The Melancholic Woman Writer:

Claims to a Melancholic Subjectivity in Margaret Cavendish and Jean Rhys

Henriette Marie Kolle

A Thesis Presented to
The Department of Literature, Area Studies and European
Languages

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the M.A.
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II

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IV

Abstract

This thesis explores the representation of melancholia in the autobiographies written by Margaret Cavendish (1623-1673) and Jean Rhys (1890-1979). By a close reading of Cavendish's *A True Relation of My Birth, Breeding and Life* (1656) and Rhys's *Smile Please: An Unfinished Autobiography* (1979), this thesis argues that melancholia, as represented in these texts, is the very basis of the authors' path to a sense of self. Historically, melancholia (or melancholy) refers to a condition that is both destructive and a source of creativity and authorial self-construction. Within its tradition, the condition has been considered a gendered construction, granting men a superior position as creative geniuses, as Juliana Schiesari explored in her study *The Gendering of Melancholia* (1992). Against Schiesari's conclusion of how melancholia has exclusively been delimiting in women, I propose a critical reassessment of the melancholic persona in order to include the self-understood female melancholic. This thesis aims to reveal how the previously mentioned female writers portray a melancholic subjectivity that challenges the traditionally gender-based distinction between the inarticulate female melancholic and the loquacious male equivalent. In my analysis, I employ scholarly studies on melancholia, particularly Robert Burtons *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) and Sigmund Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) as a framework through which I explore the women's melancholic subjectivities. This thesis thus seeks to inscribe the female melancholic into a tradition from which she has been culturally excluded.

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1   Introduction

The subject of this thesis has a long tradition in Western culture, and has been a point of scholarly enquiry for centuries. Melancholy, or melancholia, has historically been considered as a condition that is both destructive and a source to creativity and self-construction. While referring to a pathological state associated with loss, grief, dark moods of disempowerment and depression, the melancholic condition was linked to a source for creativity, insight and even genius. I use the terms melancholy and melancholia interchangeably, for reasons that I shall explain later in this introduction. The suffering creator was portrayed already in ancient times, with Aristotle's (or rather, one of his followers') famous question: "Why is it that all those men who have become extraordinary in philosophy, politics, poetry, or the arts are obviously melancholic, and some to such an extent that they are seized by the illnesses that come from black bile (…)?" (*Problems*, 277). Sigmund Freud would later ask a similar question in his essay "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) in relation to what he considered as the melancholic's greater sense of self-knowledge, asking "why a man has to be ill before he can be accessible to a truth of this kind" (246).

Tracing the historical development of melancholy from the Renaissance to Freud, Juliana Schiesari, in *The Gendering of Melancholia* (1992), has emphasized that there are hardly any women among the "great melancholics", "an absence that surely points less to some lack of unhappy women than to the lack of significance traditionally given women's grief in patriarchal culture" (3). She argues that "the 'grievous' suffering of the melancholic artist is a gendered one, an eroticized nostalgia that recuperates loss in the name of an imaginary unity and that also gives to the melancholic *man* (…) a privileged position within literary, philosophical, and artistic canons" (11). According to Schiesari, this conversion of loss, grief and disempowerment into artistic expression seems unachievable for women, who are associated more with inarticulate, "intellectually and artistically unaccredited" (12) forms of mourning. Thus, while on the one hand referring to a pathological condition, melancholia appears "*as a discursive practice* through which an individual subject who is classified as melancholic or who classifies himself as melancholic is legitimated in the representation of *his* artistic trajectory" (15). Melancholia is therefore an ethos centred on a powerful and productive sense of lack or loss, forming a discourse of self-construction that has historically favoured men. Schiesari's study points to significant aspects of how melancholia is a cultural as well as a clinical phenomenon, uncovering how it has been a clinical category that "serves

to legitimate a certain ego-formation in men" (16), while excluding women from being regarded as melancholics.

But does this mean that women cannot be melancholic? Or rather, can they not identify themselves as melancholic creators? One would think not, given Schiesari's definite conclusion that "melancholia is at best made available to woman as a debilitating disease and certainly not as an enabling ethos" (15). However, although the discourse of melancholia has culturally granted men a superior position of productivity, it seems too simple to rule out the possibility of women claiming a similar position as creative geniuses. Therefore, while Schiesari's study introduces a significant feminist critique of a historically gendered discourse, I find there is something amiss in her argument concerning the female melancholic. In her assessment of how melancholy has been exclusively delimiting and disabling in women, she effectively removes the possibility of women entering this arena of self-creation and artistic creativity.

This thesis contends that melancholia, as represented in the autobiographies of two women writers, Margaret Cavendish (1623-1673) and Jean Rhys (1890-1979), is the very basis of their path to a sense of self. By exploring the strategies of self-presentation in these literary works, I shall argue that Cavendish's *A True Relation of My Birth, Breeding and Life* (London, 1656) and Rhys's *Smile Please: An Unfinished Autobiography* (London, 1979), portray melancholic personae. The thesis encompasses a critical reassessment of this persona in order to include the female writer who presents herself as melancholic and, subsequently, decentre the male melancholic. By studying female grief, loss and unresolved mourning in these autobiographical works, I seek to inscribe the writers into a position within the long tradition of melancholia. Rather than merely considering the gendered discourse within this tradition in terms of representations written in studies on the condition from the Renaissance to Freud (which Schiesari predominantly does in her study), I will use these studies as a framework through which I will reveal how the chosen female writers present a melancholic self. In other words, I will read their self-presentation through the lens of scholarly works that have sought to keep women away from this position of creativity in order to explore how the female writers both appropriate the discourse of melancholia in their own self-presentation, and by that, challenge its gendered borders. Their self-portraits may be said to reflect on a tradition of gendered construction of melancholy that has lasted from the Renaissance to Freud's essay in 1917, as Schiesari uncovered in her study. Whereas Cavendish belongs to the late Renaissance, Rhys's work is post-Freudian. In the following, I will give an overview of

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this cultural tradition, with an emphasis on how melancholia has been deemed a source of creativity for men.

In the early seventeenth century, Robert Burton stated in his extensive treatise, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621): "The tower of Babel never yielded such confusion of tongues, as the chaos of melancholy doth variety of symptoms" (1: 397). As a self-proclaimed melancholic, he explained how his endeavours in writing about this condition was like conquering a many-headed beast, as he attempted to enclose the numerous causes and cures for the illness in his treatise. Originally, as Jennifer Radden observes in her study *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva* (2000), melancholia "suggested any disease resulting from an imbalance of black bile" (5). Black bile was regarded as one of the humours in humoral theory, and, in the words of Stanley W. Jackson, it was considered as "the crucial etiological factor in melancholia" (4). Although serving as a causal explanation, the black bile has also been recognized, as Radden explains, as a metaphor for the "dark mood of melancholy" ("Melancholy and Melancholia", 238). The dark mood of the melancholic can also be seen in how melancholia was dominantly characterized in terms of fear and sadness, as Burton explains in his *Anatomy* and Timothy Bright in his treatise from 1586: "The perturbations of Melancholy are for the most part, sad and fearefull, and such as rise of them, as distrust, doubt, diffidence, or despaire" (124). Despite the idea, stemming from Aristotle, of how every "great man" suffered from the disease caused by black bile, writers of ancient as well as medieval times who studied melancholia generally considered the condition as "an unwelcome disease" (Schiesari 6).

However, with the Italian humanism and the writings of the self-understood melancholic Marsilio Ficino in the fifteenth century, a connection between melancholia and creative energy emerged (Radden, *Nature*, 12). This glorification during the Renaissance is explored in the famous study *Saturn and Melancholy* (1964), written by Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl. According to this study, while acknowledging the dual nature of melancholia, Ficino, along with other Italian humanists, "valued it, because they saw in it the main feature of the newly discovered 'genius'" (247). As the planet Saturn had long been considered (in negative terms) as being connected to melancholia, Ficino linked the melancholic's giftedness to this planet, in the belief that it bestowed "the highest and noblest faculties of the soul, reason and speculation" (Klibansky et al. 247). Accordingly, the Aristotelian notion of how every "exceptional man" is melancholic was revived and further developed in the Renaissance. In the words of Schesari, "Ficino thus turned melancholia into

a positive virtue for men of letters and 'popularized' it to the rest of Europe" (7), and his influence can be seen in English works such as Burton's *Anatomy*. By this link between melancholy as a state of depression and sorrow and as a cause of creative productivity, the person suffering from the illness was enabled to justify the malady as a source of inspiration, turning the state of disempowerment into something positive. Consequently, melancholy became a fashionable condition in the early modern period among writers, "an elite 'illness' that afflicted *men* precisely as the *sign* of their exceptionality, as the inscription of genius within them" (Schiesari 7). This exceptionality of the *homo melancholicus* separated him from the common crowd (the "*vulgus*" [Schiesari 7]).

The connection between melancholia and genius was gender-determined, however, representing "melancholy in the *man* of genius and genius in the *man* of melancholy" (Radden, *Nature*, 40). The condition was regarded as more frequent among men than women, an idea that lasted from medieval times to the eighteenth century (Radden, *Nature*, 39). Moreover, women melancholics were generally considered as more severely troubled than their male equivalent, mainly tormented by the pathological effects of the disease than the exceptional melancholy man in whom such a state evoked creative inspiration (Schiesari 14). The physician Johann Weyer noted the severity of melancholia in women, implicitly revealing the illness as inherently masculine in his *De praestigiis daemonum* (*Of Deceiving Demons*) (1562) by explaining how "melancholia being more opposed to [women's] temperament, it removes them further from their natural constitution" (qtd. in Radden, *Nature*, 96). Despite the general degradation of women melancholics, melancholia was often presented as a female figure, such as in the famous engraving by Albrecht Dürer, "Melencolia I" (1514) (which I will turn to in the chapter on Cavendish). Burton similarly displays a feminine figure when referring to his malady as his "mistress Melancholy" (1: 21). Nevertheless, it has been recognized, as Radden explains, that these female images of melancholia represented "the 'feminine' within man, and a metaphor of male sorrow" (*Nature*, 40). Women were also considered as a possible cause of, or an element exacerbating a man's melancholia (Schiesari 253), a notion Burton explored in his *Anatomy*. For female melancholics, however, Burton claimed that marriage was the cure. Indeed, in a section dedicated to the female melancholic, he portrayed her as an inarticulate sufferer in need of male dominance in order to control her illness. Thus, women were generally thought to suffer from an uncontrollable disease whereas men could be seen to suffer from milder and less destructive variants. We might detect this distinction in Alexander Pope's "On a Certain Lady

at Court" from 1732, where he asserted that "the thing that's most uncommon" was "a Reasonable Woman" (l. 1): "Not warped by Passion, aw'd by Rumour (…) An equal Mixture of good Humour,/ And *sensible soft Melancholy*" (l. 5, ll. 7-8, *Poems*, 474) (my emphasis). The abnormality of this sight is suggested by how such a state of "sensible soft melancholy" has generally been linked to men claiming to be melancholic.

A revival of the connection between melancholic suffering and creative energy took place during the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries: "Again the suffering of melancholy was associated with greatness; again it was idealized, as inherently valuable and even pleasurable, although dark and painful" (Radden, *Nature*, 15). The melancholic man "was one who felt more deeply, saw more clearly, and came closer to the sublime than ordinary mortals" (Radden, *Nature*, 15), this once more reflecting the melancholic's exceptionality that separates him from the common crowd. Moving towards the end of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, however, melancholia increasingly became known as a woman's complaint, comparable to what one would term depression today (*Nature*, 40). The impact of this gender-specific idea of depression is evident in our own time (Radden, *Nature*, 44). Clinical depression, as opposed to the glorified melancholia of the past, "is characterized as much or more by certain behavioral manifestations as by the moods and feelings it involves: by a slowing or agitation of movement, by fatigue, loss of appetite and insomnia" (Radden, "Melancholy and Melancholia", 243). As melancholia became known as a condition closer to today's depression, then, it was no longer connected to a privileged position of creativity. Therefore, although similar, this transition brought a difference, specifically a removal of "the notion that the other side of this mood of sadness and despair was intellectual depth, wisdom and learning, even genius" (Radden, "Melancholy and Melancholia", 244).

With Freud's essay "Mourning and Melancholia", however, we can again see the link between melancholia and male giftedness. As Radden observes, Freud's essay differs from earlier works, in that the condition is related to object-loss, whereas before, it was characterized by "a state of imbalance and a mood of despondency" (Radden, *Nature*, 282). In addition, Freud's account of the melancholic's identification with the lost object (that is, the incorporation of the object into the ego) and the subsequent focus placed on the melancholic's self-loathing, described as accusations directed towards the incorporated lost object, distinguish the essay from former works on the condition. Despite its innovative aspects, Freud's essay on melancholia shares important similarities with earlier studies. To begin with,

the melancholic's unresolved mourning for the lost object reminds us of the sadness, depression and darkness of mood evident in the melancholic of the Renaissance. Furthermore, Freud's difficulties in clearly defining the condition resemble the struggles of Renaissance scholars like Burton, who attempted to enclose the "many-headed beast" of melancholia into his extensive treatise. Freud asserts that melancholia "whose definition fluctuates even in descriptive psychiatry, takes on various clinical forms the grouping together of which into a single unity does not seem to be established with certainty" (243). Moreover, his argument concerning the melancholic persona's greater sense of self-knowledge suggests an image of giftedness and the melancholic's extraordinary status. This image is gender-specific, as I will show in the following.

While Freud offers both male and female case studies in his discussion on melancholia, he seems more inclined to associate the condition with the masculine, reminding us of the Renaissance tradition. Primarily referring to the melancholic as a "he", Freud's choice of examples similarly involves a type of gender-dichotomy favouring the male sufferer. The unnamed female examples he mentions are mostly described as melancholic in terms of their relationship with men and, in these cases, "no particular depth of 'self-understanding' is foregrounded" (Schiesari 58). By contrast, the only named melancholic persona in "Mourning and Melancholia", namely Hamlet, is linked to the formerly mentioned higher degree of self-understanding, and granted the position as "speaker of truths" (Schiesari 59) in Freud's essay. In turning to the tragic Renaissance figure of Hamlet, considered as one of the most iconic melancholic characters in literature, Freud further points to the melancholic "genius" of the past in his own account of the condition. Accordingly, while giving an account of its pathological status, Freud, by his reference to Hamlet and the implicitly male melancholic's visionary prowess, "points to a cultural apotheosis of its victims, whose sense of loss and 'melancholy' is thus the sign of their special nature" (Schiesari 11). The Ficinian tradition of the melancholic's giftedness is therefore still evident in Freud's essay from the early twentieth century, presented as a "specific representational form for male creativity" (Schiesari 8). Freud's essay has had a major impact following its publication, as it "has gone largely unchallenged in psychoanalytic accounts of melancholia and depression through much of the twentieth century" (Radden, *Nature*, 282).

As this brief account of the historical development of this cultural tradition has shown, there are certain elements that have persisted, the gender-based power politics being one of them. Before turning to the structural layout and the theoretical framework of this thesis, I

will include a note on my choice of referring to the affect in question both as "melancholia" and "melancholy". In her essay, "Melancholy and Melancholia", Radden explores the historical development of the two terms, arguing that "melancholy" today corresponds to "depression", while "melancholia" refers to "depressive illness or reaction" (240). Radden's distinction between the two terms renders important aspects of the clinical dimension of melancholia/melancholy. However, this thesis will not focus on the history of the clinical picture of melancholia, but rather the cultural valuation of turning grief and depressive states into artistic expression. As Schiesari explains, in the sixteenth century, the Latin term "*melancholia"* was translated into the English "melancholy", and "[w]hether one suffered from 'melancholy' or 'melancholia' prior to the replacement of these terms by 'depression' or 'clinical depression,' the former (…) terms were the continuing legacy of the Aristotelian and Ficinian reading of the *homo melancholicus*" (Schiesari 94). I share Schiesari's view in that "[w]hat is important here is that 'melancholia' with all its diverse spellings at different historical moments means not only a type of disease but also a form of cultural empowerment" (94). Accordingly, I will apply both terms in this thesis in referring to this type of condition in which grief, loss or disempowerment is turned into artistic creativity. In other words, this thesis will not centre primarily on the medical aspect of melancholia, but rather on the melancholic state as a source of productivity and self-portrayal. I will study, in detail, two self-narratives by two female writers from different historical periods in order to analyse their way of inscribing a melancholic self in a cultural system of representation from which they, as melancholic subjects, have been excluded.

1.1   Structural Layout, Theory and Method

As melancholia has been predominantly regarded as a category of identity formation, that is, a category of self-presentation through which a person can be understood by others, I will turn to Cavendish's and Rhys's autobiographies in order to examine their self-construction and how they present themselves as melancholics. This thesis is not a genre analysis, as that would have required another type of study. Rather, I will perform a close reading of the two autobiographies for the sake of analysing the complex representation of melancholia in relation to the female authors' self-portrayal. The historically downgraded status of women's autobiographical writings is evident in how, as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson explains, such works were "seldom taken seriously as a focus of study before the seventies" (4).

Furthermore, as Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck assert, "[a]t both extremes of subjectivity and publicity, the female autobiographer has lacked the sense of radical individuality" (1). Although it would have been interesting to problematize the female authors' self-presentation as melancholics in relation to the genre autobiography, this would have required a more extensive paper.

The thesis is divided into two main chapters, where the first will focus on Cavendish and the second on Rhys. Separated into three subchapters, both chapters will centre on various aspects of these writers' melancholic self-presentations. The third subchapter in each chapter will focus on the authors' own accounts of their writing process, as displayed in their memoirs, and the women's self-construction as female authors. As I seek to uncover, both Cavendish and Rhys present their writing process as rooted in their melancholic state, thus rendering them as melancholic writers. Although this is not a thesis aiming at analysing the clinical aspects of melancholia, the third subchapter on Cavendish will encompass elements of her proposed medical condition, as it is part of how she opposes the prescribed cures for women suffering from melancholia in her contemporary society. Furthermore, it is connected to her self-presented melancholy disposition, in which she finds empowerment and literary productivity. Due to the historical "gap" separating the authors, I have dedicated a longer introduction to each work at the opening of each chapter as opposed to introducing the two literary works in the main introduction.

Similar to my choice of primary works, written in the seventeenth and twentieth century respectively, the main theorists I will turn to in relation to melancholia in this thesis are each representatives of these periods, namely Burton and Freud. While Burton's *Anatomy* and Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" will be central in both the chapter dedicated to Cavendish and the one on Rhys, I will also employ other works, such as the previously mentioned sixteenth-century treatise by Bright. In the chapter on Rhys, I will also turn to Julia Kristeva's work on melancholia, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (1989). Moreover, in relation to Cavendish's self-presented melancholia, I shall address Douglas Trevor's work on melancholy, *The Poetics of Melancholy in Early Modern England* (2004). My choice of Freud and Burton as the main scholarly works rests in the gender-based power politics of melancholia evident in both the Renaissance and the twentieth century. Both Burton and Freud present the female melancholic as unproductive, not inhabiting a position of giftedness or suffering a productive state of depression. Moreover, in both these scholars' work, women are exposed as unnamed "types", bound to their function in a patriarchal society. Burton

addresses the melancholia suffered by "maids, nuns and widows", while the faceless examples of Freud are, as previously mentioned, predominantly referred to in terms of their relationship with men. In both their studies, the female melancholic's state is furthermore predominantly presented in terms of her supposedly inferior position in relation to men. Melancholia has therefore not been considered as a cultural category of productivity and self-construction for women. This is what the two women writers discussed in the present thesis challenge in their autobiographical self-portrayals.

As I will employ Freud's essay in my analysis on Cavendish, a possible objection might be directed towards my use of psychoanalytic theory when analysing a text from the early modern period. However, the previously mentioned similarities between Freud's essay on melancholia and earlier accounts of the condition, such as Burton's, link his ideas to those developed in the early modern period. Also, as Schesari asserts in citing Stephen Greenblatt's "Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture", if the Renaissance constitutes the period that initiated, in Greenblatt's words, "the prepsychoanalytic fashioning of the proprietary rights of selfhood" (qtd. in Schiesari 25), then, according to Schiesari, "psychoanalysis is indeed capable of shedding *some* light on the literature of that period" (25). Freud's essay will be helpful in examining the various object-losses Cavendish suffers at what I will reveal as the turning point of her self-narrative, and consequently, give a broader insight into her self-presentation as melancholic. In the same vein, I will turn to parts of Burton's account of the condition in studying Rhys's self-display of melancholia. This will both give new insight into the female authors' self-presentation, as well as into the theoretical works proclaiming melancholia as a "male" condition of productivity. In the chapter on Rhys, I will also address elements of class and race concerning the culturally excluding discourse of melancholia. Schiesari opens for the possibility of studying these culturally shaped identity categories in a footnote, explaining how "one could also profitably study the roles of class, race and ethnic differences in [melancholia's] development" (235 n. 8). A contribution to the study of melancholia connected to race appeared in 2001, with Anne Anlin Cheng's study *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation and Hidden Grief*. While my main focus is on the gendered power politics of melancholia, I will include issues concerning race and class (related to the problematic construction of who is culturally granted the position of uttering loss, grief and depression) when studying Rhys's melancholic subjectivity.

I argue that melancholia forms the basis of both Cavendish's and Rhys's autobiographical self-portrayal. Claims such as Schiesari's of how a productive melancholic

subjectivity has been unachievable for women run the risk of overlooking female writers' self-presented melancholic subjectivity, such as the ones I will explore in this study. This thesis seeks to place these female authors into a tradition from which they have been culturally excluded. By exploring how they present themselves as melancholics, and, more specifically, melancholic writers, this thesis further aims at opening up for a reconsideration of melancholia as a culturally excluding category of self-understanding. While I seek to render a new insight into the self-presentation of the female authors I have chosen to focus my thesis on, this analysis will contribute to raise questions about the gendered tradition of melancholia, opening up for further investigation into women writers and how they might present themselves as melancholics.

