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'The One with the Beastly Lives': Gender and Textuality in Jean Rhys’s Voyage in the Dark

Abstract
Anna Morgan, the central character of Jean Rhys’s Voyage in the Dark, has previously been read as a victim of her own inability to fashion some form of life for herself.1 It is possible, however, to suggest an alternative to such character-based readings and instead examine the systems of oppression which work to ensure that Anna remains an excluded, marginalized subject. Rather than personal failings, it is Anna’s gender and colonial status which prevent her from participating fully in the dominant social and economic order of Voyage in the Dark. Anna is textually constrained on three levels, which may be defined as economic, colonialist, and narrative. Imbricated within these is the question of gender, which functions to place Anna in a position of double-exclusion within the text. These forms of exclusion function at the levels of discourse and narrative; I would argue that Anna’s position is not, therefore, a product of realist character ‘flaws’ but rather that her discursive placement within the novel offers insight into the ways in which colonialism and sexism function in terms of textuality. 2
Anna Morgan, the central character of Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*, has previously been read as a victim of her own inability to fashion some form of life for herself. It is possible, however, to suggest an alternative to such character-based readings and instead examine the systems of oppression which work to ensure that Anna remains an excluded, marginalized subject. Rather than personal failings, it is Anna's gender and colonial status which prevent her from participating fully in the dominant social and economic order of *Voyage in the Dark*. Anna is textually constrained on three levels, which may be defined as economic, colonialist, and narrative. Imbricated within these is the question of gender, which functions to place Anna in a position of double-exclusion within the text. These forms of exclusion function at the levels of discourse and narrative; I would argue that Anna's position is not, therefore, a product of realist character 'flaws' but rather that her discursive placement within the novel offers insight into the ways in which colonialism and sexism function in terms of textuality.

Anna is shown to be economically dependent upon men for financial support due to her position as an impoverished woman. In the early scenes of the novel, Anna is a showgirl in a touring troupe, and as a performer in *The Blue Waltz* she and the other women in the production appear on stage for the viewing pleasure of men as objects of the male gaze. Similarly, when Anna first meets Walter, the emphasis is upon her appearance and its effect upon the male gaze: "'That's one thing about you,' Maudie said. 'You always look ladylike'". After Anna has 'paired off' with Walter, his first action is to look 'at [her] sideways once or twice – very quickly up and down, in that way they have' (p. 10). Walter thus occupies the subject position, possessing Anna through his gaze 'in that way they have'. Later, when Anna eats with Walter in the private room, he 'looked at [her] as if he was trying to size [her] up' (p. 18). All the while Anna speaks in this scene, Walter 'kept looking at [her] in a funny sort of way, as if he didn't believe what [she] was saying' (p. 19). Walter emphasizes the effect of the gaze by recalling Anna's appearance when they first met:
You looked so awfully pathetic when you were choosing those horrible stockings so anxiously" (p. 20); stockings Walter had paid for.

Walter, in retrospect, purchased Anna with the stockings. In the scene in the restaurant, Walter comments upon Anna's teeth (p. 19), as he 'sizes her up'. This recalls the practice of purchasing slaves, where prospective buyers would examine the teeth of the slaves and attempt to discern how fit they were to work. Anna, as a woman in this English masculinist economy, must be fit for sexual activity rather than manual labour, but she is still, in effect, Walter's slave. Walter thus first possessed Anna through his gaze and then through the metonymic purchase of the stockings. His regular payments to Anna complete the full transaction. In this economic order, Anna becomes a commodity, to be purchased through associated purchases of other commodities. Anna's only available asset is her body, either as spectacle, as a member of the dance troupe, or object of sexual pleasure; her role in this exchange is thus defined and constrained by her gender. Women are expressly connected with the cost of objects, as in the description of the discrepancy between the cost of clothing and of women: "It's funny, he said, have you ever thought that a girl's clothes cost more than the girl inside them? ... You can get a very nice girl for five pounds, a very nice girl indeed, ... But you can't get a very nice costume for her for five pounds" (p. 40).

