modernist concept of the individual that Rhys later develops in *Wide Sargasso Sea*; in this novel of the late 1930s it becomes a means to explore the social and political limitations governing the formalism of European modernism. (171-172)

Without dismissing the cogent and imaginative interpretations of Maslen, Emery, and others, I would like to propose that the dream-text of the “Exhibition dream” resists more than it encourages interpretive integration. First, while critics generally agree that Sasha’s “self” is fractured, multiple, or fragile, they assume a direct correlation between the dominant narrative voice of the novel and the dream-I. This strikes me as a mistake, as the dream-I should be treated with as much skepticism as the other iterations of Sasha’s persona. Since the dream-I is at best a representation of the self, it would be better to see the unnamed “I” as a discreet character. Conclusions about this “I,” therefore, should not be immediately applied to Sasha. Second, critics emphasize certain details in the dream-text while ignoring others. The placards in the dream read, “This Way to the Exhibition,” but critics do not interpret why these are written specifically in “red letters”—seemingly a point of emphasis. The line, “There are passages to the right and passages to the left, but no exit sign,” is taken to mean that there is no exit or that any possible egress implies an absolute political choice (the right and left standing in for political orientation). It could very well be argued, as Emery does, that the logic of the central avenue of the 1937 Paris Exhibition, which pitted the Soviet pavilion directly opposite the Nazi pavilion, informs this dream and constructs a zero-sum choice which the dream-I refuses to make, leaving her with the only possibility of following the crowd. Yet, these passages or ways out of the central stone passage lead away from the crowd—away from the masses. The passages, rather than indicating known outcomes (fascism, communism, etc.), could point to all that is unknown, in other words to a regress into the disorganized, chaotic dreamscape. While heading straight forward is the conformist (fascist?) choice, the passages beckon the non-conformist. Notably, nobody takes any of these paths. While the dream-I is read as Sasha, it seems just as plausible that every member of the crowd is a Sasha duplicate, compounding dream-Sasha’s inability to triumph over herself with an act of will. Dream-Sasha claims to “want the way out” instead of the way to the exhibition. Critics assume that the “way out” is a self-evident statement. Rather, the “way out” seems entirely murky—the “way out” to where, exactly? Together with the unknown passageways, the “way out” points to spaces that exist beyond the landscape presented by the dream-text, indicating a rich zone of dream space beyond that which has been captured by the dream-text. Third, the man in the dream-text is not easily reconciled with the commis, despite the commonality of their dress (white night shirt). The dream-man is little, bearded and has a snub nose, while the commis has a “bird-like face.” What is more, the commis is not always

dressed in the white gown, but alternates between the “famous white one” and “a blue one with black spots” (14). The man in the dream-text claims to be Sasha’s father, a statement that strikes the dream-Sasha, and thus the reader, as dubious. The moment of doubt coincides with a startling shift in the dialogue, as the man begins to shout “murder,” causing dream-Sasha to also shout “murder” and thus to mix up or confuse who is the victim of the violence and who is the perpetrator, as many critics have observed. The interpretive possibilities here seem limitless—and I tend to think that this might be the point. The simultaneous screams of “murder” catch the reader in a reflexive trap, creating an interpretive vortex. If this moment of the simultaneous “murder” screams is not interpreted, not assigned a meaning, its noise hovers eerily over the dream as a kind of sonic fog. Indeed, the dream-Sasha seems to indicate as much when she says that “the sound fills the room.” It is unclear how the scene of the dream moves from stone passageway to room, but it appears as if the sound might have had a catalytic effect in this transition.

By pushing back against or resisting interpretation of the dream-text, the spatial and sensory richness of the dream opens up, gesturing back to the original dreamscape that has been translated and circumscribed. This becomes more evident at the borders—the entry and exit points—of the dream-text. Critics assume that the “Exhibition dream” is announced by the following line: “I take some more luminal, put the light out and sleep at once” (13). The veracity of this statement, however, should give one pause. First, it is impossible to determine oneself when one has fallen asleep and entered into dream, so Sasha’s clear line of demarcation must be doubted. On the previous page, Sasha is in bed and reports, “I can’t sleep. Rolling from side to side...” (12). The inclusion of the ellipsis here indicates some sort of temporal, mental, or spatial shift, the type of shift that we find typically in the flow of a dream-text. The shift, for example, from the tube station passage to the encounter with the bearded man in the white robe is occasioned by an ellipsis. After “rolling from side to side,” Sasha experiences a chaotic string of memories and impressions:

Was it in 1923 or 1924 that we lived round the corner, in the Rue Victor-Cousin, and Enno bought me that Cossack cap and the imitation astrakhan coat? It was then that I started calling myself Sasha. I thought it might change my luck if I changed my name. Did it bring me any luck, I wonder—calling myself Sasha?

Was it in 1926 or 1927?

I put the light on. The bottle of Evian on the bedtable, the tube of luminal, the two books, the clock ticking on the ledge, the red curtains....

I see Sidonie carefully looking round for an hotel just like this one. She imagines that it's my atmosphere. God, it's an insult when you come to think about it! More dark rooms, more red curtains....

But one mustn't put everything on the same plane. That's her great phrase. And one mustn't put everything on the same plane, either. Of course not. And this is my plane.... Quatrième à gauche, and mind you don't trip over the hole in the carpet. That's me.

There are some black specks on the wall. I stare at them, certain they are moving. Well, I ought to be able to ignore a few bugs by this time. 'Il ne faut pas mettre tout sur le meme plan....'

I get up and look closely. Only splashes of dirt. It's not the time of year for bugs, anyway. (12-13, ellipses in text)

The mnemonic intrusions, hallucinations, shift of languages, and temporal shifts create an ambiguous borderland between wakefulness and dream. The phrase "more dark rooms," for example, evokes the opening line of the novel when Sasha's hotel room speaks to her with personified voice. "'Quite like old times,' the room says. 'Yes? No?'" (9) The eerie, disembodied voice of the space sets the tone for the disjointed and multi-vocal narrative. Similar anxieties and motifs that appear in the dream-text pervade this first section, heightening its unreal or surreal quality. When describing the location of the hotel, Sasha narrates: "The street outside is narrow, cobble-stoned, going sharply uphill and ending in a flight of steps. What they call an impasse" (9). There are obvious parallels to the dream-text here—the stone, the unidirectional quality of the way, the notion of no way out or impasse, and the general anxiety that accompanies the scene.