2   Margaret Cavendish and *A True Relation of My Birth, Breeding and Life*

Published in 1656, at the end of a collection of fictional stories, *Natures Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil of the Life*, Cavendish's autobiography is a portrayal of her life up to the point of her exile in Antwerp during the Civil War. As Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson observe in *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader* (2000), "[i]n a period when spiritual and political autobiographies predominate, Margaret Cavendish's *A True Relation of My Birth, Breeding and Life* (…) offers an unusually vivid example of a personal and secular autobiography" (12). Indeed, the originality of Cavendish's work, in breaking out of the traditional patterns of seventeenth-century autobiographies, has been commented upon by critics such as Line Cottegnies, who emphasizes how "it has been hailed as one of the first narrative, nonreligious and non-historical autobiographies to be published as such in England" (103). However, among Cavendish's works, her autobiography has, until recently, been given relatively little critical attention, which Cottegnies suggests is due to its brevity (Cottegnies 103).

Critics have drawn more attention to *A True Relation* in later years, showing particular interest in Cavendish's self-analysis and self-creation in placing her life into a literary work. Several scholars have pointed out how Cavendish, in writing this personal autobiography, offers a remarkable self-analysis rarely seen in other works of the period. Sidonie Smith comments upon how "[c]ritics of seventeenth-century autobiography, when they have discussed Cavendish's autobiography (…), have remarked on the surprising and unprecedented self-scrutiny evident in her work" (85), and the autobiography, as Cottegnies explains, "has indeed recently been studied as an example of an early modern female subject finding her voice through self-inscription" (104). Katie Whitaker, in her portrayal of Cavendish in the study *Mad Madge: The Extraordinary Life of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, the First Woman to Live by Her Pen* (2002), further observes how *A True Relation* is "a careful construction of [Cavendish's] identity as a woman author" (193). Accordingly, the self-characterization in Cavendish's autobiography encompasses both her persona and her subjectivity as a writer, both of which demonstrated singularity and controversy at the time considering how writing in general, and publishing in particular, were predominantly a male realm.

In the first part of her autobiography, Cavendish – then called Margaret Lucas –

portrays her childhood and upbringing in the Lucas family's household. Following this, she depicts the outbreak of the Civil War (and its consequences on this family structure), as well as her marriage to William Cavendish. In the last section, Cavendish portrays her "[h]umour, particular Practise and Disposition"[1]. As several critics have observed, the significant role of melancholy in Cavendish's characterization of herself is evident in her account of her disposition as "more inclining to be melancholy than merry" (*True Relation*, 60). In Whitaker's words, "[m]elancholy was always an important part of Margaret's self-definition" (194), and she notes how Cavendish employs the period's fashionable and privileged position of the melancholic in her own self-portrayal (195). Sara Mendelson, elaborating on Cavendish's appropriation of a privilege traditionally preserved for men, observes how "[i]n defining her temperament as melancholic by nature, Cavendish challenged the gender conventions of the time, which associated the melancholic humor with male psychology and physiology" (xiii). Thus, in relation to Cavendish's presentation of melancholia in her autobiography, critics seem predominantly restricted to her self-proclaimed melancholic temperament at the closing pages of her literary work.

Whereas these scholars primarily restrict their focus to her self-proclaimed melancholy disposition, I contend that Cavendish's melancholic self-representation in the autobiography has more complex and wide reaching implications. Indeed, I see the very basis for the authorial self that Cavendish represents as rooted in her multifaceted presentation of a melancholic subjectivity. Cavendish's appropriation of various discourses of melancholia as part of her self-portrayal will be the focal point of this chapter. Moreover, while scholars such as Mendelson notes how Cavendish's self-proclaimed melancholic state challenged gender conventions in her contemporary society, she does not give a detailed analysis of the ways in which Cavendish questions these conventions. This chapter seeks to analyse how Cavendish challenges the gender-based borders of melancholia in her presentation of a melancholic self, and, more specifically, as a melancholic writer. Burton will be central in portraying the causes and symptoms of melancholy in its various forms as it was perceived in the Renaissance tradition, in order to show how Cavendish both employs and challenges the period's framework of melancholia. As I seek to reveal, Cavendish questions melancholia's gendered limits and decentres the privileged male melancholic as the signifier of the period's idea of melancholic "genius".

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[1] p. 59, in *A True Relation of My Birth, Breeding, and Life*, in *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader*. Ed. by Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson, (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press, 2000). All subsequent references to this autobiography are to this edition and will be cited in the text.

In the first subchapter, I will focus on Cavendish's portrayal of her idealized family unity in her childhood household and the consequences of the Civil War in relation to this family structure. Cavendish suffers various object-losses during the war. I will argue that Cavendish's road to individuality centres on object-loss, specifically the loss of the stable structure of the homogeneous unity of her family. By employing Freud's essay on melancholia, I aim to show how she exposes a melancholic subjectivity similar to Freud's melancholic. Specifically, I seek to reveal how Cavendish's self-criticisms make sense in light of the critical self-assessment that Freud came to consider as characteristic of the melancholy subject. The second subchapter centres on how Cavendish turns the object-losses she suffers during the war, in the form of deceased family members, into textual monuments. I will argue that Cavendish presents a controlled and active form of mourning through these textual commemorations, by which she subsequently challenges the gender-based borders separating the eloquent male melancholic and his inarticulate female equivalent. In the final subchapter, I turn to Cavendish's self-presented melancholy disposition, asserting that she portrays this disposition as a source for literary creativity in the private sphere. I aim to reveal how Cavendish's portrayal of her melancholy temperament and her own cures for this condition deviate from the contemporary medical discourses regarding female melancholia, as theorized in works such as Burton's *Anatomy*. This subchapter is also a contribution to Douglas Trevor's discussion regarding self-understood melancholic writers. In his study on melancholy, Trevor explores works by Donne, Burton and Milton, analysing how they fashioned themselves as melancholically inclined authors. In exploring Cavendish's self-presented method of writing, I will argue that Cavendish reveals a similar authorial self-fashioning centred on her melancholy disposition.

2.1 "Why hath this Ladie writ her own Life?" – Loss, Subject Formation and Freudian Melancholia

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, I argue that Cavendish's path to a subjectivity in her autobiography centres on loss. In this subchapter, I will explore the ways in which Cavendish's development of a selfhood, based on various object-losses, renders her self-display as portraying a melancholic self. These object-losses are a consequence of what I will refer to as the turning point of the autobiography, namely the outbreak of the Civil War. As the wartime disrupts the family unity of her childhood, which she initially portrays as a static structure, Cavendish presents the subsequent losses she suffers as part of her way of developing a melancholic subjectivity. The first part of this subchapter will focus on Cavendish's portrayal of the family household of her childhood in order to demonstrate the importance of the turning point that disrupts this idealized family portrait. This move from stability and unity to disorder and difference forms a transition in narrative style, as Cavendish turns from the external world of her childhood home to the internal universe of her mind. In this transition, as I will show, she moves from portraying herself as inhabiting the position of passive observer of the idealized family portrait of her youth, to presenting her own subjectivity in terms of personal dispositions and temperaments. Although Cavendish suffers various object-losses at this turning point, I will analyse her presentation of one of these in the present subchapter, specifically the loss of her siblings' controlling gaze. The self-criticism Cavendish portrays in relation to this loss will be explored by employing Freud's essay on melancholia. I aim to reveal how Cavendish's self-criticisms and reproaches directed towards herself can be explained through Freud's assessment of the melancholic persona. Cavendish presents personal traits connected to these instances of self-criticism. I will show how one of these traits, namely her bashful nature, plays an important part in her construction of a melancholic subjectivity.

Cavendish opens her autobiography with an account of her early life. Following the opening paragraph depicting her father's death, she paints a picture of the seemingly harmonious family life of her childhood. As Cottegnies observes, Cavendish "describes the education and pastimes of the Lucas children on a mode suggesting eternity, a perpetual life of leisure led under the governance of a benevolent mother" (111). The idealized and seemingly immutable family portrait of the Lucas household (resembling the portrait on the cover of *Natures Pictures* in which she first published her autobiography) is depicted as a

"microsociety" (Cottegnies 111). This microsociety is ruled by the mother, whose children give the impression of lacking individuality: "three sons and five daughters, there was not any one crooked, or any ways deformed (…) well featured, cleer complexions, brown haires, (…) sound teeth, sweet breaths, plain speeches, tunable voices" (*True Relation*, 48). Indeed, the lack of individuality among the members of this unity, and among her sisters in particular, is emphasized by the manner in which Cavendish refers to them under the collective noun "[s]isters" (45) rather than distinguishing them from each other by referring to their names. Similarly, in explaining the marital status of each sister, Cavendish's choice of reference leaves the women "nameless": "one married Sir *Peter Killegrew*, the other Sir *William Walter*, the third Sir *Edmund Pye*, the fourth as yet unmarried" (45). This representation of the family structure of her childhood gives the impression of a unified structure of stability, "a perfect unit of twinlike equals, a self-sufficient, self-contained society" (Cottegnies 111). In her presentation of how this idealized family portrait was part of her childhood household, Cavendish places herself among the "faceless" members of this community, displaying herself as the passive observer of the microsociety: "for I observed, they did seldome make Visits, nor never went abroad with Strangers in their Company, but onely themselves in a Flock together agreeing so well, that there seemed but one Minde amongst them" (45).

Following her depiction of the closeness and stability offered by the microsociety that constitutes her family (even after her siblings' marriages and the subsequent changes in the family's living arrangements), Cavendish portrays what I read as the turning point of her autobiography, centring on the English Civil War and its consequences on her family. In reaching this turning point, Cavendish draws on a Biblical text, specifically the Old Testament Book of Job: "but when they were at *London* (…) they met every day, feasting each other like *Job's* Children" (45). This sudden allusion to the Bible is unusual in Cavendish's writings, considering how, in the words of Gweno Williams, "[u]nlike the majority of women writers of the period, Cavendish is a predominantly secular writer who rarely invokes the Bible as intertext" (171). Indeed, as previously mentioned, part of Cavendish's display of originality in her autobiography is rooted in how she moves away from the period's traditions of spiritual autobiographical writing. Therefore, one might consider her Biblical reference as inept and out of place, bordering on satire of the intimate relationship of her siblings. However, as Williams points out, "a reference to Job would have been unequivocally symbolic of loss, destruction and despair in this period" (171), which is revealed in the following excerpt from the Book of Job:

there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: And behold there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee (KJV Online, Job. 1.18-19).

In Cavendish's rewriting of this apocalyptic disruption in the family paradise, the sudden "wind from the wilderness" takes the form of the English Civil War in which the royalists were the losing part: "But this unnatural War came like a Whirlwind, which fell'd down their Houses, where some in the Wars were crusht to death" (45). Accordingly, this Biblical allusion functions as a figure of pathos, appealing to the readers' emotions by emphasizing the loss suffered in the Lucas family as a result of the Civil War. By presenting the personal loss of the family in this manner, Cavendish turns the public disorder and ruins of the war into a private tragedy in what she had earlier portrayed as an idealized picture of a family constituting a stable microsociety.

After the emotive portrayal of the loss suffered in the Lucas family at this turning point in her narrative, Cavendish turns to her own personal loss by this disruption in the family structure. This establishes the beginning of her own road to a sense of individuality by a removal from the homogenous unit that constituted her childhood home. The removal is interestingly not solely caused by the external forces of the wars. Indeed, Cavendish illustrates how her separation from the family is actually initiated by her own choice of joining the Court of Queen Henrietta Maria: "sometime after this War began, I knew not how they lived; for though most of them were in *Oxford*, wherein the King was, yet after the Queen went from *Oxford*, and so out of *England*, I was parted from them; for when the Queen was in *Oxford*, I had a great desire to be one of her Maids of Honour" (46). Up until this point in her autobiography, Cavendish has referred to herself and her own actions predominantly as a passive observer of the family structure in which she has situated herself: "*I observed* they did seldome hawk or hunt" (44), "*I did observe*, that my Sisters were so far from mingling themselves with any other Company" (45) (my emphasis). Cavendish' sudden reference to her own desires forms the beginning of how she turns from the external world that she has observed through her childhood, to the internal world of her mind, a transition that will ultimately reveal her individuality, distanced from the "one Minde" of her siblings. This removal from the interchangeability of her family members is emphasized by her siblings' disapproval of her choice to leave the stability of their home: "my Brothers and Sisters

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seem'd not very well pleas'd, by reason I had never been from home, nor seldome out of their sight (…) for I was bashfull when I was out of my Mothers, Brothers, and Sisters sight" (46). However, the subsequent difficulties she experiences by this separation become evident as Cavendish explains that the loss of the security offered by her siblings results in anxieties connected to both her private and public self: "when I was gone from them I was like one that had no Foundation to stand, or Guide to direct me, which made me afraid, lest I should wander with Ignorance out of the waies of Honour, so that I knew not how to behave my self" (46). Thus, the self-imposed loss of her idealized family structure, followed by the destruction of this structure as a consequence of the Civil War, encompass two causes of grief for Cavendish, both of which are part of her development of a melancholic subjectivity.

As Cottegnies concludes, "[r]ealizing too late what paradise she has lost, Cavendish describes how the homogeneous, profoundly equalitarian family group constituted a warm, protective cell united by common ethics and a common language, which she also loses as soon as she leaves" (111). Indeed, considering how she writes about this family structure as a backward glance from her present exile, it is interesting to note how Cavendish presents this order as a static unity, despite her knowledge of its unavoidable collapse. The ruin of the seemingly immutable order makes the loss she experiences appear as more severe, due to how its stability, as indicated by Cottegnies' previous comment, created the illusion of eternity. Cottegnies further observes how the Civil War comprises a "temporal landmark" (110) illustrating "the symbolical entry into time and mortality that is a consequence of the breaking out of the Civil War" (110). This move from a world of stasis and eternity to a world of mutability and mortality, followed by the mourning of the previous order, echoes the common notion in the Renaissance tradition that "mutability and misery imply each other" (Dollimore 74). Poets like John Donne emphasize this link in his works, exploring the "[v]ariable, and therefore miserable condition of Man" (*Selected Prose*, 99). Donne writes about how we are thrown into mortal time at our birth ("wee come [into the world] to *seeke a grave*" [*Selected Prose*, 313]) and are victims of mutability that inevitably constitutes "passages from *death* to *death*" (*Selected Prose*, 312) into our inevitable non-being.

By contrast, Cavendish's entrance into mortal time due to the separation of the stability of her family is presented as an opportunity to develop a form of individuality. Indeed, it is through her removal from the world of stasis and eternity that Cavendish is able to form a selfhood, similar to the Lacanian theory of subject formation. According to this model, the child moves from the imaginary (where, in the words of Robert Dale Parker, "there

is no difference and no absence" [139]) into the symbolic (where "difference and absence reign" [Parker 139]) in developing a form of subjectivity. We see a similar shift in Cavendish's self-presentation, as she moves from a state of being the passive and silent observer in a unity of interchangeable characters deprived of difference to turning inwards and forming a selfhood distanced from this homogenous order.

This move from completeness to absence and difference is revealed in Cavendish's creation of an interior self-portrait in terms of fragmented and unstable temperaments and moods that border on self-contradiction: "I am seldom angry (…) but when I am angry, I am very angry (…) I am neither spitefull, envious, nor malicious (…) yet I am a great Emulator" (*True Relation*, 61). Her unstable self-portrayal can further be observed in how she inhabits a space between defining herself in relation to others as well as "the Renaissance prescription for ideal femininity" (Brodzki and Schenck 9), and developing self-characterizations removed from others. The external disorder of wartime reflects Cavendish's internal chaos constituted by self-contradictions, which renders her fragmented and destabilized. As Brodzki and Schenck observe, "[h]er deft evasions and purposive self-contradictions serve to detail a vivid and protean personality, to render a self that is impossible to fix or to name" (9). Subsequently, this self-presentation, revealing how she cannot be pinned down into essentialist categories, portrays Cavendish as a signifier with no clear signified, similar to the Derridean notion of *différance*, defined as "the inevitable gap between the signifier and the signified, the gap that keeps meanings from ever settling into something stable, the gap that keeps all meaning unstable" (Parker 95-96). As an early modern example of what can be considered a poststructuralist subject, then, Cavendish's self-presentation, in the transition from stability to difference, portrays a multiple and fragmented self, mirroring the fragmented and brief autobiography in which she places this subjectivity. As will be explored in the final subchapter on Cavendish, this fragmented self can be connected to her "paper bodies" (Cavendish's own term for her literary works), in which Cavendish inscribes multiple self-portraits. For now, however, it will suffice to conclude that her path to a selfhood, as presented in her autobiography, is rooted in the various losses she suffers when entering the world of mortality and earthly time, which ultimately, as I will illustrate in the following paragraphs, play an important part in Cavendish's portrayal of a melancholic subjectivity.

As previously mentioned, the turning point of the autobiography encompasses a shift in Cavendish's portrayals of herself and her actions, moving from depictions of her family's household in the external world to the internal universe of her mind and her persona's

"Naturall" (*True Relation*, 53) dispositions. Both the self-imposed loss of her family's gaze as she chooses to leave the stability of her childhood home, and the loss she suffers by the death of family members following the outbreak of the Civil War disrupt the stability of her inner and outer world. Cavendish points to this connection by referring to her loss of foundation and guidance when not under the controlling gaze of her mother and siblings. As I will demonstrate, this twofold loss is presented in ways that illustrate various aspects of Cavendish's melancholy self-portrayal. Although the two losses are connected, I believe that separate analyses of how they are presented will render a broader insight into Cavendish's complex representation of melancholia in her autobiography. Accordingly, while the following paragraphs will focus on the self-imposed loss of her family's gaze, the subsequent subchapter will centre on the second loss Cavendish suffers during the Civil War, namely the tragedy that strikes her idealized family portrait by the death of her mother and other family members.

The consequences of the self-imposed loss is presented in a way that evokes the idea of melancholia similar to Freud's model of this state of pathological mourning in "Mourning and Melancholia". In his essay, Freud considers the similarities between the work of mourning in melancholia and in "normal" mourning, asserting that "[m]ourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (243). In other words, the loss of an object is the central cause triggering both the work of mourning and melancholia. The difference between "normal" mourning and melancholia, however, centres on the mourner's relationship with the lost object and the consequent effect the loss has on the subject's ego. In "normal" mourning, the mourner goes through a process of removing the libido from the lost object: "Each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object is brought up and hypercathected, and detachment of the libido is accomplished in respect of it" (245), resulting in the ego becoming "free and uninhibited again" (245). In melancholia, on the other hand, the mourner incorporates the lost object into the ego, meaning that the mourner establishes "an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object" (249). Based on this distinction between "normal" grief and melancholia, Freud concludes that "[i]n mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself" (246). As David L. Eng explains in relation to Freud's essay, "[t]he turning of the lost object into the ego (…) marks a turning away from the external world of the social to the internal world of the psyche" (1276).

Such conversion from the external world to the internal realm is, as previously stated, evident in Cavendish's self-presentation succeeding the turning point of her autobiography. In this transition, moreover, she demonstrates an identification with the lost object, similar to Freud's melancholic. Indeed, in Cavendish's self-portrayal when in the presence of others at the Queen's Court, she explains how she had difficulties in knowing how to behave, viewing herself in a critical manner, as though through the controlling gaze of her siblings, without which she is deprived of stability and foundation:

> being dull, fearfull, and bashfull, I neither heeded what was said or practic'd, but just what belong'd to my loyal duty, and my own honest reputation; and indeed I was so afraid to dishonour my Friends and Family by my indiscreet actions (…) in truth my bashfulness and fears made me repent my going from home to see the World abroad (46).

Her critical assessment of her personal dispositions, followed by the regret of her self-imposed loss of the stability and control offered by her family, illustrate how she sees herself in the same critical manner as her siblings who also disapproved of her leaving this secure unity. In other words, in this excerpt, Cavendish demonstrates how, just as Freud's melancholic, she has incorporated the lost object, that is, her family's controlling gaze that stabilizes and controls her behaviour. Critically viewing herself through this lost object, Cavendish evokes the melancholic condition as explained by Freud: "the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object" (249). The "ghost" of her siblings' gaze haunts her inner world as well as the pages of her autobiography.

Furthermore, her critical self-assessment, rooted in her personal traits of being "dull, fearfull, and bashfull", resembles Freud's portrayal of the melancholic in terms of critical self-reproaches: "In the clinical picture of melancholia, dissatisfaction with the ego on moral grounds is the most outstanding feature. The patient's self-evaluation concerns itself much less frequently with bodily infirmity, ugliness or weakness, or with social inferiority" (247-248). Such emphasis on moral as opposed to bodily features in relation to self-reproaches appears to be the basis for Cavendish's negatively charged assessment of herself as well. Indeed, her fear of behaving dishonourably is connected to her aristocratic "breeding", and seeing how, in the words of Cottegnies, her siblings "constituted her privileged public" (111), her loss of this stability in the public threatens her social position. This suggests that the

incorporation of her family's gaze is also an effect of this social position and its moral boundaries. Her personal traits, unrestrained when not under the surveillance of her family, threatens her cultural position, causing her to turn reproaches towards herself, based on the incorporated gaze of her siblings.