Women are thus commodified objects to be bought and discarded in an English patriarchal system which sees them in terms of their sexual value, a system in which women are shown to collude. Maudie agrees that women cost more than their clothes: 'after all, it's true, isn't it? People are much cheaper than things' (p. 40). Later in the novel Ethel allows Anna to move into her flat and take part in the manicure business (a front for prostitution) on the basis that if Anna is able to 'introduce some clients of your own it'll be all the better for both of us' (p. 115). Ethel then sees her opportunity when Anna is making money from Carl, and becomes complicitous in the patriarchal economy by allowing Anna 'the run of the whole flat' while simultaneously increasing the rent: 'under the circumstances two and a half guineas isn't too much to ask for this room' (p. 135). Women thus exploit women, just as the men in the novel do. English society is therefore characterized as one of rapacious economic individualism, where there is no solidarity between the members of oppressed groups.

Anna stands at a remove from the English society of Voyage in the Dark. On one level she is marginalized as an impoverished woman in a system of patriarchal exchange. On another, her position as a colonial subject further excludes her from the English hegemony. Anna is persistently signalled as being Other to the middle-class English order of the novel, through the repetition of a series of signifiers and their related cultural associations. These include references to the cold and Anna's aversion to it (corresponding to reports of Anna being born elsewhere, other than England), and the repeated descriptions of
Anna's character which stem from her unspecified 'alien' status.

For instance, when Anna first meets Walter, Maudie stresses the fact that Anna is 'always cold because she was born in a hot place. She was born in the West Indies or somewhere, weren't you kid?' (p. 12). Also in this scene, Anna's offer to show Mr. Jones her birth certificate is described (by him) as 'excessive' (p. 12). In this brief exchange Anna is therefore characterized as childlike ('kid') and 'excessive', common descriptive tropes applied to indigenous people of colonized societies and/or enslaved groups. This pattern of associations continues through the text, incessantly positing Anna as a non-English, colonized Other. When, for example, Anna tells Walter more of her background, he describes her speech as 'fine and large' (p. 44); she is, to him, a 'rum little devil' (p. 45). Walter adds that the Caribbean would be 'too lush' for his taste, a judgement Anna (unsuccessfully) attempts to dispute (p.46). These descriptors bring out the supposed excess of both the 'fine and large' Anna and the 'lush' colonies/tropics. Walter's language serves to infantilize Anna: she becomes a 'rum child, you rum little devil' and is, like the Caribbean, 'too much' (p. 48). In a repetition of this scene Walter again calls Anna a child when they are in the forest (p. 67) after she once more tries to describe the Caribbean. In the face of the English landscape, however, the Caribbean takes on an air of unreality; Anna begins to feel that she is 'making up the names' of the Caribbean flowers (p. 67). When confronted with the disparity between England and the Caribbean, the latter becomes for Anna the fiction it is for the English characters. The values and judgements of the English characters are imbued with such cultural power that the Caribbean becomes displaced into Anna's memories and dreams as 'unreal'. Walter's belief in the superiority of the English landscape (and indeed, his own judgement) effectively silences any opposition.

The excess attributed to Anna is also evident in her conversation with Joe. When she reacts to his lies about knowing the Caribbean, he asks if she is 'tight' (p. 106), and then describes her as 'quaint' (p. 109). Other characters pass similar judgement on Anna: Ethel calls her 'potty' (p.124) and a 'bastard' (p. 124); Carl asks if Anna is on drugs: 'you look as if you took something' (p. 131). Vincent refers to Anna as 'my infantile Anna' (p. 69) and as '[m]y dear Infant' (p. 80). To Germaine Anna is 'this kid' (p. 73) as she is to Laurie (p. 106) and Ethel (p. 125). All these descriptions of Anna recall the stereotypes of the tropics and their inhabitants as excessive, alien and exotic, and/or child-like. Anna metaphorically becomes the tropics, her body the locus of a convergence of attributes associated with the un-English colonies. In addition, there is the suggestion that Anna is an incipient hysteric. When she tells Walter not to forget her, he is described 'as if he were afraid [Anna] was getting hysterical' (p. 76). These perceived attributes of the Caribbean and the hysteric will function later in the novel as a veiled form of resistance to England and the English.