Line breaks and ellipses contribute to the narrative disorientation that precedes what critics consider the formal dream-text. At the end of the novel's opening, Sasha reports, "I have been here five days. 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" (9). No sooner is this

relatively confident narration concluded than a line break decisively signals a profound shift in scene and mood. The story of what Sasha claims to be the previous night's events gestures toward nightmare. She is in a café or bar after dinner when a woman starts up a conversation with her. Shortly after, the woman's friend, an American, comes in and buys Sasha a brandy-and-soda. Sasha begins to cry, claiming that the outburst has been caused by "something I remembered" (10). In reaction, "the dark woman sat up very straight and threw her chest out" (10). The woman reproaches Sasha for her indiscretion. Sasha flees the scene and rushes to the bathroom or lavabo. Once there, the disjuncture builds:

I stayed there, staring at myself in the glass. What do I want to cry about? ... On the contrary, it's when I am quite like this, when I have had a couple of extra drinks and am quite sane, that I realize how lucky I am. Saved, rescued, fished-up, out of the deep, dark river, dry clothes, hair shampooed and set. Nobody would know I have ever been in it. Except, of course, that there always remains something. Yes, there always remains something.... Never mind, here I am, sane and dry, with my place to hide in. What more do I want?.... I'm a bit of an automaton, but sane, surely—dry, cold and sane. Now I have forgotten about dark streets, dark rivers, the pain, the struggle and the drowning.... Mind you, I'm not talking about the struggle when you are strong and a good swimmer and there are willing and eager friends on the bank waiting to pull you out at the first sign of distress. I mean the real thing. You jump in with no willing and eager friends around, and when you sink you sink to the accompaniment of loud laughter. (10)

The multiple "reflections" in this sequence act to shatter linearity and verisimilitude, and to amplify the sense of ambiguity. The ambiguity comes primarily from either inexact language or language that indicates its opposite or that loses meaning altogether. Sasha is "quite like this"—though the "this" has no discernible meaning, even when qualified by the information that she has had a couple drinks. She is "quite sane," another nonsensical formulation. She is "lucky," though of course the reader is aware that she has retreated, for no apparent reason, to the bathroom in tears. "Yes, there remains something," Sasha tells us, but it is impossible to determine the nature of this "something." There remains "something"—but what could this possibly be? The attempt to add clarity only enhances the ungraspable nature of the sensibility.

Sasha says she is “dry and sane,” though she is clearly not dry in the sense of sober and her face is full of tears, another form of wetness. How, then, precisely, is Sasha dry? The rhetorical question of what more she could want propels her deeper into a startlingly disintegrating state of mind: “I’m a bit of an automaton, but sane, surely—dry, cold and sane. Now I have forgotten about dark streets, dark rivers, the pain, the struggle and the drowning...” (10). The claim of having forgotten the very aspects/thoughts/images that are being articulated stokes the narrative tension and fosters the surreal quality of the moment. The internal inconsistencies resound: How does “an automaton” feel pain? The contrasts between dry/wet and sanity/suffering are irreconcilable. The “loud laughter” breaks the spiral of disintegration and allows Sasha to transition to a safer space:

Lavabos....What about a monograph on lavabos—toilets—ladies? A London lavabo in black and white marble, fifteen women in a queue, each clutching her penny, not a bold spirit daring to dash out of her turn past the stern-faced attendant. That’s what I call discipline.... The lavabo in Florence and the very pretty, fascinatingly-dressed girl who rushes in, hugged and kissed the old dame tenderly and fed her with cakes out of a paper bag. The dancer-daughter? ... That cosy little Paris lavabo, where the attendant peddled drugs—something to heal a wounded heart. (11)

This discourse on lavabos—or on a potential book on international toilets—works as a pathway into a new scene. Sasha goes back upstairs and finds the dark woman and the American man gone. The waiter seems not to recognize her. Sasha describes his face as “blank”—again enhancing the dream-like quality of this memory. The blankness of the face immediately fades into Sasha’s present moment, “I lie awake, thinking about it...” By now, this claim of being awake should be encountered with skepticism. As in the preceding scenes, with terms like “sane,” “dry,” and “lucky,” the description of being “awake” is just as likely to indicate being not awake. In any case, Sasha falls immediately into another memory sequence that is meant to provide the rationale for her being in Paris—for her being where she is. Sasha is in London and meets her friend Sidonie after returning from a walk. The walk itself seems as much dream-like as real: “I had just come in from my little health-stroll round Mecklenburgh Square and along the Gray’s Inn Road. I had looked at this, I had looked at that, I had looked at the people passing in

the street and at a shop-window full of artificial limbs” (11). When Sasha returns, Sidonie tells her that she needs a change and should go to Paris to buy some new clothes. Sidonie offers to find her a room and to give Sasha money for the hotel and shopping. “I had not seen this woman for months and then she swooped down on me.... Well, here I am. When you’ve been made very cold and very sane you’ve also been made very passive (Why worry, why worry?)” (12). This thought leads to yet another statement about sleep: “I can’t sleep. Rolling from side to side....” (12). The return to the issue of sleep/non-sleep adds to the ambiguity of Sasha’s state of being—in effect merging the zones or spaces of sleep and wakefulness, or at least creating a porous and indeterminable border between them. The intensity of this ambiguity then serves to heighten the images encountered in the scene immediately preceding the text of the “Exhibition dream.” Specific images and phrases in what could be called the moment of dream-incubation point to the existence of the dream/wakefulness borderland. They include “the tube of luminal,” “the clock ticking on the ledge,” “the red curtains,” “more dark rooms, more red curtains....”, “black specks on the wall,” and “only splashes of dirt” (12-13).

The movement from the dream-text into wakefulness—the dream exit—also presents a moment of profound ambiguity and reinforces the notion that a clear demarcation of a formal dream-text is not possible. In the dream-text, dream-Sasha shouts “Murder, murder, help, help” and reports that the “sound fills the room.” It is not possible to determine which room, precisely, this sound is filling. The dream-text has not mentioned a room up to this point. The strongest connection to the notion of “room” at this point in the novel is to the personified “room” of the opening line, the creepy voice of Sasha’s hotel room. If the scream of murder is filling this room, either the dream scene has shifted perilously close to Sasha, overtaking her reality, or Sasha’s screams themselves carry over into wakefulness. Either way, the sound of the screams forms a sonic connection to the next moment. Sasha says, “I wake up and a man in the street outside is singing a waltz from *Les Saltimbanques*” (13). The scream and the singing create a mixed soundscape for the movement from dream to wakefulness—though it is left unclear exactly how they relate temporally. Moreover, the assertion “I wake up” is as unreliable as the earlier parallel statements “I can’t sleep” and “I...sleep at once.” The words of the street musician’s song seem to cascade into Sasha’s consciousness, offering the ironic counterpoint to her sense of isolation, abandonment, and hopelessness—and a stark, though comical, juxtaposition to her shouts of murder: “‘C’est l’amour qui flotte dans l’air a la ronde,’ he sings” (13). The dream-like quality of

this performance denies conclusion to the dream-text and leaves unresolved the relationship between the dreamscape and the subsequent narrative. This irresolution disrupts the narrative coherence of the dream-text and problematizes the search for meaning as a cohesive whole. The breakdown of the dream-text's borders serves to rupture its integrative potential.