One might object that these instances of self-reproach in Cavendish's presentation of herself are grounded in the incorporation of the critical gaze of her family (the lost object) and not directed toward the incorporated lost object in the ego, which Freud suggests could be the reason for the melancholic's self-criticisms. According to Freud, "the self-reproaches are reproaches against a loved object which have been shifted away from it on to the patient's own ego" (248). However, the reason for Cavendish's self-reproach, namely the previously mentioned personal traits she critically views, are important to consider in Cavendish's presentation of a melancholic subjectivity. Although being a cause of self-criticism, these traits, particularly her state of being "naturally bashfull" (62) further evoke the image of the melancholic. This will become clearer if we consider what this bashfulness signifies. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word "bashful" in terms of "shrinking from publicity," and being shamefaced or shy. It can also mean that one is "sensitively modest in demeanour", "embarrassed and ill at ease in society" and "sheepish" (OED Online, *adj.,* 2). As this definition indicates, the bashful person prefers solitude rather than social settings, in which the subject is ill at ease and suffers states of nervousness and shyness. Such a description can be applied to Cavendish's self-portrayal. Cavendish explains how she finds this "defect" troublesome in social settings: "for it hath many times obstructed the passage of my speech, and perturbed my Naturall actions, forcing a constrainedness or unusuall motions" (53). She concludes that she "durst neither look up with [her] eyes, nor speak, nor be any way sociable, insomuch as [she] was thought a Natural fool" (46). Her bashful nature silences her in social settings, and although she fears that she will be viewed as a "Natural fool" in the company of others, she states that she "rather chose to be accounted a Fool, than to be thought rude or wanton" (46).

As opposed to being considered a "disorder" in the public, however, her bashfulness takes on a different character when in the private sphere. Indeed, while this "[n]aturall defect" (53) causes ridicule in the judgemental gaze of the public, it opens for a self-presentation demonstrating a form of melancholy connected to creativity in the private sphere. Although this will be further explored in the third subchapter, where I will give a detailed analysis of Cavendish's bashful nature connected to her portrayal of her own writing method, I will here

introduce this part of Cavendish's melancholic subjectivity before turning to the more extensive analysis in the final subchapter. Following Cavendish's account of her time spent at Court, she offers a backward glance to her early years, a move by which we can observe the narrative shift in which she goes from being the passive observer to portraying her own subjectivity. Again, Cavendish goes back to her childhood, but this time, she portrays herself rather than the other members of her family: "I being addicted from my childhood, to contemplation rather than conversation, to solitariness rather than society, to *melancholy* rather than *mirth*, to write with the pen rather than to work with a needle" (57) (my emphasis). Her preferences, originating from her childhood, of solitude and contemplation rather than conversations in social settings mirror her earlier account of her "disorder" of being bashful. Placing the similar attributes of her persona in the private sphere, however, creates an image of the melancholic creator rather than the "fool", especially as she connects this image of the sad, lonely and contemplating subject to the art of writing. Thus, her bashfulness, although seemingly a source of ridicule in the gaze of the public as well as a cause of self-reproaches in social contexts, plays a significant part in Cavendish's presentation of herself as a melancholic subject. This is further suggested by Cavendish's explanation of how this "Naturall defect (…) *if it be a defect*, is rather a fear than a bashfulness" (53) (my emphasis). The categorization of this trait as a fear echoes the long tradition of melancholy as characterized in terms of two particular symptoms, namely fear and sorrow. As mentioned in the thesis's main introduction, Bright analysed the central position of these symptoms in his treatise. Following this tradition, Burton states in his *Anatomy* that "fear and sorrow (…) are most assured signs, inseparable companions, and characters of melancholy" (1: 385). Cavendish's insistence that this disposition is innate and natural to her, and her scepticism of it being a defect furthermore suggests that her bashfulness may also provide some special opportunities. As will be further explored in the final subchapter on Cavendish, these opportunities can be observed by her literary endeavours in the private sphere.

2.2 Memory, Mourning and Literary Monuments

The second object-loss Cavendish suffers at the turning point of the autobiography takes the form of the loss of family members following the outbreak of the Civil War. As previously stated, her bashfulness, as part of her melancholic subjectivity, is a form of fear, unrestrained when not under the critical gaze of her siblings. The other most common feature in melancholy, namely sadness, becomes part of her self-presentation when mourning the death of her loved ones. This bereavement is connected to the self-imposed loss of the stability of her idealized family structure explored in the previous subchapter (as both losses are part of the destruction of this unity). However, the two differ in significant ways in relation to how they are presented at the turning point, with the common denominator of both being part of Cavendish's self-display as a melancholic. While the loss of the stability and foundation offered by her family's gaze is portrayed as an object-loss she incorporates into her ego, resulting in instances of self-reproach, the deaths of her mother as well as several of her siblings and her brother-in-law are presented as causes of mourning that she, consequently, attempts to depict in a textual expression of grief. Therefore, although both causes of mourning centre on a loss in the external world and its consequences on the mourner's internal universe, the different presentations of the two losses in her literary work indicate that we should read them separately. By doing so, we perceive the complex representation of her work of mourning and, consequently, the development of a self-display demonstrating melancholic selfhood.

As mentioned in the previous subchapter, her work of mourning in incorporating her family's controlling gaze is connected to the cultural expectations of her social status. Similarly, the work of grief displayed in the second loss is equally blurring the borders between the external (public) and the internal (private). However, in the latter work of mourning, the borders between the public and the private centre on the expression of mourning itself. Indeed, in Cavendish's presentation of her lost loved ones, she creates literary monuments of her family members, performing private mourning on a public "stage". By employing cultural rituals of grief in creating monuments of her deceased family members, she blurs the borders of public and private grief, which again affects Cavendish's portrayal of her selfhood. Furthermore, in articulating her grief and placing it in a textual memorial, Cavendish challenges the gendered borders between rival forms of grief that dominated the period, as female grief was considered immoderate and excessive in contrast to the self-control revealed in its male equivalent. Cavendish's work of mourning in articulating

sadness and, consequently, creating a subjectivity based on this grief by which she portrays herself as a melancholic, will be the focal point of this subchapter.

In the early modern period, funeral monuments and epitaphs functioned as objects that connected the living mourners with the deceased. The nature of this link between the living and the dead changed, however, after the Reformation. As Peter Marshall observes in his discussion on this change in relation to the meaning of monuments, "the funeral monuments of later Reformation England seem profoundly 'retrospective', designed solely to commemorate the past achievements of the dead, in contrast to the 'prospective' monuments of an earlier period, focusing on the fate of the deceased in the afterlife" (275). The changing features of epitaphs and tombs, as they "regularly emphasized the 'fame' of their subjects, which death could not extinguish" (Marshall 272) altered the previous monumental inscriptions focusing on what awaits the deceased after death. In other words, the shift was marked by a "refocusing of the quest of personal 'immortality' on the things of this life rather than the next" (Marshall 276). Accordingly, as Elizabeth Hodgson notes, "[t]his monumental connection between the dead and the living changes form, but in some respects not function, over the Tudor and Stuart centuries" (10). In her recent study, *Grief and Women Writers in the English Renaissance* (2015), Hodgson explores the connections between the dead and mourners in literary works by four women writers of the early modern period (Mary Sidney Herbert, Aemelia Lanyer, Mary Wroth and Katherine Philips). Although she does not include Cavendish among these women, I see her study on the mourners' complex link with the deceased as applicable to Cavendish's literary monuments of her dead family members in her autobiography, as tombs and textual memorials served similar functions. In effect, as Hodgson explains, "[m]onuments and memorials in their physical form were increasingly interchangeable with textual remembrances (…) and the functions of the one were often reflected in the conventions of the other" (11). Memorials and textual commemorations centred on remembrance, creating the illusion of post-mortem continuity in the memories and monuments of the dead. Cavendish's autobiography offers examples of such commemorations of her departed family members. She portrays monumental accounts of their lives and deeds while, simultaneously, creating a portrait of herself by expressing her own emotions of grief through these textual monuments. This depiction of her inner universe of sentiments in relation to her portrayals of deceased family members can also be connected to the changed form of memorials in the seventeenth century. In this change, we observe, according to Marshall, "the presence of a more affective language of loss and bereavement"

(271). Moreover, as will be uncovered in this subchapter, this emotional portrayal of mourning is part of her self-display of melancholic selfhood.

In depicting the "ruine" (*True Relation*, 48) of her family's stable unity, caused by "these unhappy Wars" (48), Cavendish constructs a detailed image of the head of this household, namely her mother. She explains how her mother never remarried: "for she never forgot my Father so as to marry again; indeed he remain'd so lively in her memory, and her grief was so lasting, as she never mention'd his name" (48). This connection between grief and commemoration, portrayed as the memory of her deceased father haunting her mother's consciousness, echoes the growing form of monumental connection between the dead and the living in the seventeenth century. Thus, the opening of the literary monument of her mother evokes an image of a memorial of her father. In remembering her mother, Cavendish portrays her as the mourning widow carrying the memory of her husband as if her mind is the very monument of Cavendish's father. In this reading, one might see her depiction of her mother's grief as a reflection of her own mourning in writing the monuments of her deceased family members.

The two women's works of mourning, however, are displayed in dissimilar ways, suggesting that Cavendish seeks to separate the two monumental connections between the dead and the mourner. Indeed, as Cavendish depicts her grief-stricken mother who "made her house her Cloyster" (48) by "inclosing her self" (48), unable to articulate her loss as "love and grief caused tears to flow, and tender sighs to rise, mourning in sad complaints" (48), she consequently illustrates the passive and inarticulate state of her mother's mourning. In contrast to her mother's inability to articulate her loss, Cavendish's detailed portrayal of her deceased mother demonstrates her ability to express her grief in a literary work, consequently constructing herself as an active mourner capable of expressing sadness and grief. This distinction between the passive (inarticulate) and active (articulate) mourner can be connected to "the period's gendered culture of grief" that Patricia Phillippy explores in her study *Women, Death and Literature in Post-Reformation England* (2002) (4). Whereas female grief was devalued and considered as "excessive, violent, and immoderate" (Phillippy 1), men's grief was characterized as moderate, "correcting and improving upon 'wivishe' mourning" (1). Schiesari further links these gendered forms of mourning to the culture's gender-determined division in relation to articulating loss, as she explains how the period's devaluation of women's grief "is expressed by less flattering allusions to widow's weeds, inarticulate weeping, or other signs of ritualistic (but intellectually and artistically

unaccredited) mourning" (12). Therefore, by contrasting her own work of mourning to the excessive grief of her mother, Cavendish demonstrates a more moderate and controlled form of mourning by articulating her loss in a literary work. In doing so, she challenges the period's gendered binary opposition between male and female forms of grieving.

The division between the active and passive mourner is reflected in two female characters in Cavendish's play *Bell in Campo*. This play, and its representation of grief and monuments, has been studied by Holly Faith Nelson and Sharon Alker in their essay on *Bell in Campo*. Set in a wartime (with possible connections to the Civil War) this play portrays three women, Lady Victoria, Madam Jantil and Madam Passionate, who are faced with the bleak possibility of widowhood as their husbands are being summoned to the battlefront. While Lady Victoria decides to join her husband in the war, Madam Jantil and Madam Passionate, both of whom are widowed through the course of the war, remain at home. The subsequent mourning performed by the two war widows invokes the previously mentioned division between the passive and the active mourner. Madam Passionate's excessive and uncontrolled grieving over the loss of her husband, as she collapses several times on stage by the news of his death, is explained by Madam Jantil's observation of how "her Spirits are drown'd in Sorrow, and Grief hath stopt her breath (…) her Passions lie on heaps, and so oppress life, it cannot stir, but makes her senceless" (Cavendish, *Bell in Campo*, 130). This reminds us of Cavendish's mother's state of passivity following the loss of her husband. In contrast to what Nelson and Alker refer to as the "conventional, unstable, 'womanly'" (19) display of emotions performed by Madam Passionate, Madam Jantil's work of mourning is conveyed in a more moderate and controlled manner. In the stage direction of the scene in which she learns of her husband's death, Madam Jantil is to appear in a restrained performance of grief, as "the Lady seems not disturb'd, but appears as usually" (129). In her work of mourning, she expresses her grief through two kinds of monuments, a marble tomb and a textual monument, each of which contain the memory of her deceased husband. Her performance of private mourning, juxtaposed by the public spectacle of ritualistic grief represented by the marble tomb which offers a "spectacular platform, a glorious space on which Madam Jantil will stage her mourning" (Nelson and Alker 23), blurs the borders between public and private grief in the play.

Similarly, Cavendish's textual monument of her mother, staged on a platform of public loss and disorder caused by the Civil War, offers a performance of private mourning that illustrates her capacity to articulate her grief in an active and controlled manner. In this

way, she turns loss into a creative textual representation of mourning and, by this, displays loss in a manner similar to what Schiesari claims to be the male melancholic's privilege in converting "the feeling of disempowerment into a privileged artifact" (8). Thus, in Cavendish's literary monument, the reader observes the mourner as exposing a melancholic subjectivity through a performance of grief that, as Nelson and Alker note in relation to Madam Jantil's performance, "enjoys great rhetorical, poetic, and theatrical authority, one that eschews conventional female practices of mourning" (19). In the following, I will explore the ways in which both Cavendish and her fictional character fashion their monuments, focusing on how they display their loss in terms of rhetorical devices, presentations of public and private mourning and strategies of immortalization in converting object-loss into artistic expressions.

As the previous quote from Nelson and Alker's essay suggests, the melancholic performance of Madam Jantil in *Bell in Campo* is "decorated" by the appliance of artistic and rhetorical techniques, mirroring the ornaments decorating the marble tomb she designs for her husband. Having hired "the best and curioust Carvers or Cutters of Stones to make a Tomb" (*Bell in Campo*, 131) in accordance to her own instructions, Madam Jantil designs a monument featuring Roman gods, an image of her husband ("which face I would have to the life as much as Art can make it" [131]) wearing his armour, surrounded by marble pillars and other extravagant details of artistry. After she gives the directions of how she wishes the marble tomb to be shaped, Madam Jantil offers a textual monument of her husband, closing scene 21 of the play's first part with a performance of her mourning. While carrying "the heavy burden of Melancholy" (134), she poetically expresses her grief:

> Inurn my sighs which from my grief is sent,
> With my hard groans build up a Monument;
> My Tongue like as a pen shall write his name,
> My words as letters to divulge his fame (134).

By placing the memory of her husband in a textual monument in the shape of a poem, Madam Jantil creates a memorial with similar artistic "decorations" as the marble tomb. She employs rhetorical devices such as *prosopopeia*, also known as personification, which is used in order to present abstract concepts or non-human objects in a way that gives them human qualities (Silva Rhetoricae, *prosopopeia*, 1), ("Weep cold Earth", "But Death is generous and sets us free"). She also "decorates" her monument with figures of pathos, used to provoke emotional

response, in her expression of emotions and loss. Ultimately, as Nelson and Alker conclude, Madam Jantil's melancholic performance is "active in relation to both aesthetic creation and performance" (19), creating a monument of private grief that mirrors the public spectacle of mourning offered by the marble tomb.

As I argue, the type of active mourning whereby grief is turned into art is represented in other works besides *Bell in Campo*. One can see this artistic and rhetorically rich shaping of monumental connection between the dead and the living very clearly in Cavendish's portrait of her mother in *A True Relation* as well. Following the vivid and detailed description of how her mother was driven out of her home during the war, being "loyall to the King" (*True Relation*, 48), Cavendish portrays her mother as having a "[h]eroick Spirit" (a characterization she applies to her father at the opening of her autobiography as well), evoking the reader's feelings in revealing her mother as "suffering patiently where there is no remedy" (48). This epideictic speech honouring her mother's actions after the destruction of her household is juxtaposed by an allusion to the executed king. Cavendish speaks of how her mother had such a "Magestick Grandeur (…) that it would strike a kind of an awe to the beholders, and command respect from (…) the rudest of civiliz'd people" (48), before connecting the actions of the "Barbarous people" (48) who destroyed her mother's house to their act of pulling "Royaltie out of his Throne" (48). This brief reference to the regicide invites two different interpretations. First, one might consider the brevity of the allusion as demonstrating, in Williams's words, "the traumatic impact of the king's execution as an apparent point of no return for royalists, particularly for those who, like Cavendish, were in exile" (170). As Cavendish writes from the position of a royalist in exile (before the Restoration), the briefness indicates the possible dangers of mourning and remembering the dead, seeing how, in the words of Hodgson, "as the king himself became a martyr and his courtiers his rather precarious mourners, political grief became a high-risk game of alliances" (2).

However, the brevity of the allusion to the regicide invites a second interpretation, linked to Cavendish's presentation of public and private loss and the text's treatment of time as displayed in her creation of textual monuments commemorating family members. By connecting the two events, namely the destruction of her family's house and the execution of King Charles I, she effectively links private and public loss, fusing together, as Anna Battigelli notes, "personal and political history, linking her personal pain to political events" (41-42). This link can be seen in Hodgson's discussion on Katherine Philips's poems as well.

Hodgson observes how Philips, as opposed to creating a tension between the private and the public in her writings, employs a "mutually constitutive mourning rhetoric" (106) in which private losses are linked to public meaning. As Hodgson concludes, Philips builds "inward monuments to the dead that are somehow also in public view" (107). This interconnection between private and public loss, as well as the monumental connection between the dead and the living, is evident in Cavendish's textual monument of her mother as well. Just as she blurs the borders between external and internal loss, she links the royalist work of grief connected to the execution of the head of state to the mourning of her "head" of the family household of her childhood. Nevertheless, the previously mentioned briefness of her account of the wars, adding to a general pattern in her autobiography of how, as Williams observes, "[m]ajor and decisive political events are either omitted or registered with surprising brevity" (170), reveals how Cavendish places more emphasis on the private (internal) as opposed to the public (external) in her literary work. In contrast to the detailed and emotional portrayals of her deceased family members, the brevity of the events and public losses caused by the wars indicates how the monuments are centred around the private loss she has suffered, placing her performance of internal mourning in the centre, while situating the public losses of the wars in the background. I see this as part of what I, in the previous subchapter, referred to as Cavendish's shift from the external world to her internal universe at the turning point of the autobiography. Similar to how she moves from external observations to portraying the internal universe of her mind, the connection in her textual monument between the public loss of the war and her private mourning of her deceased family members blurs the borders between external (public) and internal (private) mourning, while the asymmetrical space given to each situates her private loss in the centre.

In this way, Cavendish positions her personal loss as a focal point in her work of mourning. Similar to her monumentalizing of her mother's memory, she proclaims in relation to her deceased brother-in-law that she "will build his Monument of truth, though [she] can not of Marble, and hang [her] tears as Scutchions on his Tombe" (50), a monument she further "decorates" with portrayals of his person and achievements. Moreover, this post-mortem continuity, rooted in what Hodgson described as monumental connection between the mourner and the deceased, challenges the course of time itself, as it evokes an image of immutability. Harold Weber explores this idea of monumental search for immutability and remembrance in after ages in his study *Memory, Print, and Gender in England, 1653-1759* (2008), where he considers Cavendish's works in relation to monumentality. Building on

Sanford Levinson's idea of how "[a]ll monuments are efforts, in their own way, to stop time" (Levinson 7), Weber connects this assessment of architectural monuments to written memorials, emphasizing their ability to "cheat time and conquer oblivion in spite of their apparent fragility" (30). This search for monumental remembrance preserved for future generations is revealed in Cavendish's textual commemorations. Similar to Madam Jantil's concern with how tombs might be destroyed by both the destructions of war as well as the ruins of time, resulting in her desiring a textual monument to obtain the memory of her husband, Cavendish demonstrates the same search of preserving the "fame" of her brother-in-law, as well as her mother in her literary monuments.

This is especially evident in Cavendish's way of challenging time through language itself. Indeed, as Cavendish portrays her mother's looks, stating how "she had a well favoured loveliness in her face, a pleasing sweetness in her countenance, and a well temper'd complexion, as neither too red, nor too pale" (48), she effectively creates an image of her mother's looks that she subsequently freezes by declaring how "her beauty was beyond the ruin of time" (48). By employing the rhetorical device of *prosopopoeia*, Cavendish depicts the immortality of her mother's beauty in explaining how not even death could make her looks decay, as "death was enamoured with her, for he imbraced her in a sleep, and so gently, as if he were afraid to hurt her" (48). As she personifies death, she consequently makes death come alive, which mirrors her way of keeping her mother alive in this text, as she creates a monument obtaining her memory. According to Marshall, "it was common for the 'memorial' or 'remembrance' of the dead person to take on an essentially reified quantity" (275). Moreover, by following the Post-Reformation fashion of creating "retrospective" monuments centring on the achievements of the deceased, Cavendish monumentalizes her mother's accomplishments in her life, depicting her deeds as "ruler" of both the household and the idealized family structure that Cavendish portrayed prior to the turning point of the autobiography. Ultimately, Cavendish turns the loss of her mother into a textual monument that will overcome "the ruin of time" (48) as a memorial object in which the dead will haunt the pages of her work in after ages.

By way of challenging time through the written word, Cavendish displays a search to create control out of chaos. In contrast to the chaotic subject matter of her autobiography, dominated by disruptions and loss caused by the war, Cavendish's written commemorations offer a sense of timelessness and stability. The external "ruins" of time and war are thus contrasted to the stability and constancy of Cavendish's private mourning. As Cavendish

proclaims: "I finde the naturall affections, I have for my friends, are beyond the length, strength and power of time: for I shall lament the loss so long as I live" (50). On the one hand, the "I" in this excerpt refers to Cavendish writing these monuments, who proclaims that she will grieve the loss of her loved ones for the rest of her life. On the other hand, the excerpt points to the "I" inscribed in the text, that is, the autobiographical "I" placed in her textual commemorations. This mourning self, enclosed in her autobiography, shall outlive her in the textual memorials that neither the ruins of the war, nor the ruins of time can destroy.