Ethel acts as something of a surrogate mother for Anna in that she
takes Anna into her house and offers to teach her manicure. Ethel, however, then seeks to exploit Anna economically, which fits the pattern already established in the novel. Anna’s other surrogate mother Hester also exploits her. It seems that Hester has robbed Anna of her inheritance by not giving Anna her share in her father’s estate (p. 52). Hester, like Ethel, is xenophobic. She has

an English lady’s voice with a sharp cutting edge to it. Now that I’ve spoken you can hear that I’m a lady. I have spoken and I suppose you realize I am an English gentlewoman. I have my doubts about you ... Speak up for I fear the worst. (p. 50)

Hester also stresses her ‘ladylike’ attitude through her disparagement of Anna. Hester has ‘tried to teach [Anna] to talk like a lady and behave like a lady and not like a nigger and of course I couldn’t do it’ (p. 56). Anna is thus marked as a black West Indian, a characterization reinforced by Hester’s reference to Anna’s ‘awful sing-song voice ... Exactly like a nigger you talked — and still do’ (p. 56 [emphasis mine]). In the eyes of the English characters, Anna, to all intents and purposes, is a black West Indian. She is called ‘Hottentot’ by the other women in the dancing troupe (p. 12) and is told her voice is like that of a ‘nigger’. Hester makes the veiled allegation that Anna’s ‘mother was coloured’ (p. 56), and when she first has sex with Walter, the text links Anna with the slave Mailotte Boyd, whose name Anna had seen on ‘an old slave list’ in Dominica (pp. 45, 48). Anna is therefore continually linked with the oppressed/marginalized population of the Caribbean, despite the fact that she is white. In terms of the textual black/white binary, Anna presents an anomaly. She must, in accordance with this binaristic structure, be grouped with either one part of the equation or the other. That the text (through the English characters) links her with black rather than white would suggest, therefore, that the novel is uneasy with her status as a third term in the colour structure. As a Creole fifth generation West Indian (p. 45) she is white but belongs to the Caribbean. Thus, she must ‘become’ black so that the English order is not disrupted.

Anna also links herself with the black population: she says that ‘I always wanted to be black’ (p. 45). As well as keeping the binaries uncomplicated, this constitutes a desire to join a recognisable community. The novel continually contrasts the community of the black West Indians with the individualism of the English. In the Caribbean there is a form of female bonding available not evident in England. When, for instance, Anna begins menstruation, it is the black servant Francine ‘who explained it to [her], so that it seemed quite all right and I thought it was all in the day’s work like eating or drinking’ (p. 59). This sense of things being ‘all right’ is disrupted by Hester, whose talk with Anna makes her feel ‘awfully miserable, as if everything were shutting up around me and I couldn’t breathe’ (p. 59). The voice of the English woman works to oppress and silence that of the communal
Caribbean so that Anna is removed from the comfort of black Caribbean society. Significantly, it is at this point that Anna becomes estranged from Francine.