The breakdown of the borders of the dream-text and the opening up of ambiguous borderlands—both on the periphery of the dream-text and within the dream-text itself—disrupt attempts at integrating interpretations of the dream-text with broader interpretations of the novel as a whole. What is more, these borderlands gesture toward un-narrated spaces or chaotic (in the sense of un-formed) moments: the passageways to the right and left, the transition between tunnel and room, the comingling of the screams, the relationship between the scream and the street musician, etc. I want to suggest that this disintegration of the dream-text opens up the possibility to expand the definition of the dream-text in *Good Morning, Midnight* beyond the narrow confines of the “Exhibition dream” to include the entire novel. Like the “Exhibition dream,” however, the novel-as-dream-text should not be considered a hermetic unity. Rather, the novel, like the “Exhibition dream,” continuously pushes beyond its boundaries into ambiguous borderlands, like those between wakefulness and sleep, dream and reality, memory and delusion/illusion, past and present, chaos and creation. This deep ambiguity has radical implications, going beyond critiques of mass society, capitalism, and the gender politics of 1930s Western Europe.

Critics are in general agreement that *Good Morning, Midnight* is a response to the political authoritarianism sweeping Europe in the 1930s. In her book on Rhys, Elaine Savory writes: “The mid to late 1930s saw a crisis within European humanism as fascism triumphed in Spain and then in Germany. Fascism, with its emphasis on authoritarianism and conformity was the polar opposite of Rhys’s idiosyncratic anarchism” (128). In a footnote to this statement, Savory says: “I use the term anarchism here because it best describes Rhys’s individualistic resistance to centralized authority of all kinds” (276). Helen Carr, too, cites Rhys’s opposition to fascism as the main political thrust of *Good Morning, Midnight*. Rhys, Carr writes, “is describing the febrile nightmarish world of Europe on the eve of the Second World War, with its anti-Semitism, its racism, its class-machinery, its nationalistic posturing. Rhys’ writing demonstrates in fictional form Robert Young’s terrifying proposition that the Holocaust was not an aberration:

‘Fascism was simply colonialism brought home’” (53). Yanoula Athanassakis similarly sees Rhys’s novel as a response to European power dynamics in the 1930s:

Rhys’s female protagonists in general participate in a pointed refusal to comply with networks of power outside of their control. Their movement signals an implicit critique of unjust hegemonic structures (patriarchal and colonial) and foreshadows recent developments in postcolonial feminist studies. Sasha Jensen does not *reverse* the bildungsroman process, but Rhys forcibly deconstructs and questions hegemonic forms of selfhood. Sasha (much like the other three female protagonists in the series of four post-WWI novels) is in many ways reduced to a shadow of her former self and the very statelessness she feels potentially allows a new discourse on what it means to be a racialized and sexualized subject circa 1939 in England. (14-15)

While critics are in general agreement about the political orientation of *Good Morning, Midnight*, there is some divergence about the novel’s strategies of resistance—and about what, specifically, is being resisted most fervently, and how the resistance operates. For Emery, a main locus of resistance can be found in the style or formal aspects of the novel, what she calls the novel’s “paradox of style” and defines as the “power to effect new discoveries in the midst of crisis and the threat it presents of empty but controlling form...” (163). The paradox demonstrates itself in two formal components that “create a complex and contradictory style...” The first component, Emery argues, is that,

Rhys presents Sasha in varying degrees of split consciousness. Isolating and fracturing Sasha’s perceptions, this strategy begins with abrupt shifts from first-person narration to direct interior monologues and back again.... The narrative fracturing of time and voice portrays Sasha at her most desperate moments... These abrupt shifts from present to past portray her struggles to revive, through memory, an identity now violently disordered. (163-64)

The second component works in the reverse direction. According to Emery, “The second formal strategy, which perhaps builds on this fragmentation but also competes with it, is that of a poetic

logic that combines, condenses, and potentially transforms Sasha's fragmented perceptions into newly unified acts and symbols" (164). Emery's interpretive construct opens up a new way to approach the novel's ambiguous ending, one which escapes the dichotomy of Sasha as either submitting to death or embracing rebirth. For Emery, the core meaning of the ending lies in its "disturbing"—perhaps shocking—ambiguity (169). On Sasha's final coupling with the commis, Emery writes: "In this scene, we might view Sasha as 'acting' but no longer in the sense of bringing to her performance an interpretation. Rather, the passage bears the full ambiguity of an original *act*. Her act creates a metaphor for sexual oppression that gives formal order to her experience" (169). The notion of act as metaphor bridges the two formal strategies of fragmentation and consolidation. For Emery,

Metaphor, like ritual, contains a liminal phase, that point in between the meaning of an old identity and the creation of a new one, the moment of emptiness that transformation requires. Hence the title of the novel greets the midnight hour, between morning and night and between systems of explanation. Sasha's actions in this scene create a ritual moment of suspension that parallels the formal liminal moment of metaphor: is it enough to suggest renewal or is it, like René's technique, "possibly quite meaningless"? This is a question posed to the modernism that it participates in and contributes to yet, through the perceptions of a marginalized woman, also writes against. (170)

In Emery's account, the political force of *Good Morning, Midnight* coalesces in the social, psychological and political ambiguity of the marginalized. In 1930s Europe, the marginalized, nationless, jobless outsider—an impossible position—represents the antithesis to state power and social domination. Athanassakis articulates a similar point with regard to the concept of "silence" in the novel:

While seemingly quiet, Sasha Jensen is full of anxiety-inducing thoughts about belonging, language, foreignness, and sexuality. The broader sense of unease that haunts *Good Morning, Midnight* dismantles the possibility of passive absorption into the narrative of Sasha's life. Certainly linguistic anxiety in part justifies the frequent "silence" of Sasha; but that silence is also a mechanism that Rhys employs to critique the

unfeasibility of autonomy in a moment of colonial decay and systemic gendered and racial oppression. (15)

Maren Linett, writing in a qualified way against the notion of the liberating or resistance potential of fragmentation, posits that the novel's fragmentation should be understood as the consequences and reenactments of traumatic experience:

More importantly, reading Rhys as an artist who worked to represent the mental phenomena that accompany traumatic dissociation illuminates important interrelations among time, trauma, and narrative fragmentation. It reminds us that while modernist fragmentation may sometimes depict the chaotic but decipherable flow of consciousness, it may also, at other times, both conceal and reveal the rigid and not wholly accessible fragments of traumatized psyches. In the case of a woman traumatized by patriarchal violence, it seems that instead of aligning fragmentation with feminist subversion, we might revisit our bias, as Lynn Layton puts it, against “any wish for an integration of fragments” (109). While the desire for wholeness and the belief in integration are in many cases wise targets for feminist attack, the terms and values shift when we encounter fragmentation that arises from trauma. (459)

For Linnet, the power of the novel is that it illustrates the seeming inescapability of the traumatized repetition within the social context of pre-WWII Europe with its crushing patriarchal violence and rigid class dynamics.