Cavendish's search for stability and immortalization through the written word, combined with her display of moderate and controlled grief, reveal how her textual monuments portray an active, controlled and eloquently articulated form of mourning. Resembling Madam Jantil's creative and composed performance of grief in *Bell in Campo*, Cavendish's textual performance of mourning exposes the same ability of transforming loss into artistic expression. As previously mentioned, this conversion reflects Schiesari's account of male privileged melancholia as a display of loss that "converts the personal sorrow of some men into the cultural prestige of inspired artistry and genius" (12), a reflection that consequently challenges the culturally constructed privileging of male melancholics as it has been constructed from Burton's *Anatomy* to Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia". In Burton's gendered division of melancholia, the eloquence of the male melancholics is contrasted to the inarticulateness of the female equivalents who cannot "express themselves in words" (1: 416), as he explains in the section dedicated to female melancholics ("Symptoms of Maids', Nuns', and Widows' Melancholy"). Nearly 300 years later, this idea is echoed in Freud's presentation of the unproductive female melancholic who is not granted the possibility of converting loss into a privileged position of giftedness in his essay. By referring to melancholy women solely as types, he refuses them a subjectivity, contrasted to his reference to Hamlet, "whose illness makes of him a possible speaker of truths and visionary" (Schiesari 9). In breaking down this gendered division of melancholia, Cavendish's textual monuments reveal a transformation of loss into literary expression, ultimately converting the loss into a self-display of melancholic subjectivity similar to that of the privileged male melancholic. As I will demonstrate in the following subchapter, Cavendish further challenges this gender-based division by how she gains control over language through her self-proclaimed melancholy disposition.

Considering how the discourse of melancholia has historically been a gendered one that "legitimates that neurosis as culturally acceptable for particular men, whose eros is then

defined in terms of a literary production (…) while the viability of such appropriation seems systematically to elude women" (Schiesari 15), one might read Cavendish's "performance" of melancholia in her textual monuments in the Butlerian sense of the word. Philosopher and feminist critic, Judith Butler, developed the term "performativity" in order to demonstrate how gender is not a static essence, but rather, as she claims in her 1990 study, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* "an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through *stylized repetition of acts*" (191). As a gendered discourse then, combined with the general idea that "[m]elancholia, as a cultural category (…) is essentially theatrical" (Schiesari 236), the performative aspects of melancholia open for a reading of Cavendish's self-presentation as a "theatrical display of melancholy behavior" (Schiesari 236). Burton applies this performative behaviour to the melancholic as well: "To see a man turn himself into all shapes like a chameleon (…) to act twenty parts and persons at once for his advantage" (1: 65). Accordingly, in what might be considered as a predecessor of Butlerian performativity, Cavendish breaks down the binary opposition between what Schiesari explains as the culturally constructed "higher-valued" (male) and "lower-valued" (female) forms of melancholia (16). By her textual display of loss, she exposes her melancholic subjectivity as empowering and productive, in contrast to the culturally devalued, unproductive and disempowered female melancholic.

Furthermore, as a transition to the final subchapter on Cavendish, this "performance" of the gendered construction of melancholic privilege centring on converting loss into textual expression opens for a way for Cavendish to obtain a position of originality and authenticity through writing, a realm from which women were dominantly excluded at the time. Indeed, as Weber explains, "before the eighteenth century the term 'woman writer' might be considered an oxymoron" (29). This search for originality and empowerment as a writer is evident in the way in which Cavendish presents the loss she turns into textual expressions of grief. Again, a comparison with scene 21 in the first part of *Bell in Campo* will be useful in explaining this. Following her decision to hire a male poet that will create textual "[r]egisters of memory" (133) of her husband, Madam Jantil actually ends up performing this task herself. As opposed to other instances of poetic compositions uttered by Madam Jantil in the play, which, as explained in the play itself, Cavendish's husband wrote, Cavendish herself authored the poem by which Madam Jantil performs this task. Therefore, the poetic monument of her husband's memory grants Madam Jantil and, by her, Cavendish, the position of, in the words of Shannon Miller, "memorializing poet" (21). Although the framework and system of representation in

which she places her husband's memory is predominantly an area reserved for men, she claims authenticity as a female writer by turning her own personal mourning into poetic expression. Similarly, Cavendish's textual monuments, although "performed" in a system of representation dominated by men, centres on her own personal loss, while placing public loss and disorder as a backdrop for her own work of mourning. This focus on articulating her own personal loss points to her strive for originality in her writing, building a literary monument of her works which "are the buildings of [her] natural wit", as she explains in "A General Prologue to all my Playes" in her 1662 collection of plays (*Playes written by the thrice noble, illustrious and excellent princess, the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle*). The textual monuments she creates in her autobiography thus become part of Cavendish's desire to gain immortal fame in after ages through the monument built from her works, which she addresses as her "Cottage": "Thus I my poor built Cottage am content,/ When that I dye, may be my Monument" ("A General Prologue").

Cavendish's search for originality as a writer, as her texts emerge from her "natural wit", is part of how she wants to be remembered in posterity. This is demonstrated by her own funeral tomb in Westminster Abbey, where Cavendish's statue shows her holding a book open while an inkhorn is placed next to the book. Peter Beal states that the statue displays how Cavendish is "in effect, reading" (165), an assessment I find problematic. Rather than being monumentally represented as a reader, I share Amy Scott-Douglass's view in that Cavendish appears "as a *writer*" (167), as her hand covers the book while reaching for the inkhorn. Therefore, this memorial not only portrays Cavendish as a writer, but also as a particular kind of writer, as the hand covering the book hints at how her writings are presented as products of her own wit, allegedly without any reference to earlier writers or scholars, which again is linked to her self-presentation as a melancholic. This will be the focal point of the next subchapter on Cavendish.

2.3 The Solitary Writer's Melancholy Disposition

Whereas the first two subchapters centred on object-loss connected to Cavendish's self-presentation as a melancholic, this third and final subchapter will focus more on her self-proclaimed melancholy disposition in relation to her literary endeavours, as the two are predominantly linked in her self-presentation as a writer. As Douglas Trevor observes in *The Poetics of Melancholy in Early Modern England*, these two states of melancholia were commonly referred to as "natural" and "unnatural" melancholy in the early modern period, the latter being described as "objectally caused melancholy" in psychoanalytic terms (19). Distinguishing between these states, the French physician Jacques Ferrand explains in his treatise *Erotomania* (1610) how natural melancholy "accompanies a Man from his birth" while that "which is not Naturall, ariseth from the Defect of the Braine, when as the Imagination is deprived" (81). As I will demonstrate, Cavendish moves away from the cures generally prescribed for women suffering a similar state of natural as well as unnatural, or objectally caused, melancholia. She consequently challenges the dominating view in seventeenth-century medical discourses regarding female melancholia, as theorized by scholars like Burton.

Both natural and unnatural melancholy, or, as Ferrand calls it, "Naturall" and "Accidental" melancholy, constituted a frame within which writers could understand themselves and present a self as scholar and author in their literary endeavours in solitude. In his study, Trevor seeks to uncover this form of self-understanding in relation to melancholically inclined authors like Donne and Burton. As opposed to the academic studies among self-professed melancholics such as Burton and Donne, Cavendish's solitary contemplation did not involve the same kind of scholarly study, due to the lack of educational opportunities for women at the time. Excluded from the "cloistered world of Burton's Oxford" in which only men could enjoy the privilege of higher education, women had scarce resources by comparison (Trevor 21). According to Trevor, even women like Cavendish, who were surrounded by prominent learned men, were bound by gender considerations in their self-presentations (22). In his brief remark on female writers of the period, exemplified by Cavendish, Trevor explains the opportunities open for women writers thus: "Delimited by social conventions and prejudice, writing becomes an avenue by which an alternative, more fully realized life is imaginable" (21). Cavendish's literary production affirms this assertion of writing as an opportunity beyond gender-based limits, creating alternative spaces in which women might fashion a sense of self. Trevor also observes how, in relation to Cavendish's

literary endeavours, "[w]riting functions here as opening up an alternative space to male prerogative, which can be inhabited by the female thinker" (21-22). Although making this remark in connection to Cavendish, Trevor does not investigate her self-portrayal of being melancholic by disposition in relation to her writing practice. According to Trevor, it would take a separate study to give an account of female self-understood melancholics (21). This subchapter seeks to fill this gap in the existing criticism.

In this subchapter, I argue that Cavendish fashions herself as a melancholically inclined author, displaying her melancholic temperament as a source of productive creativity. She thereby reveals melancholy as empowering in literary production in general and, more particularly, in women's literary endeavours. Indeed, in her own portrayal of how she is dispositionally melancholic, she explains: "as for my Disposition, it is more inclining to be melancholy than merry, but not crabbed or peevishly melancholy, but soft melting solitary, and contemplating melancholy" (*True Relation*, 60). While exposing a self-understanding as a melancholic, Cavendish further points to how her melancholy temperament enables studious and creative endeavours by specifying her disposition as "contemplating melancholy". This self-presentation, forming a self through the written word from the position of her melancholy disposition, was generally considered as unachievable for women. In general, women were, as Cavendish herself explains, "more apt to Read than to Write" (*Sociable Letters*, 120), revealing the passive position of women in the literary realm and their inability to create. The "model" of subjectivity around which she centres her authorial self nonetheless makes for a less restrained process of literary production as well as a self-image of authenticity in relation to writing.

As I aim to demonstrate, Cavendish's self-presented method of writing deviates from the traditional techniques of textual production that dominated the literary realm of her contemporary society. Part of her uniqueness stems from the emphasis she places on being the solitary creator of her literary production. Rather than turning to external sources of the past in her textual practice, Cavendish turns inward to the privacy of her mind, presenting her literary works as products that are solely her own creation, without the voices of past scholars haunting her pages. As a result, this method of writing, rooted in her melancholy disposition, renders several multifaceted self-portraits of solitary characters in her literary works. This complex body of solitary self-images and the consequent mirroring between the isolated writer and the lonely self-portraits of her texts will be explored in this subchapter. In connection to this, I will turn to a number of Cavendish's paratexts. I adopt the term

"paratext" from Gérard Genette's work *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (1997). According to Genette, a paratext refers to productions that surround the main text and "extend it, precisely in order to *present* it" (1). Cavendish placed a vast number of such texts in her works, most often in the form of prefatory material. A selection of her paratexts will be examined in this subchapter, particularly among those found in her collection of poems published in 1653, *Poems and Fancies*. I aim to show how Cavendish's paratexts present the author's awareness of the possible scorn she might receive by publishing, while simultaneously displaying the author as the solitary reader of her works, creating a reflection between the isolated writer and the solitary reader. I will also examine the melancholy self-portraits Cavendish presents in other works, such as the collection of fictional letters called *Sociable Letters* (1664), in order to expose the mirroring effect between herself as the solitary reader and the many melancholy "selves" in her texts. By this, I seek to reveal the fragmented "self" she presents in her literary works. Furthermore, I will show how Cavendish's self-portrayal of her melancholy disposition, connected to her literary endeavours, ultimately reveals a form of "Miltonic" melancholia, in which the "sufferer" displays a higher degree of free will in connection to his or her condition and exposes solitary contemplation as liberating rather than endangering.

Opening this subchapter, I will again turn to my argument from the first subchapter on how Cavendish's melancholy disposition can be connected to various personal traits, her bashful nature in particular, presented as a cause of self-reproach in the public sphere. "Bashfulness" is also one of the many symptoms of melancholia that Burton lists in his *Anatomy*. As he explains: "Crato, Laurentius, and Fernelius put bashfulness for an ordinary symptom" (1: 395). Burton further points out how such melancholics are "so childish, timorous, and bashful, they can look no man in the face (…) they cannot speak, or put forth themselves as others can (…) unsociable, hard to be acquainted with, especially of strangers; they had rather write their minds than speak, and above all things love solitariness" (1: 395). This reminds us of Cavendish's self-presented bashful nature in her autobiography, as when she, distanced from the controlling gaze of her siblings, displays a nervousness in the public sphere. Her general preference of writing in solitude, favouring "contemplation rather than conversation" (*True Relation*, 57), also alludes to the symptom of melancholy bashfulness. This self-display thus confirms Burton's account of the melancholy condition, while at the same time challenging its gendered borders.

Considering how Burton portrays female melancholics in the section "Symptoms of

Maids', Nuns', and Widows' Melancholy", it becomes clear that bashfulness has a different effect in women than men. Indeed, Burton explains how women might obtain a "foolish kind of bashfulness" (1: 415) that, at first sight, might seem like the previously portrayed bashful nature of the (male) melancholic, as he further explains how "[t]hey take delight in nothing for the time, but love to be alone and solitary" (1: 416). Yet the bashful nature of the melancholic develops differently in women, for "[m]any of them cannot tell how to express themselves in words, or how it holds them, what ails them; you cannot understand them, or well tell what to make of their sayings" (1: 416). Burton repeats this claim of the female melancholic's inability to express herself after describing how the disease generally harms the female sufferers' bodies: "now their breasts, now their hypochondries, belly and sides, then their heart and head aches; now heat, then wind, now this, now that offends, they are weary of all; and yet will not, cannot again tell how, where, or what offends them" (1: 416). The silencing and ungovernable melancholy of "maids, nuns and widows" is therefore contrasted to the eloquence of the male melancholic writing in isolated contemplation. One may recognize the gender-based division between the eloquent male mourner and the inarticulate female equivalent portrayed in the previous subchapter.

The uncontrolled and inarticulate state of the female melancholic portrayed in this section of Burton's *Anatomy* exposes female melancholia as delimiting and restricting rather than empowering. In contrast to the possibilities of creating a subjectivity as a writer centred around one's melancholy disposition, female melancholics ought to marry, as "the best and surest remedy of all, is to see them well placed, and married to good husbands in due time" (Burton 1: 417). This notion of the female melancholic's need to subvert herself in her "lacking" position resembles Freud's examples of female melancholics in his "Mourning and Melancholia", specifically the "case of a betrothed girl who has been jilted" (245) and thereby suffered a loss "of a more ideal kind" (245), and "[t]he woman who loudly pities her husband for being tied to such an incapable wife as herself" (248). In both examples, the women are presented as melancholic as a result of their lacking position in relation to the supposed superiority of men. Ultimately, as Schiesari observes in relation to Burton's melancholic women, "[t]he source of their discomfort, just as for the women in Freud's essay, is supposedly the lack of a good man" (249-50). This is further emphasized by how Burton asserts that "[t]his melancholy may happen to widows with much care an sorrow (…) but to nuns and more ancient maids, and some barren women, for the causes abovesaid, 'tis more familiar" (1: 415), revealing how the disease is less frequent among women who have been

under the control of a husband. Implicitly, Burton's account renders female melancholia as, in Schiesari's words, "the result of a breakdown in the patriarchal order" (250). Through marriage, women will be cured of their disease by being under the control of their husband, as Burton implies later in his exhaustive work by stating how "[t]he husband rules her as head" (3: 53). Citing Plutarch, Burton further explains how "[a] good wife (…) should be as a looking-glass to represent her husband's face and passion" (3: 54). In other words, rather than creating a subjectivity based on their melancholy temperament, they ought to become copies or mirroring reflections of their husbands.

Similarly, Burton's other "cure" for melancholic women is found, as Schiesari notes, "in the phallic subservience of women, whether as servants or whores" (250), for, according to Burton, "seldom should you see an hired servant, a poor handmaid, though ancient, that is kept hard to her work and bodily labour, a coarse country wench, troubled in this kind" (1: 417). In Burton's influential work on melancholia, there seems to be no opportunity for women to transcend the damaging nature of the condition and achieve the status of "genius" in the tradition of Ficino. The hierarchal differentiation between men and women is also seen in Burton's evaluation of the ones most prone to become melancholic: "such as are solitary by nature, great students, given to much contemplation, lead a life out of action, are most subject to melancholy. Of sexes both, but men more often; yet women misaffected are far more violent, and grievously troubled" (1: 172). The different effect melancholia causes in men and women consequently degrades female melancholia by displaying it as an illness that renders its sufferer as inarticulate and lacking self-control.

As we see in Cavendish's autobiography, however, her bashfulness is not a disease that is "cured" at the point of her marriage with William Cavendish. On the contrary, Cavendish explains how her husband "did approve of those bashfull fears which many condemn'd" (*True Relation*, 47). As opposed to Burton's deterministic view of the uncontrolled female melancholic who is dependent upon male domination in order to control her unruly behaviour, Cavendish exhibits a more self-governable form of melancholia when moving from the public to the private sphere, resembling the bashful nature of Burton's male melancholic. As I revealed in the first subchapter, in describing her behavioural difficulties in social settings, Cavendish explains how her bashfulness obstructs her speech. Like Burton's assessment of the "bashful melancholic" who "had rather write their minds than speak", Cavendish demonstrates a power over language in the private sphere as opposed to her lack of linguistic control in the eye of the public. As Bowerbank and Mendelson briefly explains,

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"[t]hrough writing, Cavendish gains a measure of control over her body, her tongue, her gestures, her language" (14). This control over body and mind through solitary writing is revealed in the following excerpt from her autobiography:

> when I am writing any sad fain'd Stories, or serious humours or melancholy passions, I am forc'd many times to express them with the tongue before I can write them with the pen, by reason those thoughts that are sad, serious and melancholy, are apt to contract and to draw too much back, which oppression doth as it were over power or smother the conception in the brain, but when some of those thoughts are sent out in words, they give the rest more liberty to place themselves, in a more methodicall order, marching more regularly with my pen, on the ground of white paper (55-56).

Cavendish's employment of language in the private space of her chamber, culminating in the written word on the "ground of white paper", reveals a linguistic authority that challenges the general restrictions placed on women's access to language and the realm of literature during the period, as well as the more specific generalization of the female melancholic's inability to speak, as theorized by Burton. The general search for women's right to self-expression is a dominating theme in Cavendish's works, as Jacqueline Pearson observes in an essay on Cavendish's plays. Pearson explores the central part given to the plays' female characters, which deviates from the general pattern of theatrical production in Cavendish's contemporary society. In the plays, we are "introduced to play-worlds through women's eyes and women's language" (Pearson 33). A similar focus on a woman's right to claim access to the male-dominated language of her time is also present in *Poems and Fancies*. In an address "To All Noble and Worthy Ladies", she urges them to embrace the spoken and the written word: "may your *Wit* be *quick*, and your *Speech ready*, and your *Arguments* so *strong*, as to beat them out of the *Feild* of *Dispute*" (*Poems and Fancies*). Similarly, through the character Lady Sanspareile, Cavendish concludes in her play, *Youths Glory and Death's Banquet* (1662), "speaking belongs as much to the Female Sex as to the Masculine" (136). By presenting her own linguistic authority in her autobiography, Cavendish similarly lays claim to this right, through her melancholy disposition. In contrast to the inarticulateness of the female melancholic in Burton's *Anatomy*, the eloquence and self-control displayed in Cavendish's self-presented method of writing demonstrates a productive and coherent transformation of her bashful nature into artistic expression.

Cavendish's presentation of her melancholy disposition thus moves away from

Burton's gender-based division between the silenced and unproductive female melancholic and the eloquence of the loquacious male equivalent. Moving away from the cure prescribed for female melancholics, she similarly protests against the treatment recommended for her objectally caused melancholia. Recalling the previously mentioned distinction between "natural" and "unnatural" melancholy, we see how Cavendish, while seemingly being inflicted by both, rejects the recommended cures for either type of this disease. Significantly, both of these states of melancholia play a central part in Cavendish's self-portrayal through the pen. Cavendish's family doctor, Sir Theodore Mayerne diagnosed her with the disease "Melancholyk Hypocondriak" (Mendelson xiii), referring to a depressive state that he considered as caused by "the psychological impact of civil war, exile, and several deaths in her family during the late 1640s" (Mendelson xiii). Writing to Cavendish's husband, Mayerne criticized her refusal to follow his prescribed cure, asserting that, as Mendelson explains, Cavendish insistently worsened her condition by her literary endeavours (xiv). Cavendish's own treatments for her disease mirror the general pattern of self-determination she exhibits in the private sphere. She reveals a self-control over her body through regimes of "blood-letting" (Mendelson xiv) and fasting. Indeed, she explains that her "diet is for the most part sparing" (*True Relation*, 57), as if impersonating Burton's claim that bashful melancholics "will diet themselves, feed and live alone" (1: 396). Similarly exhibiting control over her own mind, Cavendish's writing practice allows her "fancies" (*True Relation*, 57) to be placed into a system of representation. Disregarding Mayerne's warning against her solitary writing, Cavendish, as demonstrated in the first two subchapters, turns the object losses that the physician identified as the cause of her suffering, into artistic expressions in her autobiography. Cavendish consequently demonstrates a control and self-determination both in relation to her mourning and her natural melancholy. Accordingly, melancholia is, in the words of Bowerbank and Mendelson, "the incurable 'natural defect' of [Cavendish's] body and the pre-condition of the courageous productivity of her mind" (14), ultimately constituting the character type around which she centres her individuality, particularly as a writer.