A second contrast between the Caribbean and English scenes is evident in the depiction of Francine as a surrogate mother for Anna. Anna can achieve a bonding with Francine not evident with any of the English surrogate mothers. Their relationship, however, is barred by colour: Anna realizes that Francine dislikes her 'because [Anna] was white' (p. 62). Making an important distinction between the white and black communities, Anna notes that to be white is 'getting like Hester, and all the things you get – old and sad and everything' (p. 62). One further contrast between blacks and whites is evident in the masquerade/carnival Anna recalls when she is bleeding after her abortion. The masquerade celebrates youth and gaiety in opposition to the old and sad English. It is marked by colour, vibrance and a spirited resistance towards the English colonizers. In England, there is no real outlet for this form of social protest: the closest Anna can come to allying herself with an English form of resistance is in her dream of the boy bishop, a feature of the English and European carnival (pp. 140-41). This, however, is no longer available to the oppressed classes of England, so Anna is forced to return, in dream, to the Caribbean to find a more viable form of resistance.

In the Caribbean masquerade the black population bands together, wearing masks which parody English faces:

the masks men wore were a crude pink with the eyes squinting near together squinting but the masks the women wore ... over the slits for the eyes mild blue eyes were painted then there was the small straight nose and a little red heart-shaped mouth and under the mouth another slit so that they could put their tongues out at you. (p. 157)

The dancers also cover their necks and arms with white powder (p.157). Their dress and masks thus make them parodic English people, with pink skins, blue eyes and heart-shaped mouths. The women in the masquerade stick out their tongues as an act of defiance, a resistant mocking parody of the dominant English colonizers. Moreover, the masquerade is a communal activity, with all the black population joining in ('they all have a go they don’t mind' [p. 157]). The carnival is thus an activity 'in which the whole collective participates'. As Emery notes, Anna’s recollection of the masquerade undergoes a significant shift. At first, Anna refers to the dancers as ‘them’ but the pronoun changes to ‘we went on dancing’ (p. 157 [emphasis mine]). In a drifting, dreamlike state, Anna takes part in the carnival, becoming one of the black Caribbean collective.

Anna’s bleeding after the abortion functions to link her with the carnival. In Bakhtin’s conception of carnival, emphasis is placed upon the faecal body, the points of the body
open to the outside world, that is, the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world.8

The body, in the carnival, transgresses its limits so that it is no longer a self-contained unit but one which disrupts its boundaries to take part in the collective world. What is usually hidden or secret becomes part of the ‘outside’ world, as opposed to the ‘inside’ of the body, inverting and disrupting the conventional order; hence the emphasis on orifices, where the body both marks boundaries and transgresses them. This is why the Caribbean women put out their tongues: they enact the transgressive ideas of the carnival, revealing what is usually hidden in an un-English, ‘rude’ gesture. So too for Anna. Her representation of the grotesque body, with its abundant flow of blood, disrupts the closed unit of the English body. Wills has argued that the hysteric enacts a similar form of resistance, in that the hysteric falls into patriarchy’s zone of exclusion.9 Described throughout the text as excessive or hysterical, Anna has thus been placed within this excluded zone and is ‘representing the past in the present’ as a form of resistance to the patriarchal/official order, thus disrupting linear, masculinist time.10 The past represented is, significantly, a remembered act of resistance, suggesting a connection between the carnival and the hysterical body, both of which refuse to obey or conform to the expectations of the dominant (English) order.11

The disruption of linear time and narrative focuses attention on the enunciative site Anna occupies as the first-person narrator of Voyage in the Dark. She is initially presented as caught between two texts, one of the Caribbean and the other of England. When recalling Dominica, she quotes from ‘that book’ which describes the island as ‘[l]ying between 15° 10’ and 15° 40’ N and 61° 14’ and 61° 30’ W. A goodly island and something highland, but all overgrown with woods’ (p. 15). In comparison to this is the England Anna ‘had read about ... ever since [she] could read’ (p. 15). The England of Anna’s experience, ‘smaller meaner everything is’ (p. 15), operates in contrast to Dominica. Both places are the sites of reading, whether from ‘that book’ or the England Anna has always read about. The distinction between the two sites is represented by the image of the curtain which opens the novel: ‘A curtain fell and I was here’ (p. 15), thus marking the division between the Caribbean and England. This image draws attention to the split in the consciousness of the narrator and, in conjunction with the perceived unreality of the Caribbean landscape, exiles the colony behind the curtain, only able to surface in dreams and memory.