Even if the above interpretations of *Good Morning, Midnight* are valid—and I think they are—the question remains: what are, precisely, the foundational aspects of Rhys's anarchism or her resistance to power? Savory's idea of “Rhys's idiosyncratic anarchism” as an “individualistic” anarchism points in a potential direction, though as demonstrated by Emery, Athanassakis and others, the “individual” of this individualistic anarchism is a complex, fractured, fragmented, and fundamentally ungraspable entity. Furthermore, for Linnet, the individual can even be a site of powerlessness, unable to escape traumatized subjectivity. I would like to propose a different type of “idiosyncratic anarchism” at work in *Good Morning, Midnight*, one evoked by the disintegrating quality of the novel-as-dream-text. Though the entire novel can

be read as a disintegrating dream-text, that is as a dream-text collapsing back into a primordial dreamscape, the following analysis focuses on two key sections of the book that contain the most radical examples of narrative disintegration: Sasha's "birth scene" and the concluding scene of Sasha's violent confrontation with René and her encounter with the commis.

***Good Morning, Midnight* as Disintegrating Dream-Text**

Before turning to the two specific parts of the novel, it is important to establish a relationship between the form of the novel and the genre of the dream-text. The dream-text as a model for certain strains of literary modernism can be seen in works ranging from Strindberg's *A Dream Play* (1902) to Schnitzler's *Dream Story* (1926) to Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939). While the form of the dream-text is often announced or framed, by the 1930s it had become pervasive enough to be presented without this formal setting-off. This accounts for the difference, for example, between the use of dream-text in Schnitzler's "Dream Story" and that in *Finnegans Wake* but does not mean that the setting-off of dream-text as a text-within-the-text disappears, as seen in Roth's *Goodbye, Columbus* and in the presentation of the "Exhibition dream" in *Good Morning, Midnight*. As I hope to have demonstrated above, however, Rhys explores the relationship between the discrete dream-text in the Freudian sense of a separate object for investigative interrogation and the text as a whole, merging or blending textual layers so as to question or even obliterate their independence; ultimately, they are not only related but indistinguishable. Rhys's borderless dream-text of the "Exhibition dream" allows the central formal principles of dream-texts to seep out into the novel. In this sense, it is relevant that the "Exhibition dream" comes at the beginning of the novel and not in the middle (as in Freud, Roth, etc.), where narrative conventions typically dictate a curving of the narrative arc toward climax and resolution.

On a purely formal level, *Good Morning, Midnight* displays key features of the dream-text. Like Freud, Rhys makes frequent use of ellipses—the central typographic indicator of dream writing. In the novel's first three pages, for example, there are over 10 ellipses. These ellipses do not have a recognizable and/or consistent function. They are meant as visual ruptures in the story's flow, indicative of the disjointed and dissociated nature of dreaming. Beyond the use of ellipses, the dream-text style shows itself throughout the novel in a number of other key ways, which include temporal ruptures, the blending of memory and contemporaneity, the

eruption of strange/out-of-context imagery, illogical or surreal associations or descriptions, linguistic confusion or loss of speech/voice, sudden spikes of anxiety or emotion, and a lack of conclusion or internal coherence of scenes. These elements can be seen by taking a close look at the section of the novel that includes Sasha's "birth scene" and ends with the shocking death of Sasha's baby (57-61).

The scene opens in the present tense, that is, with the purportedly current temporal setting of the novel, though coming after a section break the precise temporal positioning is impossible to determine: "I get up into the room. I bolt the door. I lie down on the bed with my face in the pillow. Now I can rest before I go out again. What do I care about anything when I can lie on the bed and pull the past over me like a blanket? Back, back, back...." (57). This seems to indicate the beginning of a memory. And yet, it is also seemingly a prelude to sleep and the coming of a dream. The reader cannot be sure, for the first ellipsis is immediately followed by a second: "...I had just come up the stairs and I had to go down them again." The shift into the past tense indicates flashback, though whether this is memory or dream remains obscure, asserting the essential borderlessness between the concepts. Nonetheless, the subsequent stream-of-consciousness makes clear that Sasha is presenting the story around the birth and death of her son. This story begins, as the novel begins, with the focus on the room. A disembodied voice speaks to Sasha: "No, no, your room's not ready. You must come back, come back. Come back between five and six" (57). When Sasha learns that it will be over six hours until her room is ready, the voice tries to calm her, "'Courage, courage, ma petite dame,' she says, 'Everything will go well'" (57). It is interesting to note here the move back into the present tense. In any case, after this interaction with the disembodied voice, the narrative speeds up dramatically and, as in the prelude to the memory, finds Sasha in bed on the border between sleep and wakefulness:

I go down the stairs again, clutching the banisters, step by step.

I stop a taxi. The man looks at me and hesitates. Perhaps he is afraid I may have the baby in his nice new taxi. What a thing to happen!

No danger at all, I want to say. Hours and hours and hours yet, she says.

I get back to the hotel and climb upstairs to my room. This is a hard thing to do. Has anybody ever had to do this before? Of course, lots of people – poor people. Oh, I

see, of course, poor people....Still, it is a hard thing to do, walking around when you're like this. And half-past five is a long time off – centuries of time.

When I climb the stairs again I am not seeing so well.

“Courage, my little lady. Your room is ready now.”

A room, a bed where I can lie down. Now the worst is surely over. But the long night, the interminable night.... (57-58)

Again, as with the “back, back, back....”, the “interminable night....” presents an opening into the dreamscape, or in this case into another tier or realm of an already unfolding dreamscape, a dreamscape within a dreamscape, indicating that dream/memory contains a vortex-like force. The “interminable night....” shifts the scene as someone repeats the use of the word “courage,” though it is unclear if it is the same person. As the scene unfolds, the ambiguity grows:

“Courage, courage,” she says. “All will be well. All is going beautifully.”

This is a funny house. There are people having babies all over the place. Anyhow, at least two are having babies.

“Jesus, Jesus,” says one woman. “Mother, Mother,” says another.

I do not speak. How long is it before I speak?

“Chloroform, chloroform,” I say when I speak. Of course I would. What nonsense! There is no doctor to give chloroform here. This is a place for poor people. Besides, she doesn't approve of chloroform. No Jesus, no Mother, and no chloroform either....

What then?

This.

Always?

Yes, always.

She comes and wipes my forehead. She speaks to me in a language that is no language. But I understand it.

Back, back, back.... This has happened many times.

What are you? I am an instrument, something to be made us of....

She darts from one room to another, encouraging, soothing, reproaching. “Now, you’re not trying. Courage, courage.” Speaking her old, old language of words that are not words.