Presenting melancholia as a source of self, as opposed to a reason for being objectified similar to how Burton theorized female melancholia, Cavendish's self-understood melancholy is at the core of a subjectivity that challenges the gendered division of melancholia while reconceptualising its cures. This reconceptualization reappears in other texts in Cavendish's writings, often in a manner of satirizing the existing treatments of the disease, as Bowerbank

and Mendelson observe (13). As Lady Wagtail tells the melancholy Lady Ignorance in *Loves Adventures* (1662), "[i]f you are troubled with melancholly vapours, arising from crude humours, you must take as soon as you wake after your first sleep, a draught of Wormwood-wine, then lye to sleep again" (45). Lady Wagtail then lists various other treatments that might cure the young woman, all of which are connected to her body and diet, as opposed to her mind. While on the one hand demonstrating how diet played an important part in the general remedies recommended for melancholy troubles, this sole focus on the bodily treatment of Lady Ignorance further reveals how women were dominantly considered melancholic in relation to their (ungovernable) body, not mind. As previously mentioned, Burton also points to this division in the section devoted specifically to female melancholics. The satirical portrayal of how the melancholy woman might be cured in Cavendish's play therefore contrasts with Cavendish's own self-presented cures for her melancholia in her autobiography. Moving away from the treatments traditionally prescribed for melancholics, her isolated writing process becomes the sight in which balance and control are regained. This is contrasted to the advice Sir William Lovewell gives his melancholy wife in *Matrimonial Trouble* (1662), telling her to "goe abroad, to divert your melancholy, and eat as others do, that may have good meat and drink, and not live by the Air, as you do" (465).

Cavendish's self-control in the private sphere is further demonstrated by the restrictions she imposes upon her bodily movements in order to let her "thoughts run apace" (*True Relation*, 57). In Cavendish's own words: "should I Dance or Run, or Walk apace, I should Dance my Thoughts out of Measure, Run my Fancies out of Breath, and Tread out the Feet of my Numbers" (57). Applying "technical poetic terms" (Graham et al. 99 n. 17) that link the internal processes of her mind with the bodily movements she might have performed in the public sphere, Cavendish puns on words like "measure", "feet" and "numbers", connecting her mind and body in poetic practice. Carefully restricting every motion of her body in favour of letting her mind run more freely whilst writing, she explains how the motions of her mind hinder "the active exercises of [her] body" (57). The discrepancy of action performed by body and mind in the process of writing is explored in other works by Cavendish as well. In the first of the four poems in *Poems and Fancies* that are named "The Claspe", each functioning as "a brief, lyrical moment when Cavendish self-consciously reflects on her poetry" (Weber 39), she explains:

> When I did write this *Booke*, I took great paines,
> For I did walke, and thinke, and breake my Braines.

> My *Thoughts* run out of *Breath*, then downe would lye,
> And panting with short wind, like those that dye (47).

The writing process is thus portrayed as actions performed by mind and body. However, the more intense work of her thoughts, personified in order to contrast the slow pace of her body with the running of her mind, shows how her self-presented writing process is a process of turning inwards. By neglecting her body, Cavendish separates herself from the external world, a typical characteristic in the often isolated melancholic. This self-imposed seclusion demonstrates a form of exile in addition to her position as exiled royalist at the moment of writing her autobiography. In this way, she separates herself from the outside world both by enclosing herself in the privacy of her chamber, and by turning inwards into the universe of her own mind.

This isolation is further revealed in the lack of references to external sources of inspiration in her literary endeavours, displaying a form of solitude at the level of the text itself. Similarly, her autobiography contains very few if any references to outside factors. Although explaining how, in her childhood, she "chose rather to read, than to imploy [her] time in any other work" (*True Relation*, 60), she emphasizes how her reading was minimal. One might see this in her autobiography by the small amount of space given to what she read as opposed to the greater space given to her isolated writing process. As opposed to self-understood melancholics like Burton and Donne, two Oxford intellectuals who relied on knowledge of past scholars in their literary pursuits, Cavendish's solitary "study" encompasses an internal glance rather than turning towards the outside world. The vast amount of sidenotes in Donne's *Biathanatos* (written circa 1608), for example, as well as the numerous citations found in Burton's *Anatomy*, function as ways to strengthen their own authority in their self-presentations as melancholic scholars. According to Trevor, "for most learned writers in the period, it is authority that speaks in quotation, and thus through quotation that one may come to speak authoritatively on a given subject" (112). Furthermore, as Trevor observes in relation to both Donne and Burton, the inclusion of these authorities serves as an antidote towards the threat of isolation (112). The solitary writing of the melancholy scholar, living "a sedentary, solitary life" (Burton 1: 301) in his study, was considered as both the cure and a contributing factor to the disease. Thus, the risks of solitary contemplation threatened the scholars' health in their literary practice. Revealing his loathing of solitude, Donne, while writing from his sickbed in 1623, laments "[a]s *Sicknesse* is the greatest misery, so the greatest misery of sicknes is *solitude* (…) Nothing can be utterly

emptie, but so neere a degree towards *Vacuitie*, as *Solitude*, to bee but one, they love not" (*Selected Prose*, 106). The inclusion of former scholars' voices establishes a community of learned personae within the text itself, that is, the quotations and sidenotes function as, in Trevor's words, "the material manifestation of the author's fight against loneliness" (109).

The community offered by sidenotes and quotations would be of particular importance when the melancholically inclined writer touched on gloomy subjects, as Burton does in his extensive work on melancholia. In one of his verse epistles to the Countess of Bedford, Donne similarly asserts that "dark texts need notes" (*Poems*, 683), a criteria that he in turn fulfilled in his work on self-slaughter, *Biathanatos*. Deviating from this method of turning to outside factors in approaching bleak topics, Cavendish uses her own voice as a medium through which "sad fain'd Stories, or serious humours or melancholy passions" (*True Relation*, 55) can be expressed, before being written down. While this illustrates her own control over language as well as the general self-control that Burton considered as beyond the reach of the female melancholic, it further shows how her process of turning melancholy subjects into literary products is a process rooted in the self. This self-authorization over mind and body demonstrates how Cavendish gains control over her melancholy without the assistance of external sources. She consequently creates a subjectivity as a melancholic writer independent of other authorities. Her internal universe is the source from which she voices these melancholy thoughts before placing them on the page. Although capable of obtaining "new materialls" (59) in her literary pursuits, her thoughts work independently of other sources, "for if the senses brings no work in, they will work of themselves, like silk-wormes that spinns out of their own bowels" (59).

This omission of citations from other voices of former intellectuals in her own writings is a general pattern we see in Cavendish's texts. Indeed, she presents herself as a poorly read and uneducated writer of philosophy as well as poetry, frequently displaying herself as "a lonely and isolated genius creating volumes of natural philosophy exclusively through the use of her imagination" (Battigelli 7-8). The claim in her autobiography that she did not spend much time reading ("as for my studie of books it was little" [60]), is mirrored in one of the many prefatory texts in *Poems and Fancies*: "I never read, nor heard of any *English Booke* to Instruct me" ("To Naturall Philosophers"). This literary self-image resembles her tomb in Westminster Abbey, where she is presented as a writer rather than a reader. Nevertheless, as Lara Dodds explains, "[i]t cannot be true that Cavendish did not read English books; however, this claim was central to her self-presentation as a writer" (1). Later critics

have uncovered how she actually read works by philosophers like Hobbes and Descartes, and her writings reveal her knowledge and reading of her contemporary poets and playwrights, a link which Dodds's study seeks to uncover in detail by recovering "Cavendish's debts to the writers of the English books that she disingenuously disavows" (2).

However, this self-fashioning as an author, centring on how everything she placed on paper stemmed from her own imagination, suggests a desire to stand out among the writers of her period in a search for singularity, an ambition that I read as connected to her self-proclaimed melancholia. As previously stated, the levels of isolation in Cavendish's writing process encompass on the one hand the solitude offered by the seclusion of her chamber, while on the other the inward glance into the source of her literary endeavours from which her published works emerge. This self-imposed isolation displays both an image of the solitary writer and the solitary voice within her written works, revealing the distinctive nature of her subjectivity. Considering how the isolation is rooted in her melancholy disposition, this separation from others points to the tradition of the melancholic's status as exceptional in society. Indeed, Cavendish's self-portrayal of singularity demonstrates the *homo melancholicus*'s want to stand out among the *vulgus* (the "common crowd" [Schiesari 7]) as the melancholic "not only became perceived as an exclusive someone but also perceived himself as exclusive" (Schiesari 8). Finding "delight in a singularity" (*True Relation*, 60), Cavendish's complex self-portrayal, encompassing both her personal traits that, as demonstrated in the first subchapter, borders on self-contradictions, and her presentation of herself as an author reveal this desire to separate herself from others. The distinctiveness of her own subjectivity, mirrored in the self-presented originality of her writings, renders an image of the author as exceptional: "for I think it no crime to wish my self the exactest of Natures works, my thread of life the longest" (61). Moreover, revealing her memorial ambition of wanting to be remembered through her written works, she claims that she is "very ambitious, yet 'tis neither for Beauty, Wit, Titles, Wealth or Power, but as they are steps to raise [her] to Fames Tower, which is to live by remembrance in afterages" (61-62). Ultimately, her ambitious search for monumental remembrance, combined with her desire for singularity, forms an image of the melancholic's singular nature, a much-recognized trait in the melancholy persona, extending from Aristotle to Freud.

Cavendish's self-portrayal, combined with her "hasty resolution" of publishing without revising (as portrayed in "The Poetresses hasty Resolution" prefacing *Poems and Fancies*), deviate from the traditional methods of writing that dominated the literary realm of

Cavendish's contemporary society (Skouen 550). Following in the footsteps of the ancient rhetoricians Horace and Quintilian, the art of writing in the Renaissance was dominated by a focus on revising one's texts and read works by former writers. As Ben Jonson emphasized in *Timber, or Discoveries* (1640): "*For* a man to write well, there are required three Necessaries. To read the best Authors, observe the best Speakers: and much exercise of his owne style" (615). In imitating, the greatest writers "draw forth out of the best, and choicest flowers, with the Bee, and turne all into Honey" (Jonson 639). As opposed to this image of the true writer as a "bee", however, Cavendish refers to her own process of writing by employing the image of the silkworm, claiming that her thoughts work like silkworms that spin out materials regardless of other sources of inspiration (*True Relation*, 59). The urgency and spontaneity in this imagery move away from the slow process of creating found in Jonson's model of composition. In this model, the writer "must first thinke, and excogitate his matter; then choose his words, and examine the weight of either (…) No matter how slow the style be at first, so it be labour'd, and accurate: seeke the best, and be not glad of the forward conceipts, or first words" (Jonson 615). When describing the immediacy of her own method of writing, Cavendish explains how products of her inner world are "spun" out of her mind and placed on the paper in such a hurry that "some have taken my hand-writing for some strange character" (*True Relation*, 56). Refusing to revise both the content of her written works as well as her bad handwriting, she rushes to the printer in fear of how external forces might prevent the work from being published, as she states in "The Poetresses hasty Resolution". Consequently, Cavendish challenges the temporal dimension of composition found in the general pattern inherited by the great men of rhetoric, namely the time-consuming act of reading works by other authors and revising one's own literary endeavours before publishing.

In criticizing poets that remind us of Jonson's ideal writer, Cavendish refers to them as "translators", explaining how this kind of poet's "Wit & Expressions are Stoln out of several Excellent Poets, only he turns their Fancies and Expressions to other Subjects, so as he only Varies other mens Wits, but Produces none of his Own, and such Writers may rather be nam'd Translators than Authors" (*Sociable Letters*, 85). As opposed to this act of "copying" other authors, Cavendish's separation from other writers as well as the other levels of isolation in her writing process constitute a self-presentation that emphasizes authenticity, in accordance with her striving towards singularity. Cavendish, while being more critical of the method of composition advocated by Jonson, supported the more "natural" writings of Shakespeare (Skouen 558-559). While mentioning both playwrights in her "General Prologue

to all my Playes" of her 1662 folio (*Playes*), Cavendish reveals a preference for the model of writing connected to Shakespeare, as it reflects her own. She asserts how Shakespeare "had a fluent Wit,/ Although less Learning, yet full well he writ", and how "all his Playes were writ by Natures light" ("A General Prologue"). This resembles her own idea of her written works, "[w]hich are the buildings of my natural wit;/ My own Inheritance, as Natures child" ("A General Prologue"). The writing process displays an image of the author as a "home-grown genius", which is a term Jeffrey Masten has used in connection with Cavendish's writings (162). By portraying herself as an uncensored, spontaneous genius "spinning" out her literary products, Cavendish renders an image of her melancholy disposition as empowering and productive for posterity. Consequently, both her self-proclaimed method of writing and the content of her literary products separate her as a writer from others, again revealing her self-imposed solitude, stemming from her melancholy temperament, as a source of productive creation.

In Cavendish's own words, her "running mind" is quicker than the pen, as "the brain being quicker in creating , than the hand in writing, or the memory in retaining, many fancies are lost, by reason they ofttimes out-run the pen" (*True Relation*, 56). This emphasis placed on how the *pen* is slower than her mind is echoed in the prefatory text linked to her autobiography in *Natures Pictures*, where she concludes that "my phancy is quicker than the pen with which I write" (367). In her self-proclaimed method of composition in which haste and spontaneous writing is revealed as the very basis of authentic creation, this idea of her mind working at a higher speed than the pen, renders an image of her internal universe as being superior to the male-dominated instrument of writing. Indeed, this image of the "male" pen as insufficient in her literary pursuits challenges the supposed superiority of the gendered instrument through which men gained a privileged position in the literary field. Mary Astell would at the turn of the eighteenth century display this as part of men's linguistic authority in society by explaining how "their Pen gives worth to the most trifling Controversie" (59). Cavendish questions the supposed superiority of the "male" pen by her hasty writing process.

Cavendish's imagery of "spinning" in relation to her method of writing further questions the supposedly male superiority symbolized by the patriarchal pen. Indeed, the imagery of "spinning" in connection to writing often appears in connection to gender in Cavendish's literary works, as in one of the prefatory texts included in *Poems and Fancies* where she asserts that "[t]rue it is, Spinning with the Fingers is more proper to our Sexe, then studying or writing Poetry, which is the Spinning with the braine: but I having no skill in the

Art of the first (…) made me delight in the latter" ("Epistle Dedicatory"). According to Weber, "the juxtaposition between the male pen and the female needle marked a foundational cultural trope in early modern Europe" (32). This trope reached beyond the geographical borders of Europe, as we see it in the poetry of women like Anne Bradstreet, Cavendish's contemporary, who asserts that

> I am obnoxious to each carping tongue,
>
> Who sayes, my hand a needle better fits,
>
> A Poets Pen, all scorne, I should thus wrong:
>
> For such despight they cast on female wits:
>
> If what I doe prove well, it wo'nt advance,
>
> They'l say its stolne, or else, it was by chance
>
> ("Prologue", stanza 5: ll. 1-6, *The Tenth Muse*).

In Bradstreet's portrayal of the trope connecting the needle and the pen, the gendered binary between the male activity of writing and the female work of sewing is evident. Although linked through this imagery, the gender-based borders keeping the female writer away from the pen seem unbridgeable. This is seen in her depiction of how women writers are considered as incapable of constructing an authorial self without mirroring herself in the male counterpart. Turning back to Cavendish's treatment of this imagery, however, we see that these borders are challenged, and that the very basis of her employment of the imagery rests in a search for the female writer's road to singularity through the written word. By linking the conventionally female activity of spinning in the private sphere with the internal "spinning" of her thoughts that results in textual "Garment[s] of Memory" ("Epistle Dedicatory", *Poems and Fancies*), Cavendish connects spinning and writing by revealing both to be a source of originality and singularity as creator (again reminding us of the melancholic's desire for singularity). As Weber explains, "strategically, the figurative link between 'Spinning with the Fingers' and 'Spinning with the braine' generates equivalence where before only difference existed" (43). By this connection, Cavendish calls into question the contemporary gender conventions that grant men the status as "rulers" of literature, through which "they hold *Books* as their *Crowne*, and the *Sword* as their *Scepter*, by which they rule, and governe" ("To All Noble, and Worthy Ladies", *Poems and Fancies*), and their supposed monopoly on the written word.

Based on this link between spinning and writing Sandra Sherman argues that

Cavendish creates a private space that is "unassailable: inside the brain, spinning alternative realities are not subject to conventional sanctions" (193). According to Sherman, Cavendish's idea of how women's lack of rights in society renders them as "no Subjects" (*Sociable Letters*, 25) in the Commonwealth, opens for an alternative space of self-creation, "a Commonwealth in the mind unassailed by discourses in the public sphere which subjugate men" (208). On the one hand, I agree with Sherman that Cavendish's process of turning inwards into the private space of her mind creates a space in which forming literary works separated from the conventions of her contemporary society is possible. On the other, as Tina Skouen aptly observes, "one should not automatically expect Cavendish (or any other early modern woman writer) to be 'outside of' or 'against' her culture" (552). Rather than being completely separated from the contemporary conventions of writing, Cavendish predicts the possible critique she might receive in publishing her works in the numerous paratexts we find in her publications. I will in the following explore some of these paratexts in order to show how Cavendish presents an ambivalent position in relation to the reading public and how she, in her paratextual practice, exposes the melancholy writer's preference for solitude by displaying herself as her own solitary reader.

Appealing to the reader's goodwill (*captatio benevolentiae*), Cavendish's many paratextual addresses to the reader reveal her awareness of the possibility of scorn, being a female writer that claims the right to a public voice through publishing her literary products. Viewing herself through the dominating conventions of her contemporary society, she opens *Poems and Fancies* with an address to women of the reading public, where she pleads "[c]ondemne me not as a *dishonour* of your Sex, for setting forth this *Work*; for it is *harmlesse* and free from all *dishonesty*" ("To All Noble, and Worthy Ladies"). Although aware of how she "shall be censur'd by [her] owne Sex; and *Men* will cast a *smile* of *scorne* upon [her] *Book*, because they think thereby, *Women* incroach too much upon their *Prerogatives*" ("To All Noble, and Worthy Ladies"), her ambitious aspirations of wanting "to be worshipt, rather than not to be regarded" (*True Relation*, 62) present an image of ambivalence in the author's relationship with the reader. Cavendish considers herself worthy of being worshipped through her works, while, at the same time, she sees the need to defend her works in order to be read and thus be placed in the cultural memory, by seeing herself through the public eye.

Trevor points to this impossibility of complete independence from external forces in creating the Self in quoting Lacan's Eleventh Seminar, in which the French psychoanalyst

states that "it is in the space of the Other that he [the subject] sees himself and the point from which he looks at himself is also in that space" (qtd. in Trevor 111). Seeing this dependence upon the Other in relation to Donne's use of citations when introducing unconventional subjects in his writings, Trevor asserts that in "[f]inding his own views echoed in the ostensible opinions of others, Donne arranges evidence of these opinions so as to frame his own discourse as one fully dependent upon, and incorporated in, a community of like-minded thinkers" (111). Serving a similar function, Cavendish's great number of paratexts create a bond between the author and the reader, displaying her dependence on the reader as she places herself among the reading public and its conventions in order to defend her written works and their place in the literary realm.

The ambivalent position of the author in relation to the intended reader in Cavendish's many textual commentaries can be seen as a "conflict of perception". On the one hand, she sees herself through the critical gaze of the public while, on the other, she reveals a separated point of view from which she praises her literary creations through a form of self-love. This dual aspect is particularly demonstrated in "The Poetresses hasty Resolution", where she explains how "Reading my Verses, I like't them so well,/ Self-love did make my Judgement to rebell" (*Poems and Fancies*). While including the critical gaze of the public, Cavendish exposes a form of solitude in her paratexts. Indeed, Cavendish's paratextual matter is almost solely written by the author herself, with the rare exception of prefatory material written by others, her husband being one of them. According to Weber, a paratext "was precisely where the author's friends or other individuals responsible for a text's production – printers, booksellers, editors, translators – could have, as it were, their say" (41). Cavendish therefore deviates from this tradition by omitting other voices in her paratextual practice. The melancholy writer's preference for solitude is thus mirrored in the monologues introducing her published works, revealing an image of Cavendish as the isolated reader of her own texts. As Weber concludes, "[b]arren of other contributors, and ostensibly divorced from not only other literary influences but even readers, Cavendish's books sometimes appear to be speaking to an audience of one, the putative 'Authoress of a whole World'" (50). Consequently, although serving to defend her unconventional pursuits of publishing her written works, Cavendish's paratextual commentaries are a way in which she places subjectivity within her works, hers being the sole voice in these texts.

In the prefatory text introducing *Plays, Never before Printed* (1668), Cavendish explains how her literary endeavours are "only for [her] own pleasure, and not to please

others: being very indifferent, whether any body reads them or not; or being read, how they are esteem'd" ("Author's Epistle", 273). Although frequently addressing a variety of readers, Cavendish's commentaries seem to render herself as the intended audience of her works, as shown towards the end of her autobiography where she explains how "[r]eaders will scornfully say, why hath this Ladie writ her own Life? (…) I answer that it is true, that 'tis to no purpose, to the Readers, but it is to the Authoress, because I write it for my own sake" (63). Cavendish plays with voices in this excerpt, referring to herself as the "I"-persona and "the Authoress", and she subsequently connects both "voices" when moving back to the first person as she sums up her intentions of writing her autobiography. This creates a mirroring effect between the subjectivity she fashions through her solitary writing and an image of herself as her own isolated reader that moves away from the disregarding and faceless "[r]eaders". The "conflict of perception" is revealed as a way for her to connect with the reading public while simultaneously separating herself from the public's gaze. She thus becomes her own ideal reader. The isolated writer is mirrored in the solitary reader, connected in the sole voice of Cavendish herself.