Anna may therefore be read as colonized/exiled on a third level, that of narrative and textuality itself. Anna is contained within a narrative which is already written in the codes of the Derridean general text, ‘the field of historic, economic, political inscription’;12 a narrative which is impossible for her to break out of. Anna is rendered silent and pre-
written, unable to speak for herself. As Lyotard suggests,

\[\text{[a]s narrator, s/he is narrated as well. And, in a way, s/he is already told, and what s/he him/herself is telling will not undo the fact that somewhere else s/he is told}^{13}\]

Anna’s story is therefore effectively ‘already told’, so that she is discursively placed within a narrative that is simultaneously hers (told in the first person) and yet not hers, in that she is represented as an undifferentiated member of a generic class already defined and contained within the field of the Derridean general text. There is a specific reference to this situation in the early pages of the novel where Anna is reading Zola’s *Nana*, ‘a dirty book ... about a tart’ (p. 9). Maudie says that ‘a man writing a book about a tart tells a lot of lies one way and another. Besides books are all like that - just somebody stuffing you up’ (p. 9). This places the reader in the position of reading Anna reading; Anna’s status as a textual subject is constrained within the pages of a book which is about to ‘stuff her up’. The text both acknowledges its status as fiction as well as the previous narratives which exert an effect upon the narrative of *this* book. Anna’s story is, in a sense, already written, in the texts which have preceded *Voyage in the Dark*. Anna is unable to disrupt this ur-narrative, a narrative which is masculinist and colonialist in its origins and ideology.

An early instance of this occurs when Maudie and Anna first meet Jones and Jeffries, and Jones predicts the ages of the women: ‘[He] knew you’d either be eighteen or twenty-two. You’re eighteen and so of course your friend is twenty-two. Of course’ (p. 12). This domineering speech signifies the status of the characters; the repetition of ‘of course’ indicates there is an expected pattern to the women’s answers and that Jones will not allow any deviation from it. This is despite the fact that the text contradicts Jones, in giving Maudie’s age as twenty-eight (p. 97), which is passed over in the exchange.\(^{14}\) Jones calls Anna and Maudie ‘you girls’, suggesting that they are seen simply as a type who are not permitted space in the text to diverge from this masculinist narrative. Jones’s name signifies that this is a narrative which has been written by a series of anonymous, patriarchal figures who have a collective identity. Women are thus expected to conform to the expectations of the Mr. Joneses.

When Anna has dinner with Walter, her actions are again dictated by an adherence to anonymous male codes. She wears black in the belief that ‘“[m]en delighted in that sable colour, or lack of colour.” A man called “Coronet” wrote that or was it a man called “A Peer”?‘ (p. 19). Again the actions of women (in this case Anna’s dress) are expected to conform to the dictates and desires of a nameless upper class man or men. The dinner is entirely based upon these masculinist desires, as Anna realizes when she discovers the bedroom. On doing so, she laughs with Walter ‘because [she] felt that that was what [she] ought to
do’ (p. 20). Walter’s laugh is that of a man who expects certain events to occur which tally with his perception of Anna and himself. Anna, however, desires a change in this script, in her hope that

[s]oon he’ll come in again and kiss me, but differently. He’ll be different and so I’ll be different. It’ll be different. I thought ‘It’ll be different, different. It must be different. (p. 21)

The repetition of ‘different’ throughout the passage clearly conveys Anna’s desire to change the sequence of events as they have been mapped out by the patriarchal forces as symbolized by Walter. But Anna’s desire is wholly based upon the actions of the male. For things to change, Walter must kiss Anna differently; he must be different so that she can be as well. This, of course, does not happen and Anna is left with the knowledge that she is the only one who has been naive to the workings of the system: ‘The girls would shriek with laughter if I were to tell them about this. Simply shriek’ (p. 21).