A rum life, which you come to think of it. I’d hate to live it. However, to her it’s just life.... (58-59)

Fragmentary thought, distant voices, unrecognizable language, repetitions, vague or even spectral figures, longings, and anxieties pervade this memory/dreamscape of Sasha’s delivery of her child. The final ellipsis trails off, presumably, into the moment of birth—seemingly an unrecoverable experience that cannot be represented directly in dream/memory form. This circumambulation and thus absence of the core moment draws attention to the narrative’s incompleteness. The incompleteness is radical, because it serves to call into question or deny the narrative coherence of the scene. The birth narrative, emphasized by Sasha’s evocation of the Jesus/Mary relationship, dissolves into various types of ambiguity.

The post-delivery narrative is structured around an anxiety loop with Sasha lamenting her inability to sleep caused by rising anxiety about the fate or future of her child. The section emphasizes the blurred boundary between dream and wakefulness. Sasha begins, once again moving from the present tense to the past after a line break, “Afterwards I couldn’t sleep. I would sleep for an hour or two, and then wake up and think about money, money, money for my son; money, money....” (59) The word “money” acts in a similar way to the image of the apple in Frost’s “After Apple-Picking.” It is an endless and repeating intrusion into the narrator’s consciousness, interrupting her train of thought, pushing against other images, and undermining narrative development. Money and sleep or “can’t sleep” form the two axial points for a revolving circle of anxiety:

Do I love him? Poor little devil, I don’t know if I love him.

But the thought that they will crush him because we have no money – that is torture.

Money, money for my son, my beautiful son....

I can’t sleep. My breasts dry up, my mouth is dry. I can’t sleep. Money, money.... (59)

The memory/dreamscape fluctuates between moments in which it gestures toward narrative and others when narrative flow is ruptured by static concepts (money, sleep). At these points, the trajectory halts and the narrative undergoes disintegration into phrases, words, punctuation—or even into nothingness, blankness in the form of ellipses and gaps between the paragraphs. One such narrative gap covers the seemingly un-representable moment of birth. The next spatial gap in the text comes after the repetition of “money” quoted above. Following this gap, the unnamed character exclaims:

“Why!” she says. “Can’t you sleep? This will never do.”

She probably knows why I can’t sleep. I bet some of the others here can’t either. Worrying about the same thing. (This is not *a* child; this is *my* child. Money, money....)

“Well, why can’t you sleep?” she says. “Does he cry, this young man?”

“No, he hardly cries at all. Is it a bad sign, that he doesn’t cry?”

“Why no, not at all. A beautiful, beautiful baby.... But why can’t you sleep?” (59)

The unnamed woman starts to materialize out of the shadows, gaps, or blankness of the scene as Sasha describes her eyes: “She has slanting eyes, very clear. I like people with slanting eyes. I can still give myself up to people I like. (Tell me what to do. Have you a solution? Tell me what to do.)” (59). The woman comforts Sasha, though with a confidence and calmness that betray a dubious, nightmarish quality:

She pats me on the shoulder and says: “You’re worrying about nothing at all. Everything will come right for you. I’ll send you in a tisane of orange-flower water, and tonight you must sleep, sleep....”

I can’t feed this unfortunate baby. He is taken out and given Nestlé’s milk. So, I can sleep.... (59-60)

Though the woman has come into the foreground a bit more and now possesses at least a single material characteristic (slanted eyes), she remains mostly invisible and, more importantly, has taken on sinister attributes. She tries to assuage Sasha’s well-founded anxiety about her baby, foreshadowing her role not only as midwife, but also as handmaiden of death. She administers to

Sasha a seemingly helpful potion, which could very well have narcotic effects; it seems likely that the infusion is spiked with a sleep-inducing agent. Then she takes Sasha's baby away from her.

The sinister quality of the midwife increases after another line-break when Sasha describes her process of dressing the physical manifestations of pregnancy and birth with the goal of "fixing" Sasha so she appears never to have carried or delivered a child—both a real and a symbolic erasure. The process is successful: "When she takes [the bandages] off there is not one line, not one wrinkle, not one crease" (61). This is a radically dissociative moment when Sasha's body is manipulated to conceal its past and its scars. Another line break precedes the concluding moment of the scene. Sasha reports:

And five weeks afterward there I am, with not one line, not one wrinkle, not one crease.

And there he is, lying with a ticket tied round his wrist because he died in a hospital. And there I am looking down on him, without one line, without one wrinkle, without one crease.... (61)

The report of the death of Sasha's baby ends with an ellipsis and then a section break, shifting the narrative to Sasha's visit to the hairdresser. While the elliptical and fragmented structure of the birth memory/dream section emphasize incompleteness and open-endedness, the use of section breaks as bookends sets it apart as a discrete sub-entity. The section creates a confused and blurred reality. All physical or bodily impact from the action in the section vanishes in the transition from hospital morgue to hair salon. The slanted-eyed woman has disappeared, still nameless. Sasha's body has regained its pre-birth appearance as if the birth never happened. Scars, wrinkles, creases in flesh have disappeared. The child has died, his body gone. Like a dreamscape, the section leaves only mental, psychological, or emotional traces as the scene emerges into the "reality" of the hair salon, though it is more accurate to say that the narrative jumps from one dream-text to the next without any attempt to harmonize or justify the transition.

If the purported goal of the modernist dream-text is to lay a foundation for interpretation, I see the function of Rhys's birth memory/dream-text moving in the opposite direction and pointing to radical possibilities in line with post-anarchist conceptions of politics. First, this section, like the novel as a whole, is defined by rupture. The first transition from the seeming

present to the memory/dream sets the stage for the scene with its two consecutive ellipses separated by a line break. These gaps in the text point to the ambiguous and unknowable relationship between dream/memory and wakefulness/reality. At the same time, the movement from one state to another lacks framing, which points to the fluidity of states of mind (and bodies). Reality, memory, dream, and perhaps even delusion/illusion exist on the same plane, fundamentally undermining hierarchical notions of being. The ruptures also serve to create a temporal mishmash in which past and present become indistinguishable, as if memory and reality, dream and wakefulness, exist in a one-dimensional, flat (perhaps cubist) structure. This flattening of the temporal dimension disrupts the linearity of narrative storytelling, which adds resistance to interpretations. Second, as called for in post-anarchist theory the characters in the birth scene resist fixed identities. They are spectral figures that depend, at times quite literally, on the existence of the other for any sort of definition or recognition. This is the case between the Sasha and the slanted-eyed midwife, who spoke an “old language of words that are not words” but is nevertheless understood. A positive view of this relationship is emphasized by Deborah Kelly Kloepfer, who states: “Rhys makes explicit connection between maternity and a kind of language that is not language, not the symbolic but the rhythm, intonation, gesture, the sound of words detached from signification, words not words, old, old, back, back, thrusting into some primordial space, but it is this ‘language,’ as opposed to any other, that Sasha, as the material body, finally, ‘understands’” (81-82). Kloepfer’s insightful analysis gestures to the regressive quality of the dream-text that I emphasized in my discussion of the Garden of Eden narrative: the tendency of the dream-text to experience slippage back into the less defined dreamscape, itself bordering on pre-creation chaos. On the other hand, Kloepfer considers the relationship between the midwife and Sasha to be harmonious, whereas it contains at least an equal share of sinister darkness and quite a bit of tension. It is this dual nature of the relationship—harmony and tension—that keeps it suspended in a zone of un-interpretability. In general, the encounter between these spectral characters intensifies the chaotic movement of the scene as it lurches from rupture to rupture. The baby is the most enigmatic. He is silent and won’t eat, then vanishes and reappears as a corpse. His basic inscrutability in both life and death echoes throughout the scene (and the rest of the novel) like a pulse of nausea, which can never be overcome. The silent baby becomes the paragon of the dis-integrated identity. He has no discernible selfhood and yet is clearly a subject. As such, he becomes a site of a multitude of intersecting projections, including

the dominant one, the discourse on poverty, while still maintaining his position outside of the other characters' discursive constructs.