The self-image of solitude, both as writer and reader, is further seen in the mirroring between the melancholy writer and the melancholy personae portrayed in her writings. The many self-portraits that are "spun" out of Cavendish's own mind portray a solitary figure contemplating by herself. In the words of Battigelli, Cavendish's "self-portraits, both those she wrote and those she had engraved as frontispieces for her volumes, typically project a woman alone with her thoughts" (6). Writing from the position of her melancholy disposition, Cavendish turns inwards into a space of privacy from which she creates reflections of herself in self-portraits of solitary and often explicitly self-proclaimed melancholy characters, placed in a wide range of genres. Examples of such fictional self-portraits are Lady Bashful in *Loves Adventures*, Mademoiselle Bashful in *The Presence* (1668), Lady Solitary in *The Comical Hash* (1662) and Lady Contemplation in the play named after this character. All of these products of her mind, bearing names that resemble Cavendish's autobiographical self-portrayal, are separated from the fictional society in the world of the plays in some way, reflecting the position of their exiled and marginalized creator. Similarly, several of the various "I"-personae speaking in *Sociable Letters* reflect their author by their isolated contemplation. The nameless author of letter 8 explains how her melancholy drives her into a state of isolation, separated from the public as "a grieved heart, weeping eyes, sad countenance, and black mourning garments, will not be suitable with dancing legs" (*Sociable*

Letters, 18). Also, the "I"-persona in letter 93 discusses the idea of melancholy connected to childlessness (101), a discussion through which it is possible to see Cavendish's own concern regarding her difficulties of becoming pregnant, which their family doctor claimed to be caused by her melancholia. The many isolated and melancholy "selves" Cavendish placed in her writings form a mirroring effect between these "selves" and herself as the isolated reader.

This mirroring is further illustrated by Cavendish's trope of linking childbearing and writing when commenting upon her literary pursuits. In connecting these, she explains how she fears that her "brain should grow barren" (*True Relation*, 57), becoming an infertile space while "withering into a dull stupidity" (57). Further employing this imagery, Cavendish explains in *Poems and Fancies* that she is so fond of her book "as to make it as if it were [her] Child" ("To the Reader"), an image numerous critics have commented upon in connection to Cavendish's own childlessness. Although this metaphor of a book being the author's child is a conventional one, in Cavendish's employment of it, I view this imagery more as a reflection of the author herself. Indeed, in portraying this "child", revealed as a female, Cavendish explains that she is "of bashfull Nature" ("To the Reader"), reflecting the author's own disposition of being bashful. Furthermore, this "child" is described as "harmlesse, modest, and honest" ("To the Reader"), resembling the author's self-assessment in her autobiography of her life being "ruled with Honesty, attended by Modesty, and directed by Truth" (59). In various ways, then, the "child" constitutes a reflection of its author.

The subsequent love she reveals for her written works, being so fond of her fancies, and her assessment of how her writerly endeavours are intended for her own pleasure, evoke an image of narcissistic self-love. We witness a self-infatuation in Cavendish similar to Eve's narcissistic tendencies in *Paradise Lost* (1667). In book four of John Milton's extensive epic, Eve relates her first steps in Eden, portraying how, before becoming aware of what and who she was, she discovered her own reflection in a lake: "Bending to look on me. I started back,/ It started back, but pleased I soon returned" (ll. 462-63). Like Narcissus falling in love with his own watery reflection, Eve continues: "Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks/ Of sympathy and love. There I had fixed/ Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire" (ll. 464-66). Before becoming aware that she is a reflection of Adam, as she is formed by parts of his body and shaped in his image, this instant of self-love comprises a moment of self-understanding distanced from the ruling Law through which God will, immediately following this moment, draw her away from. The vanity inherent in Eve's account of her reflection reminds us of Cavendish's self-assessment of being "so vain, if it be a Vanity, as to endeavour

to be worshipt, rather than not to be regarded" (*True Relation*, 62). Drawn away from this moment of isolated self-absorption, Eve hears the unembodied voice of God telling her that she is the image of Adam, who further explains her origin. While briefly wanting to return to "that smooth wat'ry image" (l. 480) she left, Eve stays with Adam, with whom, as promised by the voice of God, she will create "[m]ultitudes like thyself" (l. 474). In effect, whereas Adam sees his own self-image in Eve, she, according to the voice of the ruling authority (God), is incapable of creating a similar self-image by herself.

Whereas Eve is drawn away from the mirror image through which she first experiences a sense of self, separated from any ruling discourse that might determine her way of perceiving herself, Cavendish seems to be caught in a state of suspense. Her literary self-portraits as well as her paratexts clearly show a subjectivity unaffected by external forces. At the same time, the anxieties in relation to the public reader that we observe especially in the paratexts to her publications, reveal how the voice of ruling (patriarchal) discourses has been incorporated into her self-perception. Thus, in this narcissistic self-perception, we see the external and internal world of Cavendish disputing in the voice of the author. Caught between the isolated space of her inner realm and her place in the outer reality of her present-day society, Cavendish is both self and other, being both the isolated literary self within the text and the solitary, yet split, reader. She has, again reminding us of Freud's melancholic, internalized a loss, specifically the loss she is confronted with when her self-infatuating literary subjectivity is placed in the eye of the public, revealing her culturally degraded status as a female writer in her contemporary society.

Inherent in this loss is the bleak possibility of a different kind of loss, namely the tragic prospect of being lost in oblivion or censured by "some censuring Readers" (*True Relation*, 63) of her contemporary society, both of which threatens her ambitions of being placed in the collective memory of the after ages: "I regard not so much the present as future Ages, for which I intend all my Books" ("Author's Epistle", 273). This conflicting state of self-love in relation to her literary mirror image and self-contempt is also expressed in "A Dialogue between two Naturall Opinions". As she explains, her mind may delight "[t]o heare its *Fame*, and see its *Pyramid*;/ Or *grieve*, and *mourne*, when it doth see, and know,/ Her *Acts* and *Fame* do to *Oblivion* go" (*Poems and Fancies*, 54). The objects of love, namely her own literary works, reveal how the threat of loss centres on a loss of self. This self encompasses both the subjectivity presented in her main texts as well as the isolated reader in her paratexts, both of whom face the possibility of destruction. Similar to Ovid's Narcissus and his

awareness of the possibility of his own self-destruction, the death of the onlooker becomes the death of the self-image, as stated in the third book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: "we two shall die together in one breath" (157). Indeed, both the existence of the literary self-portrait and the image of herself as her own reader through her paratextual practice are dependent on the same "breath", that is, the external reader. In other words, the subjectivity she places within her literary corpus can only exist and be included in the cultural memory in the eyes of the reader. What this implies is that writing is both the source of her pleasure and self-love, but also the cause of her self-reproach and possibility of being censured. Subsequently, the act of writing serves a similar function as the water surface in the story of Narcissus, being both the instrument of his infatuation with his own image, and the lethal element of his destruction.

Inhabiting the position as both solitary writer and reader of her own works, in which she places various melancholy self-portraits, the fragmented "self" we see in Cavendish's literary products, united and published under the author's name, exposes the instability of this subjectivity. This challenges the possibility of stability and fixity within her literary self. Emerging as a product of her solitary contemplation, rooted in her melancholy disposition, her literary creations reveal a subjectivity that is fragmented and unstable, resembling the undefinable nature of melancholia itself. Ultimately, Cavendish conveys a self-understanding as a melancholy writer that is exposed as a source of empowerment for a female writer, turning her melancholy disposition into literary self-portraits that, although placed in a system of representation through which men "dominate", evade stable definitions. As opposed to Burton's "cure" for female melancholics, advising them to marry in order to become their husband's "mirror image", which resembles what Milton's God in *Paradise Lost* demands of Eve, Cavendish is not bound by similar demands. In order to exemplify how the melancholically inclined author reveals her literary pursuits in solitude as empowering and productive, I will, in the following, analyse in detail one of her melancholy self-portraits.

The self-portrait I will examine is found as a frontispiece to Cavendish's *Philosophical and Physical opinions* (1655). This frontispiece, in the words of Bowerbank and Mendelson, "represents Cavendish as an original and independent thinker" (comment to illustration 4, 58), as it portrays Cavendish, dressed in black, in solitary contemplation, sitting alone by a desk with an inkhorn and blank pieces of paper. The many symbolic elements alluding to melancholia in the painting create a self-portrait that in many ways resembles Albrecht Dürer's famous engraving, "Melencolia I". This is a work of art that Klibansky et al. analyse in some detail in *Saturn and Melancholy*. The detailed engraving by the German artist

portrays a winged female figure sitting in an inactive position with her head resting on her hand. With a vacant expression of contemplation in the darkened face and "[w]ith hair hanging down unkempt, and her gaze, thoughtful and sad, fixed on a point in the distance, she keeps watch, withdrawn from the world, under a darkening sky" (Klibansky et al. 320). As the embodiment of melancholia, the figure "sits in front of her unfinished building, surrounded by the instruments of creative work, but sadly brooding with a feeling that she is achieving nothing" (Klibansky et al. 320). Cavendish's self-portrait similarly displays the author in a seemingly inactive position with a vacant expression. The bell placed above the head of Melencolia in Dürer's engraving points to the period's use of emblems symbolizing *memento mori*, as it is an object connected to death, which we see in works like Donne's *Devotions*: "Now, this Bell tolling softly for another, saies to me, Thou must die" (*Selected Prose*, 125). This emblem resembles a different kind of bell situated on the desk in Cavendish's portrait. Combined with the hourglass in Dürer's work as well as the clock placed next to the bell on Cavendish's desk, this imagery of death and mutability reveals what was believed to be the melancholic's self-destructing act of solitary contemplation. Furthermore, in Cavendish's painting, as the two symbolic elements are placed next to the blank pages on which she will presumably write, the bell and the clock also symbolize Cavendish's fear of how her works might be forgotten in time, disappearing from the physical world along with their author.

A notable difference between the melancholy persona in Dürer's engraving and Cavendish's frontispiece centres on their capability to create, signified by the melancholic's hands. As Klibansky et al. note, Dürer's Melencolia is inactive "because her mind is preoccupied with interior visions" (318). While the hand resting in her lap is almost hidden from sight, the clenched fist on which her head rests "symbolizes the fanatical concentration of a mind which has truly grasped a problem, but which at the same moment feels itself incapable either of solving or of dismissing it" (Klibansky et al. 319). Absorbed in the interior universe of her mind, the melancholy "genius" is incapable of performing any meaningful act in the external world. The tradition of hidden hands in paintings representing melancholia has been commented upon by scholars such as Sander L. Gilman, who observes how "the hidden or obscured hands symbolize the melancholic's ineffectuality" (14). In effect, "taken as a whole, [Dürer's engraving] can only be understood if it is regarded as a symbolic synthesis of the 'typus Acediae' (the popular exemplar of melancholy inactivity) with the 'typus Geometriae' (the scholastic personification of one of the 'liberal arts')" (Klibansky et al. 317).

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The female figure of melancholia displays an image of a disempowered melancholy persona, similar to Burton's assessment of the unproductive and inarticulate suffering of the female melancholic as opposed to her male counterpart.

In contrast to the inactivity represented by the clenched fist and the hidden hand in Dürer's painting, Cavendish's self-portrait renders a more active form of melancholia, as her hands are open while she leans towards the desk, ready to reach out for the pen. This suggests that Cavendish's frontispiece reveals a more active melancholy creator that, instead of being restricted by her disposition, appears strengthened by the opportunities it offers. Moreover, as opposed to the tools lying untouched in front of Dürer's Melencolia, "symbolizing her relationship to the scholarship of the liberal arts" (Gilman 12) there are no similar instruments in the room in which Cavendish's melancholy self is seated. Indeed, except for the writing materials on her desk, the melancholic is not surrounded by external sources of knowledge or other tools that might aid her in her literary production. Consequently, this self-portrayal points to the numerous forms of isolation in Cavendish's self-presented method of writing. Separated from other writers as well as other elements of assistance, her writings are the products of her solitary contemplation, indicated by the poem on the bottom of the portrait: "Her Library on which She looks/ It is her Head her Thoughts her Books". Cavendish's self-portrait presents a melancholic that is not bound by external sources, nor trapped within her internal world.

Combined with her display of a more active and productive form of melancholia, this independence and free will reveal a self-understanding of melancholia similar to that of writers like Milton, "who display a greater willingness to see their melancholy as governable" (Trevor 11). The self-determinism and control shown by Milton's "transcendence of the diagnostic limitations of scholarly melancholy" (Trevor 19) is part of how Trevor distinguishes Milton from his predecessors of melancholically inclined scholars. In connection to this distinction, I read Cavendish as revealing a "Miltonic" melancholia in her self-understanding as a melancholy writer. The risks and gloomy aspects of the melancholy scholar's solitary contemplation were linked to the Galenic tradition of black bile and its damaging nature in the isolated melancholic. In Jackson's words, "[t]he black bile inclined one in the direction of scholarly activities, and the scholar's way of life and intellectual efforts bred black bile in turn, with a considerable risk" (100). Milton's self-understanding of his melancholy disposition reveals a higher degree of independence from this deterministic view of melancholia in how he believes that he is able to control its symptoms. This independence

and autonomy are further shown in his self-fashioning as a writer. Similar to Cavendish's self-understanding as an author, Milton "fashioned himself as an autonomous scholar and writer, only sporadically associating himself with other groups of thinkers" (Trevor 23), while emphasizing the free will inherent in the writing subject. As opposed to the deterministic assessment of the melancholy disposition and its destructive nature, emphasized by writers such as Donne and Burton, Milton "steadily move toward a self-understanding that, in emphasizing free will, de-emphasizes the determinism of dispositional melancholy" (Trevor 153).

This understanding of melancholia as governable and unrestricting is further revealed by how Milton, similar to Cavendish, displays a favourable view of solitude connected to literary creation in exposing isolated contemplation as a source of creative opportunity rather than as a possible threat to the melancholic. This reveals a view of solitariness similar to Robert Crofts's assessment of melancholics in *Paradise within us: or, The happie mind* (1640), in which he states that "oft-times even their Solitarinesse and melancholly dispositions become most profitable, sweet and pleasant to them" (105). Accordingly, both Cavendish's and Milton's positive view of solitary contemplation move away from Burton's warning about how solitariness, although pleasant at first, will have severe consequences. As he explains, the melancholic, "being now habituated to such vain meditations and solitary places, can endure no company, can ruminate of nothing but harsh and distasteful subjects" (1: 247). The very closing words of Burton's *Anatomy* echo this warning of the dangers of excessive isolated contemplation: "Be not solitary, be not idle" (3: 432). The productive and empowering position Cavendish displays in what I have revealed through this subchapter as the various forms of solitude in her literary pursuits ultimately challenges this negative attitude towards the melancholic's solitariness. In portraying herself as a melancholically inclined author, Cavendish presents her disposition as governable and a source of creativity, whereupon she questions the gendered borders of melancholia.

3 Jean Rhys and *Smile Please: An Unfinished Autobiography*

Jean Rhys began the work on her autobiography several years before her death in 1979. As Diana Athill explains in her foreword to *Smile Please*, "[t]he idea did not attract her but because she was sometimes angered and hurt by what other people wrote about her she wanted to get the facts down" (5). In other words, Rhys sought to write an autobiography in order to tell the truth about herself, which might remind us of Cavendish's determination to write the *true* story of her "Birth, Breeding and Life". Rhys's unfinished and posthumously published memoir received mixed reviews at the moment of publication, particularly in connection to the fragmented structure of the autobiography. In the *Yale Review*, Phyllis Rose commented that *Smile Please* presented "pathetic, unconnected, insignificant fragments of memory of the sort only precious to the memorialist" (qtd. in Savory 183). Similarly, Diana Trilling, in *The New York Times Book Review*, called the autobiography "markedly disappointing" (qtd. in Savory 184), while other reviewers, such as Robert Nye, found its fragmented form fascinating (Savory 184). As Athill states in her foreword, Rhys had already placed much of her life into her dominantly autobiographical novels, and "[o]nce something had been written out (…) it was done with and one could start again from the beginning" (6). Subsequently, in writing her autobiography, Rhys decided on a fragmented structure as opposed to a continuous narrative, "[catching] her past here and there, at points where it happened to crystallize into vignettes" (Athill 6). This structure of "vignettes", which are quite literally short verbal descriptions of a place, person or episode (OED Online, *n*, 2b), dominates in the first part of her autobiography, "Smile Please". The second part ("It began to grow cold") also contains longer and more continuous narratives of her life. Whereas Rhys completed the first part, the second part had yet to be finished, and it was somewhat edited by Athill before publication. The third section, "From a Diary: at the Ropemakers' Arms", which Athill refers to as an appendix, is an excerpt from a diary which Rhys wrote in the 1940s, and she hoped to find a way to include it in a coherent way in her memoir.

The autobiography's fragmented and unfinished composition, critiqued upon its publication, might be one of the reasons why *Smile Please* has not yet received substantial critical attention. This neglect is evident in studies that focus on Rhys's life and works. Whereas Carole Angier, in her biographical work on Rhys (*Jean Rhys: Life and Work* [1990]), includes parts of *Smile Please* in order to verify elements in Rhys's life story, Teresa

F. O'Connor cites sections of Rhys's autobiography primarily in order to contextualize Rhys's novels in *Jean Rhys: The West Indian Novels* (1986). Elaine Savory's study of Rhys's works (*Jean Rhys* [1998]) employs parts of Rhys's autobiography in the aim of revealing its performative aspects and viewing it in relation to "the complex continuum Rhys fashioned between life and art" (185). By contrast, the vast amount of criticism devoted to her fictional works, particularly her novels, encompass various fields of literary criticism, as they have been analysed through the lens of feminism, modernism and post-colonialism. In her study of Rhys, Coral Ann Howells discusses "the alienated Rhys heroine" (2) and the heroine's "fragmented female subjectivity" (5) that evades stable identity categories. In the same vain, Helen Carr reads the typical Rhys heroine's marginalized position through a theoretical framework encompassing feminist- and post-colonial theory. As she concludes, Rhys's fiction deals with "those who belong nowhere, between cultures, between histories" (*Jean Rhys*, xvi). Accordingly, while scholars have focused on the complex presentations of these female protagonists, the author's own self-portrayal in *Smile Please* has yet to be analysed in depth. As I aim to demonstrate, the authorial self that is represented in this autobiography centres on melancholia.

The subject of melancholia has, in recent times, been touched upon in connection to Rhys's works. In her 2009 study, *Ferocious Things: Jean Rhys and the Politics of Women's Melancholia*, Cathleen Maslen explores various representations of melancholia in relation to Rhys's novels, and this study is a significant contribution to the discussion regarding the gendering of melancholia. As Maslen explains, Rhys, through these literary works, places her female protagonists in positions as melancholic subjects, presenting "a provocative rejection of cultural trivialisations of female suffering, as well as an attempt to usurp the psychological dignity and perceptiveness accorded to male melancholia alone" (6). These literary endeavours of breaking down the culturally restrictive position of the female melancholic are, according to Maslen, mostly unsuccessful, as "these cultural parameters prove profoundly resistant to the feminine aspiration to an articulate melancholic identity" (6). Nevertheless, the representation of female nostalgia, loss and sadness in Rhys's works poses questions towards the historical degradation of female melancholia. Maslen chooses not to include Rhys's autobiography in her discussion, and she distances her study from others that have explored the autobiographical parts of Rhys's works. Although acknowledging the autobiographical aspects inherent in Rhys's fictional works, specifically the heroine's depressive states that are often explored in relation to the author, Maslen's study aims to reveal the "political and

theoretical dimension of Rhys's writing of melancholia" (2). Whereas Maslen focuses on the melancholic identification constructed among Rhys's heroines, I will analyse the ways in which Rhys's self-portrayal in *Smile Please* uncovers a complex melancholic subjectivity.

Rhys's "battles with depression" (Carr, *Jean Rhys*, 6) have been a subject noted by several scholars. As Francis Wyndham states in his introduction to her published letters, Rhys struggled with "chronic sadness and deep dissatisfaction" (10) for most of her life. However, the way she expresses loss and depressive states in her autobiography has yet to be explored in detail. In this chapter, I will analyse how Rhys communicates loss and depression in her autobiography, and, by this, presents herself as a melancholic. I shall argue that Rhys's melancholic subjectivity is connected to her constant role as an outcast, being alienated and marginalized in both the Dominican and the English society. The chapter also aims to reveal the ways in which the author challenges melancholia's traditionally gendered borders. Although my focal point will be the gendered power politics involved in the melancholic self-display, the problematic representation of race and class will also be of importance in my analysis.

The opening subchapter centres on the first part of Rhys's autobiography, in which she portrays her childhood in Dominica. By exploring Rhys's role as outcast both in her family and in society in general, I shall argue that the young Rhys searches for a lost object that offers belonging and stable identification. I will employ both Freud's and Julia Kristeva's work on melancholia in analysing this lost object and Rhys's melancholic subjectivity. In the subsequent subchapter, I will turn to the second part of Rhys's memoir in order to examine Rhys's initial experiences in England. I will argue that her self-presented depressed state when coming face to face with the reality of the mother country once again centres on a loss, specifically the loss of her idealized image of England that she envisioned as a child. This loss and her subsequent depressed state is turned into literary representations of a monotonous and deathlike existence. As opposed to the inarticulate female sufferer unable to utter her loss in need of male domination, Rhys portrays a self that, although restricted by what I will term "the English sign system", powerfully presents a melancholic subjectivity. Finally, the third subchapter centres on Rhys's depiction of how she first came to write. I argue that this moment of literary creation reveals a compulsive writing process, rooted in her melancholic state, as she converts the loss she has suffered in England into the written word. By this, as I will show, she challenges the image of the unproductive melancholic woman as formulated by both Burton and Freud.