When reflecting upon her situation after dinner, Anna still hopes for difference and change:

‘But it isn’t always going to be like this, is it?’ I thought. ‘It would be too awful if it were always going to be like this. It isn’t possible. Something must happen to make it different’. (pp. 22-23)

Immediately after this, however, the possibility that ‘perhaps it will always be like this’ strikes Anna for ‘the first time in [her] life’ (p. 23); she is to become ‘one of the ones with the beastly lives’ (p. 23). Anna comes to realize that she is trapped within a narrative from which she cannot escape. Her position is the product of the English environment, where there is an emphasis upon both the exploitation of individuals and the predetermined positions within culture and narrative which women are forced to occupy. Anna frequently invokes the hope that all will soon change, but this is a hope which cannot be fulfilled. For example, when she buys clothes she thinks that ‘[t]his is the beginning’ (p. 25). But as with the dinner scene her hopes are based upon the actions of men: it is, after all, Walter’s money Anna uses to purchase the clothes.

Anna’s dream of a new beginning is the lie that the exploitative patriarchal system feeds to the oppressed/marginalized groups. As Walter’s accomplice Vincent tells Anna ‘[y]ou’ve only got to make up your mind that things are going to be different, and they will be different’ (p. 149). Ironically, Vincent says this as he provides the money for Anna’s abortion, where Anna’s situation changes substantially for the worse. The prospect of difference and change (as it has been shown in the novel), however, is based upon men and their putative magnanimity towards women, yet for women like Anna there is no real source of hope or power to affect change.

Anna attempts to escape England to her past in the Caribbean. This is
done, as suggested, through memory and dream. In one instance, Ethel merges with the figure of Francine: ‘I’ll say Francine I’ve had such an awful dream – it was only a dream she’ll say ... I’d know for certain it had started again, my lovely life’ (p. 115). This dream, however, occurs at another point where Anna is vulnerable to exploitation: Ethel has just asked Anna to join the manicure business, which is supposed to work to Ethel’s advantage. It is notable that Anna’s desire to start again is repeated, at points in the narrative where her situation becomes increasingly desperate. The first desire for a new beginning occurs when Anna (with Walter’s money) buys the clothes, the second when she begins living with Ethel and the third when Anna obtains the money for the abortion which nearly kills her. It seems that each time Anna’s situation worsens, the voice of exploitative patriarchy breaks into the text to pronounce a belief in this spurious hope of putative new starts. The reality of Anna’s situation thus offers a stark contrast with the lies promulgated by a patriarchal system.