Rather than an anarchism as “individualistic resistance to centralized authority of all kinds,” as Savory puts it, I want to suggest that *Good Morning, Midnight* expresses an even more radical form of anarchism in a post-anarchist mode. Individuals break into fragments of selfhood, speech falls into the vortex of silence, physical surroundings vanish and partially reemerge into amorphous and unstable places, and the temporal logic of narrative is obliterated. The borders or boundaries between people, spaces and events are porous or even, at times, non-existent. The entirety of the text is defined by an intense and multi-layered ambiguity that opens up radical doubt without providing interpretive foundations. As such, *Good Morning, Midnight* does not assert a counter-structure to the dominant political forces coursing through the novel (nationalism, patriarchy, capitalism, racism, anti-Semitism, fascism). Instead, it undermines the possibility for the building of structures through identities, spaces, and narratives that wield power and form hierarchy, and, thus, the conditions of domination.

The final scene of *Good Morning, Midnight* can be read in light of these post-anarchist concepts in a way that escapes the dualism of the ending's meaning as either passive capitulation/self-sacrifice/death or rebirth through a reversal of roles. The scene (keeping in mind the ambiguity of all scenes in the book) comes at the end of an evening that Sasha spends with René. The basic sequence of action is as follows: Sasha and René have taken a taxi back to Sasha's hotel. Once there, they part ways and Sasha heads upstairs to her room. In the darkness of the hallway as Sasha is trying to unlock and enter her room, René emerges and the two embrace. Sasha ushers him into the room and fixes drinks for both of them. The conversation quickly turns combative. Sasha tells René to go. He refuses, forcing his way onto her in order to rape her. Defending against the aggression, Sasha tells René that he should rather just take her money, at which point René stops the rape attempt and seems to rob her. He leaves. Sasha eventually inspects the envelope with her money and sees that René has not taken anything. She falls into a series of delusions or imaginings, at the end of which she begins to try to mentally pull René back to her. Her mind seizes on him, pulling him back to the hotel and up into the room. In the meantime, Sasha has undressed and unlocked and opened her door. She gets back into bed. The person she thinks is René returning comes in and shuts the door. Sasha glances up at him and sees that the figure in her room is wearing a white dressing gown, seemingly marking

him as the commis. Sasha pulls the figure down into bed, seemingly in prelude to sexual intercourse. Sasha's final words, which end the novel, are "Yes – yes – yes...." (190).

This final scene unfolds in a similar manner to the birth scene discussed above and contains all the elements of what I call the form of the disintegrating dream-text. The final scene lacks definitive boundaries; its characters are spectral and interdependent; the flow is marked by temporal ruptures and gaps; it contains fantastical illusions/delusions; and its mood shifts swiftly from comedic to menacing. In this context, the residual elements (white robe, luminal, painting of the banjo player, etc.), which could provide the basis for an integrative interpretation, remain encased by a thick ambiguity that prevents their conjoining into a coherent interpretive structure. The result is a shocking openness of meaning—maybe even a total lack of meaning—which then poses as the sharpest possible challenge to the dominant ideological structures of the age (capitalism, patriarchy, communism, fascism).

As with the birth scene, the final scene opens with a shift in time and place. The reader is transported into a seemingly fictional realm within the novel, though this realm contains enough particles of memory that the resultant text remains highly disorienting. There is no way to distinguish between the setting and mood of this text, for example, and that of the "Exhibition dream":

I am in a little whitewashed room. The sun is hot outside. A man is standing with his back to me, whistling that tune and cleaning his shoes. I am wearing a black dress, very short, and heel-less slippers. My legs are bare. I am watching the expression on the man's face when he turns around. Now he ill-treats me, now he betrays me. He often brings home other women and I have to wait on them, and I don't like that. But as long as he is alive and near me I am not unhappy. If he were to die I should kill myself. (176)

This unsettling paragraph, full of co-dependency, masochism, claustrophobia, abuse, etc. dissolves into Sasha's thought about her "film mind: My film mind... ('For God's sake watch out for your film-mind...')" (176). Though the scene has vanished, the mood and tensions arising in the scene remain like a fog above the subsequent action in the text, calling into question whether the rest of the final scene, too, takes place in the "film mind." Significantly, throughout the scene, cinematic elements resound.

The sound of René's whistling connects the scene before the "film-mind" interlude with the scene that follows it. Otherwise, the connections are tenuous and could be doubted. The mere belief that the male character is definitely René should be questioned, as he is unnamed for the remainder of the text. As Sasha ascends the stairs in the hotel, the lights go out and she finds herself surrounded by darkness. "Just as I have got to my door there is a click and everything is in darkness. Impossible to get the key in" (177). The darkness casts the reader back a few pages when Sasha explicitly images "blackness" and "darkness" as gaps and ruptures. In an interlude some pages earlier, she reflects: "You are walking along a road peacefully. You trip. You fall into blackness. That's the past – or perhaps the future. And you know that there is no past, no future, there is only this blackness, changing faintly, slowly, but always the same" (172). A page later, as she reenters the stream of the narration, Sasha writes: "I heave myself out of the darkness slowly, painfully. And there I am, and there he is, the poor gigolo" (173). Amidst her dialogue with René a page later, Sasha interrupts the conversation to present the reader with "I want to get out of this dream" (174). The construction of the night with René as a "dream" makes her report of it a kind of "dream-text." And yet, as seen from the multitude of breaks, gaps, ellipses, fissures, etc. the dream-text is constantly slipping into other temporal or physical spaces—or, more radically, into a kind of temporal and physical emptiness, what Sasha calls a blackness or darkness, and what could also be described as a pre-narrative state of chaos, a dissolution of all modes of order.