3.1 The Melancholic Outcast's Desire for the Maternal Object

The first part of Rhys's autobiography is set in the West Indies, and mainly in Dominica, where Rhys was born Ella Gwendolen Rees Williams in 1890. As I will demonstrate, in this part of *Smile Please*, Rhys reveals a longing for a lost object, enclosed within a photo of her younger self. This is portrayed in two scenes at the beginning of the autobiography, both of which will be analysed in some detail. In the second of these scenes, Rhys is looking at a portrait of her taken three years earlier. The nine-year-old Rhys experiences the photo as a loss, revealing how the picture represents an irretrievable lost object. Like Freud's melancholic, Rhys incorporates this lost object into her ego, a position from which she subsequently displays a melancholic subjectivity. The question remains however, what is it that she has lost? In order to explain what the object Rhys has lost signifies, I will turn to Julia Kristeva's theory on melancholia. Kristeva explains how melancholic suffering stems from the melancholic's mourning for what psychoanalytic theory terms the pre-Oedipal mother. I will show how Kristeva's ideas concerning the pre-Oedipal mother can be read as an image of "timelessness", stable identification and belonging, which I will refer to as the maternal object. This object is what Rhys searches for in the first part of her autobiography, as she turns to various possible "mirror images" in which she might obtain a position similar to the one offered by the maternal object presented in the photograph.

As I will show, however, this search for the lost object is a desire for something illusory, in the sense that it actually never existed. Indeed, Rhys's desire for this object resembles nostalgic desire as defined by Susan Stewart in her study, *On Longing* (1984): "Nostalgia is a sadness without an object, a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience" (23). Stewart's definition of nostalgia shares an important characteristic with melancholia, one that has been noted by scholars on melancholia for centuries, namely the idea of "sadness without an object". In the early modern period, Bright and Burton both claimed that sadness (combined with fear) "without a cause" (Burton, 1: 419) is one of the most common symptoms of melancholia, an idea that one may also detect in Freud's theory on how the melancholic's state might be related to an "object-loss which is *withdrawn from consciousness*" (245) (my emphasis). Haunted by the illusory lost object, Rhys similarly exposes a sadness without an object, a position from which she turns to the previously mentioned "mirror images" that offer such a

possibility of complete identification and a sense of belonging as the maternal object. The African Caribbean people in Dominica constitute one of these "mirror images". Like her mother, Rhys was considered as white Creole, a characterization granted several of the female characters in her fiction. Dominica was still a British colony at the time of Rhys's birth, and colonial discourse ruled the society's racial and class-based lines. As Sue Thomas explains, "[i]n the nineteenth-century British Caribbean, Creole was the term used to describe people born in the region, but not of indigenous Carib or Arawak ancestry. Distinctions were made between white, colored, and negro or black Creoles" (19-20). Rhys seeks to cross the racial border in order to identify with black people and by this obtain a position of stable self-perception and inclusion in the Dominican landscape. Similarly, this landscape may be argued to constitute another "mirror image" in which she seeks the completeness offered by the maternal object. Furthermore, in her search for this stable self-perception presented by the maternal object, Rhys points to the possibility of how such a state can be achieved through self-destruction. This points to a tradition within theories on melancholia that centres on the melancholic's suicidal tendencies. I will analyse the ways in which she demonstrates this desire for self-destruction in order to achieve the stable self-presentation and "timelessness" seen in the photographic representation of herself.

    Smile Please opens with two different moments of self-perception, separated by a period of three years. The first is placed at the very opening paragraph of the autobiography, portrayed as a six-year-old girl's fragmented vision of herself: "I looked down at my white dress, the one I had got for my birthday, and my legs and the white socks coming half way up my legs, and the black shiny shoes with the strap over the instep"[2]. Following the male photographer's command as he tells her to "'[s]mile please'" (19), urging her to change her serious facial expression in order for him to take a picture, this self-awareness functions as a moment of self-objectification. This self-objectification reveals a gender dynamic between the onlooker and the object of perception, a gender dynamic John Berger explores in his seminal study *Ways of Seeing* (1972). According to Berger, "[m]en look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at" (47). Acting in accordance with this gender-based relation of observation, the woman, in the words of Berger, "turns herself into an object" (47). The second onlooker that encourages the young girl to follow this code of femininity, is her mother. This forms a second looking relation in the opening scene, namely the mother's

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[2] p. 19, in *Smile Please: An Unfinished Autobiography*, (London: Andre Deutsch, 1979). All subsequent references to this autobiography are to this edition and will be cited in the text.

recognition as the child becomes the object of the maternal gaze. As we shall see, this bond between mother and child has been broken as we reach the second instance of self-perception in the opening vignette, a break that has important consequences for the young Rhys's sense of self. In addition to the feminine codes imposed upon the young girl being photographed, the setting exposes discourses concerning race and class. Indeed, as Thomas comments in relation to this scene, "[s]miles and the 'proper' motility of the 'pure' white middle-class woman's body are key elements in Rhys's representations of Caribbean racial differences" (97). In this way, the scene is a performance of class, gender and race, as the young girl plays the part of the privileged white Creole. Despite the girl's act of checking herself, presumably in order to please the onlookers, her arm keeps shooting up "of its own accord" (*Smile Please*, 19). As if by instinct, the spontaneity of this motion stands in contrast to the otherwise artificial setting of the photo shoot, and to the disappointment of her mother and the male onlooker who both compel her to stay passive, it functions as an act of disobedience, a rebellion that is captured in the final photo.

Following this glimpse from her childhood, the second moment of self-perception in the opening chapter occurs three years after the photo shoot, as the young Rhys looks at the picture that has been a framed and solitary object standing on a small table in the living room during this interval of time. In contrast to the girl's self-recognition (although fragmented) demonstrated in the previous self-perception ("*my* white dress […] *my* legs" [my italics]), her rediscovery of herself in the picture, a form of "mirror" into the past, renders an awareness of difference and alienation. Referring to the girl in the picture in third person, the young Rhys comments: "I remembered the dress she was wearing, so much prettier than anything I had now, but the curls, the dimples surely belonged to somebody else. The eyes were a stranger's eyes" (19-20). This self-awareness is thus based on loss, specifically the lost past that is further revealed to be a loss of self: "It was the first time I was aware of time, change and the longing for the past" (20). Unable to recognize herself in this "mirror image" of the past, she turns her gaze to the looking-glass in her present, portrayed as an act that causes despair. In contrast with the smiling (shown by her unrecognizable "dimples") and curly-haired girl dressed in white in the photo, the present reflection exposes a skinny and tall girl in a brown dress, described as a corpse-like individual with "pale skin and huge staring eyes of no particular colour" (20). Separated from the girl she sees in the photo, the nine-year-old Rhys further explains how she is alienated from her family members as well: "My brothers and sisters all had brown eyes and hair, why was I singled out to be the only fair one, to be called

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Gwendolen which means 'white' in Welsh I was told?" (20). Thus, this self-perception, rooted in loss ("she wasn't me any longer" [20]), combined with her assessment of being an outcast in her own family, portray a subject alienated from others as well as her past self, and her subsequent nostalgic desire for a lost past.

While recognizing that the girl in the photo is lost, it is not clearly explained *what* in this past self she has lost. This might remind us of Freud's melancholic: "he knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him" (245). In my own reading of what this lost object might signify, I will turn to Kristeva's work on melancholia. In her study, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, Kristeva sees the lost object (theorized by Freud) as signifying the melancholic's mother, specifically, as Maslen explains, "the mother remembered as the pre-Oedipal object of narcissistic infantile love" (23). Building on Freud's theories on melancholia, Kristeva asserts that "Freudian theory detects everywhere the same *impossible mourning for the maternal object*" (9). As I will demonstrate in this subchapter, Rhys reveals a desire for such a lost object in the first part of her autobiography. This will become clearer if we consider what this image of the "lost mother" might signify. In relation to Kristeva's theory concerning the lost mother, Maslen suggests that, instead of signifying the melancholic's biological mother, the melancholic "is preoccupied with the loss of an idealised maternal *time* – perhaps better characterised as an imagined timelessness, an archaic infantile utopia free from quotidian anxieties of identity, self-consciousness and mortality" (23). In this way, the lost mother signifies an object of stability and security, a "homely" and utopian space that offers imaginary unity and complete identification. This is what I will refer to as the maternal object in this subchapter. While Rhys reveals a longing for the maternal object, I will demonstrate how this object is illusory, meaning that it has never existed. In other words, Rhys's desire for the lost object resembles the previously mentioned quote on nostalgic desire from *On Longing*, where Stewart portrayed nostalgia as desire for a lost object that has never existed. In her search for what resembles the lost mother in Kristeva's analysis of the melancholic, Rhys exposes a similar longing for something that she has, in effect, never had, evoking the common melancholic symptom of sadness without a cause. Resembling the Kristevan melancholic in how she desires the stability offered by the lost mother, I read the loss Rhys experiences when looking at the photograph of her younger self as signifying this loss of completeness. Rhys subsequently presents her desire for the lost object by turning to various "mirror images" in society that might offer her a similar sense of stability and belonging as the maternal object.

Returning to the scene in Rhys's opening vignette with this idea of what has actually been lost for the young Rhys, I see the "I"-persona looking at her past self as an image of this loss of an imagined stability of belonging and complete identification. The framed picture of a moment frozen in time displays a form of "timelessness", offering the onlooker an illusion of a unified self enclosed in a photograph. This image of "timelessness" and a stable self-portrait evoke Roland Barthes's assertion of the photograph as an image of death in his study on photography, *Camera Lucida* (1981). In looking at a photo of himself, Barthes explains: "what I see is that I have become Total-Image, which is to say, Death in person" (14). For Barthes, death is the object he searches for in the photo of himself ("[d]eath is the *eidos* of that Photograph" [15]), which we might detect in Rhys's search for her lost self as well, enclosed in a static frame of "timelessness" similar to death. The photographic representation of Rhys's younger self suggests an image of a stable and authentic self, an image that is false, considering how the girl in the picture follows the codes of femininity imposed upon her and, in that way, wears a "mask" of convention. Barthes also points to the impossibility of presenting an authentic self in a photo: "In front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes use of to exhibit his art" (13). As he concludes, in front of the camera, he always imitates himself, suffering "a sensation of unauthenticity" (13). Choosing to view the photo as a representation of an authentic self, however, the young Rhys's subsequent realization of how she longs for the past while watching the photograph suggests a desire for such a unified self-presentation. As an outcast in the family as well as in the convent she attends (in which she "preferred being an outcast by [herself]" [*Smile Please*, 21]), the young Rhys's marginalized position presents her as "homeless", lacking a sense of belonging and stable identification. The picture displays the stable self-presentation and imaginary unity Rhys desires in the first part of her autobiography.

Additionally, the photograph represents an image of belonging and origin, suggested by Rhys's account of how the memory she attaches to it is the very first memory she has: "It is at Bona Vista that I have my first clear connected memory. It was my birthday, the sixth" (23). In contrast to the outcast watching herself in the looking-glass, the idealized family setting at Bona Vista as well as her early years at Roseau form an image of the six-year-old Rhys as belonging among her family members ("safe, protected, sitting in a large armchair, my father on one side, my mother on the other" [23]). This sensation of inclusion is shown to encompass the West Indian landscape as well. Indeed, the landscape becomes a setting for

childhood play as opposed to a sight signifying estrangement, an estrangement that, as I will return to, she experiences years after this memory. These recollections of her early childhood thus represent an illusion of a lost sense of belonging, an image of a self, captured in the photo, a self that has not yet become (or become aware of her status as) an outcast, both in the family and in society in general. The second instance of self-perception in the opening vignette displays this self-recognition of the outcast, a position from which she reveals a nostalgic longing for stable identification and belonging, which ultimately displays a desire for what I previously explained as the maternal object.

By watching herself in the mirror, Rhys can only perceive herself in fragments ("straight hair […] pale skin […] staring eyes of no particular colour" [20]), which mirror the fragmented composition of the first part of her autobiography. This split self-perception further exposes how she can only partly represent herself, unable to present a unified and stable sense of self like the six-year-old girl she saw in the photo. Although the six-year-old child being photographed similarly viewed herself in fragmented terms, the photo of her has become, for the young Rhys, an image of stable self-perception. In this way, by signifying timelessness and a unified self, the photo represents the maternal object for Rhys. Subsequently, her nostalgic desire for its stability and unity resembles Stewart's assessment of nostalgia, as this longing is similarly evoked by the loss of an object that, in effect, has never existed.

Separated by history, Rhys cannot identify herself with the girl in the photo, considering how, in the words of Barthes: "What the Photograph reproduces to infinity has occurred only once: the Photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially" (4). However, the photo becomes a lost object signifying what she nostalgically chases through the first part of her autobiography as a whole, that is, a source of stability and belonging that she might identify with in order to achieve such a unified self. Like Freud's melancholic, Rhys has incorporated the lost object into her ego, an object that signifies the completeness offered by the previously explained maternal object. She subsequently seeks to achieve such an ideal in the external reality through various possible "mirror images" in which she might obtain this sense of unity and belonging. Whereas her split self refers to how the lost object has become part of her ego, it further points to her status within her family as well as in society in general. Being a visual signifier of the outcast, Rhys never quite belongs anywhere and cannot completely identify herself with others, which, as we shall see, is reinforced by the rejection she experiences by these possible "mirror images". As the nine-

year-old Rhys watches herself in the mirror, she seems to suffer the melancholic's "extraordinary diminution in his self-regard" (Freud 246) as theorized by Freud, as she explains: "from my head to my black stockings which fell untidily round my ankles, I hated myself" (20). Viewing herself as an outcast and an embodiment of marginalization, Rhys seems to observe herself from the position of the incorporated lost object. Thus, Rhys's self-criticism, resembling the critical self-assessment of Cavendish, evokes Freud's assessment of the melancholic's condition, which is worth re-quoting here: "the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object" (249). Ultimately, the opening vignette points to what she has lost, and the lost object haunts her in her search for the stability presented by the object.

As we reach the end of the first vignette, Rhys explains: "Life had changed a great deal for me since the days of the photograph" (26). While three of her siblings are sent away, her younger sister takes her place as "the baby, the spoilt and cherished one" (26). Rhys's notion of how her little sister replaced her stresses her place as an outcast in the family. It is at this time that Rhys becomes aware of her mother's growing indifference towards her as well: "Even after the new baby was born there must have been an interval before she seemed to find me a nuisance and I grew to dread her. Another interval and she was middle-aged (…) and uninterested in me" (42). Her little sister has taken the place of the six-year-old who was the object of the controlling maternal gaze in the opening scene, and she is subsequently rendered as an object of indifference for her mother. The section dedicated to her mother opens with Rhys's discovery of a photograph of her mother: "I once came on a photograph of my mother on horseback which must have been taken before she was married. Young, slim and pretty. I hated it" (42). Unable to explain with certainty her reaction when seeing the picture, Rhys states: "I don't know whether I was jealous or whether I resented knowing that she had once been very different from the plump, dark and only sometimes comfortable woman I knew" (42). Similar to the nine-year-old Rhys watching a photograph of her lost self, this picture represents a woman she struggles to recognize as her mother, as this woman is equally lost in the past. Again I will turn to Barthes's work on photography, where he similarly looks at photographs of his mother while struggling to "find" her in these photographic representations: "I never recognized her except in fragments, which is to say that I missed her *being*, and that therefore I missed her altogether" (65-66). Separated from these pictures by history, Barthes is unable to retrieve his mother through the photographs. Rhys similarly seems to struggle with this task, looking at the image of a woman whom she cannot

completely recognize. Whereas Barthes's mother is dead when he searches in these pictures, Rhys's mother is also, in a sense, lost to her, as Rhys has been replaced by her younger sister.

However, Rhys attempts to retrieve the woman in the photograph by searching her memory: "wasn't there a time when I remembered her pretty and young?" (42). The subsequent memory Rhys attaches to the looks of her mother's younger self, as represented by the photo, displays her mother in fragmented terms: "They were going out somewhere, for she was wearing a low-cut evening dress. She had come to say 'Good night, sleep well.' She smelled so sweet as she leaned over and kissed me" (42). This memory from her early childhood, vividly described in terms of smell, hearing and touches of affection, portrays a closeness between mother and child. By this backward glance, Rhys presents a nostalgic longing for the lost woman represented in the photograph. Importantly, the woman in the photo is an image of her mother before becoming a mother, meaning that the photo represents an object of nostalgic desire that Rhys has never had. Seemingly attempting to bridge this gap, Rhys places this image of her mother into a memory through which she creates her own fragmented image of the woman in the picture. In this way, the photo represents an irretrievable lost object for Rhys, an object from which she is separated by history. Thus, one might see Rhys's backward glance while looking at the photo as a way for her to mourn her "lost" mother. Furthermore, like the photograph of her younger self, the picture of her mother points to the time before the young Rhys becomes aware of her status as outcast. Accordingly, Rhys's nostalgic longing for the lost object can be read as a mourning of her lost self, that is, the self represented in the picture taken on her sixth birthday. The subsequent hatred that the photograph of her mother evokes in her appears grounded, like the hatred directed towards her own mirror image at the beginning of *Smile Please*, in how it is a visual embodiment of the irretrievable lost maternal object that offered stable identification and a sense of belonging. The photo is a representation of a woman that no longer exists, which again points to the irretrievable past Rhys longs for, and although she does not dare to destroy it, Rhys hides the photo in order to remove it from the external reality, in which the woman is lost.

This search for the loving mother of her past is partly connected to her wish to be identified among black people as well, as they too appear to function as "mirror images" in which she seeks stable identification and belonging. Explaining how her mother considered black babies "prettier than white ones" (42), Rhys asks "[w]as this the reason why I prayed so ardently to be black, and would run to the looking-glass in the morning to see if the miracle had happened?" (42). While longing to be black in order to gain the approval of her mother,

Rhys further points to this desire in the vignette "Black/White": "Side by side with my growing wariness of black people there was envy (…) They were more alive, more a part of the place than we were" (50). As O'Connor rightly observes, "there is a connection between [Rhys's] relationship to her mother and to her feeling about the blacks of Dominica" (31), a connection I read as centring on the security offered by both as possible representations of the maternal object. Indeed, Rhys's desire to be black illustrates both her wish to obtain a space of motherly love and protection by her biological mother in her position as outcast in the family, while simultaneously pointing to her desire for a "homely" space by becoming a part of the island. Both of these reveal her desire for a maternal object that offers unity and fixed identification, like the idealized "maternal time" that Maslen explained as signifying the mourned mother in Kristeva's theories on melancholia. In effect, the connected longing for these possible maternal objects displays an underlying wish to cross the (racial) border that imprison her in a position of marginality and of the outcast. Rhys's wish to cross the racial border can be glimpsed in the memory at Bona Vista as well: "it was our delight to eat with our fingers out of a calabash as the negroes did. Food seemed to taste better that way" (22). This suggests that her fascination for black people was already evoked at the time of this memory.

Rhys's desire to cross the racial line and identify herself among black people is also expressed in one of her unpublished exercise books, often referred to as the "Black Exercise Book", in which she states: "I longed to be identified once and for all with the others' side which of course was impossible. I couldn't change the colour of my skin" (qtd. in O'Connor 36). Being restricted from this complete identification due to the colour of her skin, Rhys reveals how this gap might be bridged by the spoken word in order to achieve this kind of mirroring with the black people. This is seen in the memory Rhys connects to the photo of her "authentic self", in which she portrays the possibility of such stable identification with the cook at Bona Vista, Ann Tewitt. Ann and Rhys are linked through the spoken word, revealing the medium of fortune-telling and interracial conversation to be a bond creating a form of identification and completeness. As Rhys explains, situated in the kitchen, which was a building separated from the main house, she and Ann had long talks together. This enclosed space of "cross-racial" (Thomas 98) conversation forms a space in which the racial border, keeping Rhys away from identifying with black people, is temporarily removed. As Thomas notes, during these talks, "Rhys is welcomed across rigidly racially demarcated boundaries of domestic space" (98), which I will further suggest constitute moments of identification with

the black woman. Ann is an object of identification, a temporary "mirror image" that Rhys might identify with through the spoken word. It is important to consider how this momentary instance of identification is found in the memory Rhys associates with the photo presenting her lost self, as this source of stable self-understanding through cross-racial talks is similarly lost in Rhys's growing awareness of her role as outcast in society. However, a glimpse of the stable identification offered by the conversations with Ann might be detected in Rhys's interactions with Francine, whose stories were always introduced by a ceremony: "Francine would say 'Tim-tim'. I had to answer 'Bois sêche,' then she'd say, 'Tablier Madame est derrière dos'" (31). The ceremony, similar to the fortune-telling of Ann at Bona Vista, is connected to the practice of obeah, which, as Thomas observes, is "a metonym for African religion" (13). Thus, both instances of interaction open for Rhys to enter into a tradition of rituals she is otherwise separated from due to her racial status. The sudden silence as Francine disappears "without a word" (31) breaks this bond of verbal communication, however, and removes Rhys from this momentary identification with the "negro girl" (31). This glimpse of stable identification is part of a vignette dedicated to a different black woman, namely Rhys's nurse Meta, whom Rhys characterizes as "the terror of [her] life" (29).