Anna’s attempts to break out of the prescribed narrative patterns are doomed to failure. Her efforts and her failure to do so are linked back to her status as a colonial subject. Anna tries to tell Walter about the Caribbean and her life there, to which he responds with the Anglo-Saxon middle-class judgement that the tropics are ‘too lush’ (p. 46). Similarly, Anna’s Caribbean history becomes a source of mockery to Joe. He tells Anna he knows the West Indies and her father: ‘Why I knew your father – a great pal of mine. Old Taffy Morgan. He was a fine old boy, and didn’t he lift the elbow too’ (p. 107). Anna’s Caribbean narrative is thus colonized by Joe and Walter, who attempt to take it over and either make it their own stereotypical story or simply deny it completely. She therefore cannot narrate because of her narrative’s alterity to the English order of the novel. Anna is in the paradoxical position of being unable to tell parts of her own story; the only codes available are the stereotypically familiar, pre-scripted ones of ‘I knew your father’, which is again an exclusion of women replaced by a form of male bonding (drinking together), or the concept of the tropics as strange, threatening and ‘too lush’. A third major example of Anna’s inability to form her own, alternative story occurs when she is with Carl. Here Anna is again linked with an oppressed people, in that she, that evening, ‘did everything to the tune of Campdown Racecourse’ (p. 132), a song which is, of course, associated with African-American slaves. Carl is an American (p. 97), so the song in this instance links Anna with black Americans, victims of slavery in the United States, another instance of the text aligning Anna with oppressed/colonized peoples. Anna tries to change the words of the song, to ‘somebody won on the bay’ despite Carl correcting her (p. 132). Anna says she will ‘sing it how I like it’ (p. 132), yet the potential rebellion or change to the script this implies is negated by Carl’s statement that ‘[n]obody wins. Don’t worry. Nobody wins’ (p. 132). The ‘nobody’ Carl refers to is, of course, Anna (and not
herself); she is the biggest loser in the novel, despite *Voyage in the Dark* supposedly being her narrative. Unlike other men in the novel, Carl does not attempt to inspire Anna with any spurious form of hope. Carl’s is an alternative voice, that of the cynical and worldly-wise man which is echoed by the doctor at the end of the novel (another male character with no name). The doctor refers to Anna and Maudie as ‘you girls’ (the same term and tone Jones used at the beginning of the novel) and tells them they are ‘too naive to live’ (p. 159). It is his voice which concludes the text, contrasting with Anna’s previously expressed desires for a new start. Anna is, as the novel demonstrated, ‘too naive’, too unaware of the ways in which the system functions; her hopes for difference and change are juxtaposed with the doctor’s belief that Anna will be able to start ‘all over again in no time’ (p. 159). Starting again in this context, however, means more of what has gone on before. Anna is condemned to remain trapped within the masculinist, colonialist confines and narrative of English society. She is destined to repeat ‘all over again, all over again ... ’ (p.159 [ellipsis in original]) the exploitation and marginalisation already written into her story. The text realizes there is no new beginning for Anna; her place in the English social order has been shown to be prescribed and immutable. To argue that all Anna needs is more energy and drive is, in this reading, inapplicable, as her narrative position has been defined not by her supposed weakness as an individual but instead by the power of English masculinist imperialism.

NOTES

1. Peter Wolfe, *Jean Rhys* (Boston: Twayne, 1980) is a notable example of this form of criticism: he argues that Anna lacks ‘fiber’ and that she fails to support herself ‘honorably’ (p. 117). See also Nancy Casey, ‘Study in the Alienation of a Creole Woman: Jean Rhys’s *Voyage in the Dark*, *Caribbean Quarterly*, 19, 3 (1973), and her assertion that Anna’s life in Dominica has ‘taught her to do nothing’ (p. 99) which is the ‘root of [her] maladjustment to England’ (p. 96).
2. It should not be overlooked, of course, that Anna’s narrative functions to reveal the systems by which colonial women are constrained within discourse. *Voyage in the Dark* is in one sense a double-voiced narrative, in that it reveals these systems of oppression while at the same demonstrating the cultural power of these same systems.
3. Jean Rhys, *Voyage in the Dark* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 10. All further references are to this edition and are included in the text.
5. Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), p. 7, points out that the boy bishop dates from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as a part of the English carnival, associated with the Lords of Misrule. See also Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987), p. 98, who links the boy bishop with the ‘topsy-turvy saturnalia’ festivals of the Middle Ages. The boy bishop was thus one aspect of a parody of the dominant English order.
7. Emery, op. cit., p. 66.
10. Ibid., pp. 130-31.
11. On an allegorical level, Anna’s abortion may be read as representing the ‘illegitimacy’ of post-colonial culture. See Stephen Slemon, ‘“Carnival” and the Canon’, *Ariel*, 19, 3 (1988), p. 61. Anna had previously been called a ‘bastard’ by Ethel; as the embodiment of a hybrid society, Anna is deemed illegitimate by the voice of the xenophobic English middle-class.
14. It is significant though that Maudie’s age is relayed through Anna’s consciousness. Anna, as becomes clear, does not know the codes by which this narrative operates.