By stepping out of the darkness on the hotel landing outside of Sasha's room, René (or the figure who is seemingly René) reactivates the "dream-text" narrative. The moment of their kiss, immediately following the re-crystallization of the scene, however, begins to dissolve narrative coherence. The embrace brings Sasha's attention to the instability of her selfhood. "We kiss each other fervently," she writes, "but already something has gone wrong. I am uneasy, half of myself somewhere else" (177). René seems to reflect Sasha's anxiety over this splitting of self when he accuses her of acting, of playing a role. In this sense, the independent existences of René and Sasha are called into question. As the scene of the rape intensifies, so too does Sasha's dissolution as a whole, unified selfhood. Her voice becomes disembodied, "I lie there, thinking, 'Yes, I understand'. Thinking 'For the last time'. Thinking nothing. Listening to a high, clear, cold voice. My voice" (183). Immediately after trying to persuade René to rob her instead of raping and robbing her, she says to herself, "Don't listen, that's not me speaking. Don't listen.

Nothing to do with me – I swear it....” (183). After René departs Sasha splits into two discrete voices:

When he is gone I turn over on my side and huddle up, making myself as small as possible, my knees almost touching my chin. I cry in the way that hurts right down, that hurts your heart and your stomach. Who is this crying? The same one who laughed on the landing, kissed him and was happy. This is me, this is myself, who is crying. The other – how do I know who the other is? She isn’t me. (184)

The voice of this “other” begins to assert itself. The voice is hostile to Sasha and follows René in describing Sasha’s actions—indeed her entire stay in Paris—as theater, as a final performance. The inner, though foreign, voice gives way to Sasha’s addressing of the banjo player in the painting she purchased from the Russian Jewish painter Serge: “I know the words to the tune you’re playing. I know the words to every tune you’ve ever played on your bloody banjo. Well, I mustn’t sing any more – there you are. Finie la chanson. The song is ended. Finished” (185).

A break in the text ushers in a bewildering mix of voices and illusions. Elements of the narrative force themselves into the scene, not as symbolic elements but rather as part of a chaotic stew:

A hum of voices talking, but all you hear is “Femmes, femmes, femmes, femmes....” And the noise of a train saying: “Paris, Paris, Paris, Paris....” Madame Vénus is angry and Phoebus Apollo is walking away from me down the boulevard to hide himself in la crasse. Only address: Mons P. Apollo, La Crasse.... But I know quite well that all this is hallucination, imagination. Venus is dead; Apollo is dead; even Jesus is dead. (187)

In other words, no valid paradigm of analysis remains for Sasha or the reader. As if to emphasize the breakdown of a type of coherence achieved through the application of an interpretive perspective or system of understanding, Sasha offers the following image:

All that is left in the world is an enormous machine, made of white steel. It has innumerable flexible arms, made of steel. Long, thin arms. At the end of each arm is an

eye, the eyelashes stiff with mascara. When I look more closely I see that only some of the arms have these eyes – others have lights. The arms that carry the lights are all extraordinarily flexible and very beautiful. But the grey sky, which is the background, terrifies me.... And the arms wave to an accompaniment of music and song. Like this: “Hotcha – hotcha – hotcha....” And I know the music; I can sing the song.... (187)

The image is followed by another gap in the text, during which the “other” voice inside of Sasha vanishes. Then, yet another voice rings out inside of Sasha, speaking to her in the second person—another fracturing: “Put your coat on and go after him. It isn’t too late, it isn’t too late. For the last time, for the last time....” (187). It is unclear what this voice means by it not being “too late” or it being the “last time.” Sasha then begins her process of catching him with her thoughts and reeling him back to her:

Come back, come back, come back....

This is the effort, the enormous effort, under which the human brain cracks. But not before the thing is done, not before the mountain moves.

Come back, come back, come back....

He hesitates. He stops. I have him. (188)

Sasha addresses the now silent man, ordering him to return to her. In the meantime, she readies herself for his reentry, unlocking the door, stripping naked, and getting into bed. Again, however, there is a dissociative element introduced. “I get into bed. I lie there trembling, I am very tired./Not me, no. Don’t worry, it’s my sale cerveau that’s so tired. Don’t worry about that – no more sale cerveau” (189). Moments later, Sasha says, “Now I am simple and not afraid; now I am myself” (189). This could be seen as the culminating articulation of identity in the novel. The assertion of being oneself can, however, only be read with utter skepticism. It comes after multiple scenes of fracturing, rupture, and splitting, as well as amid a hallucinatory fantasy/nightmare. When this phantasm of René enters the room and shuts the door, Sasha refuses at first to look at him. “I lie still, with my arm over my eyes. As still as if I were dead....” (190). The ellipsis is followed by a line break, installing a rupture before the final scene in which René seemingly transforms into the commis. It is wrong, I think, to assume that the figure

entering the room before the break is the commis. It is (or could very well be) the figure of René. Somewhere in the chaos of the dreamscape, however, the transmutation takes place. The fact that the transmutation occurs without visual verification—“I don’t need to look. I know”—supports the reading of this final scene as dream-text. The erotic sadomasochistic fantasy of seduction or domination by the rapist slips into another type of narrative in which Sasha gives herself to or takes the commis. Yet both narrative strains remain incomplete, separate, and shrouded in multiple layers of ambiguity. Any possible conclusion about the scene’s meaning is excluded.

The radical doubt that results from Rhys’s disintegrating dream-text precludes the application of first or foundational principles. The Cartesian answer to doubt—the assertion of self (I think therefore I am)—is obliterated by the seemingly endless splitting and fracturing. Descartes’s fear of the inability to distinguish between dream and reality takes on new life as Rhys’s multi-layered and multi-perspectival text presents all impulses on the same plane. Everything—whether dream, reality, delusion, memory, imagination, hallucination—becomes part of the same text with no way to create a hierarchy of truthfulness among them. The Freudian answer to doubt is the application of psychoanalytic method—but this requires precisely the distinguishing between dream and reality through a clearly delineated dream-text, the likes of which Jung also employs. Rhys’s refusal to contain the dream-text and her expansion of the dream-text throughout the narrative resist this analytic method. Rhys’s attack on fixed conceptions of identity, the autonomy of selfhood, the separateness of characters, narrative coherence and logic, temporal and spatial order, the division between dream/nightmare and reality (or even between one dream and another) leaves radical doubt intact. This radical doubt stands opposed to coherence, definitions, systems, and structures of any kind—and while this, too, could be described as a “meaning,” it is so in the sense of an openness to the multiplicity of meaning. Only such a radical refusal of foundations could stand against the seemingly totalistic systems of the day, whether fascism, communism, or capitalism. By opening up meaning to multiplicity, refusing coherence and the stability of definitions, and by undermining the clarity of language and communication, *Good Morning, Midnight* poses a challenge to psychoanalysis, racism, anti-Semitism, and first and foremost to the patriarchal formations which are contained in all of these hierarchical systems or structures of oppression. This expression of antithesis is not a positive vision, nor does it represent a new mode of existence. It is darkness, chaos, marginality, shadow—a slippage back into the dreamscape. Rhys’s “serpent,” the representative

in the novel of the state of the primal “deep,” the state of pre-creation, is the ellipsis (...) or (...)—the unknowable of the dreamscape is here.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that in post-Freudian modernism dream-texts tend to function as tools of narrative and thematic integration. Narrative and thematic constructs built around the dream-texts work to delineate and circumscribe meaning. Following Freud, these dream-texts are clearly set off from non-dream-texts and invite interpretation of their content from the vantage point of the main text’s dominant system or structure. In the case of Freud, as I discuss in the previous chapter, this system is built on his general principles of pseudo-dynamics. This chapter has presented two examples of the integrative function of dream-texts, one primarily narrative and thematic (Roth) and one primarily structural or systemic (Jung). My discussion of the “Island dream” in *Goodbye, Columbus* proposes that the integrative work of the dream-text is built on a host of identity constructs and social/racial hierarchies. While the novella can be read in diverse ways, these various “meanings” orbit around a deeper core meaning forged by these constructs and hierarchies. Like the example of Blake’s *Job*, Roth’s novella, centered on the dream-text, harnesses these identity constructs and hierarchies in the service of plot and character development, thus embedding what I would call authoritarian thinking into the fabric of the narrative.

The example of Jung’s “Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy” picks up the argument about the use of dream analysis as psychological or philosophical systems-building. Like Freud, Jung aspires to a total understanding of the psyche and views dreaming as the key pathway for unveiling otherwise hidden aspects of the individual. The notion of “wholeness” is important for Jung in two senses. First, he understands the individual as a “whole”—one that must somehow reconcile the internal psyche or persona with what he describes as the “collective unconscious.” Second, he views the collective cultural legacy of the world as a whole or system, connected by an elaborate grid of concepts that are embedded in a symbolic code. The role of the Jungian analyst becomes the mastery of this code and its application to the specific information provided by the patient, thereby joining the individual case with the collective in its unique way. In “Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy,” the dream-texts provide both the raw material for this process of merging persona

with collective conscious, thus defining the psychological dynamics of the individual, and the narrative structure for the achievement of “wholeness.” I argue in this chapter that Jung’s process of dream analysis is a radicalization of the authoritarian impulses of Freudian dream interpretation. For all intents and purposes, the Jungian mode erases the patient from the case study. The dream-texts are edited and arranged to serve the case’s narrative and philosophical agenda. The incorporation of a vast array of knowledge about world cultures places the analyst far above the patient in terms of expertise. The analyst assigns meaning to each component in the system.

Rhys’s *Good Morning, Midnight* cuts against the narrative, thematic, and systematic push toward integration and wholeness. The novel tears the dream-text out of its confined and separated/specified place in the narrative, and infuses its elements into the entirety of the work, thereby dissolving both the integrity of the dream-text and opening up the whole text to dream-logic (or illogic). This infusion of the dream-text into the novel is made manifest most obviously by the work’s frequent use of ellipses, line breaks, and temporal and spatial ruptures. I argue that by expanding or exploding the dream-text into the novel as a whole, Rhys creates a text of radical doubt and ambiguity, a text that refuses or slips away from all possible meanings or interpretations. Though various interpretations can be proposed, the novel remains, I argue, beyond interpretation. This “beyond,” I contend, gestures to beyond the dream-text, to the field of the primordial, pre-textual dreamscape. My argument that *Good Morning, Midnight* can be productively seen as a collapsing or disintegrating dream-text offers an alternative framework for reading the novel, one that builds on (and incorporates) key insights by critics like Maslen, Emory, Savory, Linett and others, but also provides a new view of a specific post-anarchistic politics in Rhys’s work.

One moment in the novel, it seems to me, frames the basic anarchistic impulse in *Good Morning, Midnight*, and relates directly to the “Exhibition dream” discussed above. The scene comes toward the end of the novel when Sasha is out at night with the supposed gigolo. She reveals to him that the only people she has had a good connection with in Paris were the two Russians. The gigolo’s response to this is a xenophobic and anti-Semitic exclamation. Sasha reacts: “For some reason I am very vexed by this. I start wondering why I am there at all, what I am doing in this box of a restaurant, swapping dirty stories with a damned gigolo. I want to get away. I want to be out of the place” (163). Interestingly, Sasha decides at this moment that she

wants to see the Exhibition, reversing the terms of the dream-text, in which the Exhibition was “in” as opposed to the “way out.” Here, the Exhibition offers the means to “get away” or to “be out of the place.” Sasha and the gigolo arrive at the Exhibition, entering through the Trocadéro. Presumably, they are gazing down the corridor framed by the Nazi and Soviet pavilions, looking at the “Star of Peace.” René, the gigolo, calls the star pathetic, adding, “It’s vulgar, that Star of Peace” (163). Sasha responds by saying that the building is “very fine” and narrates, “We stand on the promenade above the fountains, looking down on them. This is what I wanted – the cold fountains, the cold, rainbow lights on the water . . .” (164). René cuts in again, “It’s mesquin,” he says, “your Star of Peace” (164). The Star of Peace acts as a site of projected longing for Sasha here, a glimmer of hope framed by the daunting and massive Nazi and Soviet structures. This is a romantic longing, a notion that some inherent or central goodness can keep the antagonistic totalitarian ideologies at bay. That the Star of Peace is situated, that it draws Sasha to its defense, indicates the futility of this romantic choice. Inside the structures of the Exhibition, real resistance does not exist—only false hope. This non-“way out” reanimates the idea of the desire for a “way out” in the “Exhibition dream.” The novel does not propose a direct response or solution to this problem: how to find the “way out” of the “exhibition” space (perhaps expanded into the entirety of Paris or even modernity/the modern metropolis) that itself plays host to fascism, Soviet communist totalitarianism, and hyper-capitalism? The “way out” crystalizes through the explosion of the dream-text into the entire fabric of the novel, tearing its temporal and spatial coherence, unsettling fixed identities, proposing/testing/exploring shifting relational dynamics between the characters (without settling on any fixed roles), undermining the coherence of language through the use of ambiguity and rupture. Rhys’s anarchism of the dreamscape models an emancipatory “way out,” revealing that the architecture of power is as artificial as the Exhibition’s pavilions and as transitory as the crowd that gathers there. The authoritarian and hierarchical ideologies built towers that tried to outdo each other in height, a mode that can be represented as a vertical line: |. To the vertical, Rhys juxtaposes horizontal movement, the ellipsis . . . as anarchic act, as emancipatory “way out,” a pathway opened by the dissolving dream-text back into the dis-integrated dreamscape. In the following chapter on Franz Kafka, I develop this notion of “escape” or “way out” by identifying the concept of the dreamscape in his novel *The Castle* as a rupture or tear in the seemingly hermetic order of power. This rupture exposes the imaginary or mythic quality of hierarchy and authority, and provokes a

sense of freedom in its purest possible form—an idea of freedom detached from any conjoined preposition (from, to, for, etc.). While scholars have defined Kafka's politics with a wide range of definitions, none have attempted to capture the politics of Kafka's work on dreams.