As opposed to the smiling cook at Bona Vista, Meta is always "in a bad temper (…) [s]he always seemed to be brooding over some terrible, unforgettable wrong" (29). According to Thomas, "the unnameable wrong may be a trauma produced by the legacies of slavery or racist colonial law, or, in a different reading of brooding, the child Rhys and Meta's race- and class-inflected charge of her may be the 'terrible, unforgettable wrong'" (99). In both of these readings, it is the racial border separating Rhys and her nurse that continues to aggravate this "unforgettable wrong". Contrasted to the closeness and interconnection offered by the interaction with Ann and Francine, Meta's treatment of Rhys reinforces the border separating them. While playing tricks on Rhys and physically harming her by shaking the child, Meta's stories and accounts of supernatural creatures constitute the greater harm she inflicts on the young Rhys. Meta's stories are "tinged with fear and horror" (30), and she talks about loups-garoux (werewolves), zombies and soucriants in ways that equally evoke fear in Rhys. In the words of Savory, "[b]y telling stories which came out of her own African-centred oral tradition, [Meta] both made the young girl afraid and reminded her of her exclusion from the African world of the spirit" (32-33). Whereas the obeah-practice in the interactions between Rhys and Ann and Francine invited Rhys to be part of traditions she is otherwise racially separated from, Meta's stories and depictions of creatures of Caribbean folklore are used

against Rhys, evoking fear and distrust as opposed to closeness. I will also suggest that the folkloric hybrid creatures Meta presents function are mirror images for Rhys's own split self, subsequently highlighting her own "hybridity" and difference in the Dominican landscape. In this way, the folkloric figures reinforces the verdict presented by the reflection in the looking-glass earlier in *Smile Please*, in which the nine-year-old Rhys observes herself as outcast. Being confronted with these manifestations of her split self, Rhys retaliates Meta's attacks with the spoken word, calling her "Black Devil" whenever Meta physically harms her. By calling Meta "Black Devil", Rhys connects her nurse to the "personification of evil" (*Smile Please*, 58) she believed ruled the world, that is, Satan. Believing that Satan existed, Rhys explains that he "was responsible for all the evil in this world" (58). Connecting the world of Meta's stories to the external reality believed to be ruled by Satan, Rhys concludes upon Meta's departure: "it was too late, the damage had been done. Meta had shown me a world of fear and distrust, and I am still in that world" (32). Whereas Francine and Ann can be considered as embodiments of Rhys's mother as seen in the memory she looks back on when observing the photo of her mother's younger self, Meta resembles the unloving mother that Rhys has grown to fear. In the end, both her mother's and Meta's treatment of Rhys function as constant reminders of her marginalized status and role as outcast in society.

Another instance of Rhys's attempt to cross the racial border takes place in the convent, which was also a place where, as previously mentioned, Rhys considered herself as a solitary outcast. Fascinated with a coloured girl sitting next to her in the convent, where white girls were, according to Rhys, "very much in the minority" (49), Rhys explains: "She didn't look coloured but I knew at once that she was. This did not prevent me from admiring her and longing to be friendly" (49). Although acknowledging the racial border separating her from her neighbour, Rhys longs to form a bond with the coloured girl, and she speaks to her as though attempting to create a similar bond of verbal communication like the one she had with Ann and Francine. The result of this attempt, however, renders Rhys silenced: "Finally, without speaking, she turned and looked at me. I knew irritation, bad temper, the 'Oh, go away' look; this was different. This was hatred" (49). The hatred in the girl's eyes is directed at Rhys's racial status that creates a gap between the two girls, resembling Rhys's own self-hatred when viewing herself in the looking-glass at the opening of *Smile Please*. Rhys's self-reproach at the sight of her paleness, which separates her from others, is thus echoed in this instance of attempting to identify with the coloured girl, as she is perceived through differences as opposed to similarities. Significantly, the girl does not speak, as her rejection is

presented by the look in her eyes. This demonstrates how Rhys cannot bridge the racial gap through the spoken word as she did with Francine and Ann. Rather, from her marginalized position, where she can only perceive herself in fragments, she concludes with a fragmented voice: "They hate us. We are hated. Not possible. Yes it is possible and it is so" (49). Presented as a dialogue, this portrayal of the divide between the people in Dominica exposes Rhys's split self. While initially voicing the unbridgeable gap of hatred between the faceless "[t]hey" and "us", a seemingly different voice interrupts this with a hopeful notion of how this is impossible, pointing to how she nostalgically longs to be identified with the people she is, in this society, racially separated from. In the end, Rhys must conclude with the verdict of the first voice, being forced to face the reality of how she cannot cross the racial border in search for complete identification. This play of voices is thus a manifestation of her split self, the self she can only partly represent and, consequently, never present in totality.

As the previous paragraphs show, Rhys's search for "mirror images" that she longs to identify with in order to gain a form of stable self-perception can never render a complete, static, and "timeless" stability like what she saw in the photo of her past self. It is tempting to read the elderly Rhys's placement of these moments of attempted identification in photo-like vignettes as a narrative technique through which she attempts to create similar photographic representations of her split self. Moreover, as I shall argue in the following, Rhys reveals how this stability, the "Total-Image" Barthes explained as Death, can be achieved through self-destruction. This is demonstrated in the vignette where her family has received two dolls, a dark and a fair one, from her grandmother, whom she calls "Irish Granny". This memory is introduced as a triumphant act of defiance: "I remember vividly the satisfaction of being wicked. The guilt that was half triumph" (39). As Rhys explains, "as soon as I saw the dark doll I wanted her as I had never wanted anything in my life before" (39). Unable to grab the doll fast enough, however, the dark doll ends up in the hands of her little sister. Although protesting to her mother, the young Rhys must settle for the fair doll, which she immediately destroys by smashing the doll's head with a rock. Confused by her own behaviour, she asks "[w]hy had I done such a naughty, a really wicked thing? I didn't know. I was puzzled myself. Only I was sure that I must do it and for me it was right" (40). As Angier rightly observes, "when [Rhys] wanted the dark doll and not the fair one so badly she was surely wanting more than a doll" (15). By this wish to possess the dark doll, Rhys displays her own desire to be black, in order to "fit in to her family and her island" (Angier 15). The dark doll is a representation of the mirror image she seeks to identify with, resembling the photo of her

younger self. By contrast, the fair doll represents her position as outcast, both in the family (in which she is the only fair child) and on the island in general, and her reluctance to take the doll might remind us of the self-hatred she felt when watching her pale self in the mirror. As she cannot possess the dark mirror image she seeks to identify with, Rhys chooses to destroy the representation of her split self. Subsequently, the destruction of the fair doll is an image of self-destruction in her melancholic suffering, hinting towards a part of the melancholic's condition that centres on an inclination towards self-annihilation.

Several scholars, from Aristotle to Freud, have observed the melancholic's "tendency to suicide" (Freud 252). Burton is among these scholars, and I will turn to his account of this element in the melancholic's condition in my reading of Rhys's display of self-destruction. In explaining the melancholic's tendency towards self-slaughter in his *Anatomy*, Burton states: "In such sort doth the torture and extremity of his misery torment him, that he can take no pleasure in his life, but is in a manner enforced to offer violence unto himself, to be freed from his present insufferable pains" (1: 431). Burton's description of the miserable condition and subsequent suicidal tendency of the melancholic can be employed in order to explain Rhys's presentation of self-destruction. Being deprived of yet another "mirror image" in which she might have been able to obtain a unified self and a sense of belonging similar to what she saw in the photo of her past, Rhys's melancholic condition is reinforced by the representation of the fair doll. As the doll is an object symbolizing how she does not fit in among her family members or among the black people whom she considers as being more a part of the island than herself, her receiving the doll reinforces the verdict of how she still inhabits this marginalized position. Still haunted by the lost object she saw in the photo in the beginning of her autobiography, Rhys's miserable condition when being faced with this loss in the shape of the fair doll provokes a different way in which she might achieve this idealized time of unity and completeness, that is, through self-destruction. Indeed, in smashing the doll's face, the young Rhys reveals a wish to obtain a position of deathlike completeness and "timelessness" as the one seen in the photo of her six-year-old self, by exposing a desire to destroy her split self, represented by the fair doll. By such an act of self-destruction, she would be, as Burton explains, freed from her "present insufferable pains".

The self-destructive desire for stable self-perception and a sense of belonging reappears later in the autobiography as well, as Rhys moves this longing for complete identification from the coloured and African Caribbean people to the Dominican landscape, that is, the landscape surrounding the family estate Rhys names "Morgan's Rest":

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It was there, not in wild beautiful Bona Vista, that I began to feel I loved the land and to know that I would never forget it. There I would go for long walks alone (…) It was alive, I was sure of it. Behind the bright colours the softness, the hills like clouds and the clouds like fantastic hills. There was something austere, sad, lost, all these things. I wanted to identify myself with it, to lose myself in it. (But it turned its head away, indifferent, and that broke my heart.) (81).

According to Howells, this passage displays Rhys's "traumatic sense of rejection by the land itself, in feminised imagery through which [Rhys] inscribes also her separation from her own mother" (23). Whereas Howells's valuable observation points to Rhys's status as outcast in her family and how this is transferred onto her being rejected by the landscape, I will further suggest that this passage renders a more complex image of Rhys's relationship with the West Indian scenery. Rhys seeks to identify herself with the personified landscape, a space she characterizes in terms that hint to her own melancholic self ("austere, sad, lost"). These similarities between the onlooker and the object of observation form a mirroring effect between the two, the landscape functioning as a mirror image Rhys seeks to penetrate in order to obtain a position of completeness by finding belonging in the Dominican nature. Amorously kissing the mirror image offered by the earth while thinking "[m]ine, mine" (82), Rhys exposes a wish to own the unified self-perception and sense of belonging offered by the landscape. Evoking an image comparable to the Narcissus myth, Rhys explains: "The earth was like a magnet which pulled me and sometimes I came near it, this identification or annihilation that I longed for" (81-82). Like Narcissus drowning in his own self-image, Rhys displays a similar desire to penetrate the surface of her mirroring reflection through self-destruction. Unable to cross the border that would allow for such a union, however, the landscape rejects her, and Rhys is left heartbroken.

Being unable to obtain a position of complete identification and belonging among black people as well as in the West Indian landscape, Rhys turns to an alternative world represented by books. The temporary mirroring between Rhys and both Ann and Francine, a connection grounded in the spoken word, appears to be transferred onto the written word. Seeking company in books in her position as outcast, Rhys explains after the portrayal of her lost self in the first vignette: "Now I was alone except for books" (26). In her solitary existence, being marginalized in society and obtaining a position as outcast in her own family, Rhys turns to an alternative reality offered by English books: "as soon as I could I lost myself in the immense world of books, and tried to blot out the real world which was so puzzling to

me. Even then I had a vague, persistent feeling that I'd always be lost in it, defeated" (62). The last part of this excerpt renders a double meaning, exposing how Rhys's sense of always being lost in her outside world is both an indication of how she feels lost in her surroundings, but also, how she has lost a self, that is, the self she saw in the photo at the opening of *Smile Please*. The way she immerses or "loses herself" in the world of books, however, hints towards the previously mentioned self-destructive ambition of obtaining a position of unity and "timelessness" by removing herself from the external world. In this way, Rhys's self-destructive wish to lose herself in the West Indian landscape is accomplished in the world of books. In contrast to the personified Dominican nature that turns its head away and rejects her, the literary landscape does not "look back", despite Meta's warning in relation to Rhys's reading: "Your eyes will drop out and they will look at you from the page" (28). Accordingly, the literary landscape encompass the space in which Rhys is able to remove her split self, separating herself from the external reality in which she is marginalized and considered as an outcast, and withdrawing into her own imagination. Again, as demonstrated in the chapter on Cavendish, we here observe the melancholic's preference to withdraw from the external reality in favour of enclosing herself within her own internal universe. Unlike Cavendish's proclaimed separation from other authors in her studious endeavours, however, Rhys's seclusion is portrayed as an act of extensive reading.

Functioning as a window to the mother country, the "glassed-in bookcase" (27) in the sitting room offers the young girl titles and authors of British "textuality": "Milton, Byron, then Crabbe, Cowper, Mrs Hemans, also *Robinson Crusoe*, *Treasure Island*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Pilgrim's Progress*" (27). The British (and predominantly English) authors, combined with the titles suggesting travel to imaginary places, indicate an escape to a fictional place, that is, the literary representation of Britain. Furthermore, the parallel placement of this "odd selection of poets" (27) from various periods presents a form of "timelessness". This further demonstrates how the literary landscape constitutes a space that allows Rhys to obtain a position of completeness and stability, as she enters a frame of "timelessness" like the photo of her six-year-old self. Moreover, Rhys's studious endeavours evoke a fascination with the mother country. As Angier explains, "[a]ll the books she read were English, so England became [Rhys's] dream of glamour and excitement" (21). Rhys's very withdrawal into this literary space seems to be a flight to England, or rather the "England" she imagines through reading: "I thought a great deal about England, not factually but what I had read about it" (*Smile Please*, 63). This notion of how she creates an idea of

England rather than thinking about it "factually" is emphasized by how she was seemingly more drawn to fiction as opposed to works of non-fiction, like "the volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* that [she] never touched" (27). While exposing her fascination with the mother country, Rhys's preference for fictional representations of England suggests that it is the "England" presented through artistic practice that forms a frame through which she might remove herself from her split self in the external reality. In this way, her solitary reading practice constitutes both a space where she can temporarily remove herself from her status as outcast, while simultaneously reinforcing this cause of melancholic suffering, as it stresses the impossibility of transferring this state of completeness and stability onto her external reality. Rhys's self-destructive withdrawal into the world of books is therefore an escape from her melancholic suffering as well as a reinforcement of this condition, pointing to the two-sided nature of the melancholic's solitary contemplation, being both a cure for and aggravation of the condition.

Seemingly attempting to bridge the gap between her idea of England and the actual country (in other words, between her internal and external world), Rhys idealizes the mother country and longs for the life she believes that it can give her. Returning from rides on horseback, the young Rhys explains: "Coming in from these rides I always felt that life was glorious and would certainly become more so later on (England, England!)" (64-65). Accordingly, the first part of Rhys's autobiography ends on a hopeful note, with the idea of England as a "homely" space driving the young Rhys away from her past: "Already all my childhood, the West Indies, my father and mother had been left behind; I was forgetting them. They were the past" (94). Her disappointment when coming face to face with the reality of the mother country, however, drives Rhys into a state of depression. Unable to make sense of her surroundings in England, Rhys is forced to realize that she has been romanticizing a fictional place represented by a world of books. In other words, she has existed in a paper reality or a "cardboard house" of England, being like the dolls in the "cardboard doll's house" (37) at Geneva. The severe consequences of Rhys's inadequate and idealized idea of England can be detected in the parenthesis placed in the following statement: "from books (fatally) I gradually got most of my ideas and beliefs" (63). She can never "lose herself", that is, separate her self from her place in the external reality, in the English cityscape as she was able to do in the literary landscape. This will be the focal point of the following subchapter.

3.2 "It began to grow cold" – A Colonial Woman Trapped in an English Sign System

Whereas the first subchapter focused on Rhys's marginalized position in the West Indian society, the focal point of this subchapter centres on Rhys's place in England, where she arrived in 1907. As Carr explains: "In Dominica, Rhys, the daughter of a government doctor and landowner, was undoubtedly respectable, undoubtedly a lady. In England her status was immediately in question" ("Intemperate and Unchaste", 46). Rhys's position in the mother country is determined by discourses of race, imperialism, gender and class, all of which marginalizes her status in the country. Therefore, upon her arrival in England, Rhys experiences a loss of self, being objectified and reduced to a passive existence of self-objectification. Her loss of self is a consequence of her entrance into – and subsequent entrapment within – what I will refer to as the English sign system, which determines her place within English society. My use of the term "sign system" is inspired by Sylvie Maurel's study on Rhys's works. As Maurel argues: "London, the imperial metropolis, is the seat of an imperialistic sign system which, far from simply standing for the extra-linguistic, tends to annihilate it" (89). This sign system refers to codes that dominate in English society, such as "codes of dress and behaviour" (Maurel 90). In a similar manner, I will refer to the English sign system as a ruling order of discourses and codes that inscribes meaning upon subjects in society. In entering English society, then, Rhys's societal position is pre-determined by this sign system. I find support of my reading of Rhys's entrapment within this system especially in the part of her autobiography dealing with her experiences at the Academy of Dramatic Art, as well as her account of her first love affair. Combined with this loss of self is the loss of the idealized image of England that she envisioned when reading about the country as a child. The disappointment she experiences when realizing that this romanticized version of England does not exist is part of how Rhys falls into a state of depression.

While initially revealing her lack of knowledge, as she struggles to understand the English sign system, Rhys uses her colonial background in order to display her loss and consequent depression when entering the metropolis. This is shown in her portrayal of her initial experience of England, where Rhys presents an imagery of death and alienation in order to reveal her own state of depression. I will show how Rhys's use of colours serves a symbolic function in this imagery, as she contrasts her colourful colonial past and her grey and colourless metropolitan present. Rhys's depression is particularly displayed by how she

presents her existence in England as a deathlike existence. This existence is a multifaceted presentation of how she loses herself in the English society. I use the term "deathlike" as her existence is presented as monotonous and without progress, trapped in a passive state of self-objectification. Objectified on stage as a chorus girl and trapped in repetitive patterns while drifting groundlessly in a grey and ghostlike landscape, she exposes her touring days in imageries suggesting such an existence. This deathlike state is further transferred onto her first love affair, in which the man becomes her escape from the stage. Moreover, I will argue that, towards the end of this affair, Rhys's deathlike existence is turned into what Emily R. Wilson refers to as "overliving" in her study of tragic works in which characters go on living after having suffered a great loss and their lives should have ended in *Mocked with Death: Tragic Overliving from Sophocles to Milton* (2004). While exposing a loss of self when entering the sign system of the metropolis, Rhys's presentation of the traumatic events she faces as a powerless colonial woman in the mother country challenges the supposedly male prerogative of expressing loss, mourning and states of depression. Accordingly, although silenced by the sign system of England, which I will show is especially evident in her affair with a rich benefactor, she presents her melancholic suffering in various forms of representation that challenges the supposed male privilege of melancholic speech. I will reveal how she turns to an object of femininity in her melancholy self-portrayal, specifically a powder compact, by which I will further combine perspectives on melancholy blackness with Rhys's treatment of colours.

The chapter opening the second part of Rhys's autobiography presents Rhys as an inexperienced and childlike colonial taking her first steps in the mother country. Unable to make sense of what she sees, it becomes evident that the seventeen-year-old girl has entered into a world in which she must learn to understand a different English "vocabulary". This "vocabulary" points to the system of signification that I earlier explained as the ruling sign system in the metropolis. In entering this system, Rhys shares the fate of her Creole heroine, Anna Morgan, whom Howells describes as "already en-gendered/en-cultured" (70), when arriving in the mother country, where she is "inscribed by a whole series of codes related to sex, education, and West Indian cultural history" (Howells 69). Again we are reminded of the codes inherent in the ruling sign system. The opening of the second part of Rhys's memoir displays how she must learn this new sign system, and it thus resembles Anna's first impression of England in *Voyage in the Dark* (1934): "It was as if a curtain had fallen, hiding everything I had ever known. It was almost like being born again" (7). As Nagihan Haliloğlu

observes in relation to Anna's entrance into English society: "The most important signifier she has to redefine turns out to be her own white female colonial body as she finds out how her subjectivity has already been written into discourses" (66). Rhys is equally faced with this need to redefine her sense of self in order to follow the script of the English discourses. Her Dominican past, as well as the knowledge she gained about England prove useless in this country. Like a child envisioning toy trains, she believes that the actual trains will resemble the toys of her childhood that "were always brightly coloured, green, red, blue" (*Smile Please*, 97). Confronted with the gap between her idea of trains and the reality of the actual machine, Rhys is left silenced: "I said nothing and after a while the train started" (98). Further revealing her ignorance, the young girl struggles with the meaning of words, believing the "black darkness" she is plunged into when driving through a tunnel to be a "railway accident" (98).

Combined with this sense of estrangement and lack of knowledge is a feeling of disappointment over what she sees, revealed by her very first look at the English landscape: "It was a very grey day when we reached Southampton and when I looked out of the porthole my heart sank" (97). The initial dissatisfaction with her surroundings is increased when entering the streets of London, which were "all the same, long, straight, grey, a bit disappointing" (98). While being shown the sights of London by her aunt, it becomes evident that Rhys's idealization of England, based on what she read about the country while growing up, fades away when confronted with the reality of the colonial Centre. As Nòra Séllei notes, the churches Rhys visits (Westminster Abbey and Saint Paul's) serve a symbolic function for the metropolis, as they are historical places for coronations and burials (131). Similarly, the Wallace Collection "the site of the largest private collection in England, symbolises colonial and imperial wealth" (Séllei 131). While signifying English history and power, these sights become another source of disappointment for Rhys. Whereas Westminster Abbey is too crowded, Saint Paul's is too cold and colourless, and during their visit at the Wallace Collection, she falls asleep. Rhys's portrayal of these places demonstrates how she can only perceive them in negative terms in her own system of signification as a colonial ("the lack of room to move, the lack of colours and warmth, and the lack of her interest" [Séllei 131]). Contrasted to her portrayal of Morgan's Rest, Rhys seems unable to present the colonial Centre, here represented by sights of its power and history, in positive terms. In this way, the transition from the Caribbean landscape to the English cityscape of London is represented as a loss for the autobiographical self, a representation that reveals her sense of alienation when entering the English society. A reversed version of this divide between colony and mother

country is found in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), where the English male protagonist we recognize as Edward Rochester describes the Caribbean landscape in terms exposing his state of estrangement among his surroundings: "Everything is too much (…) Too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near" (42). However, reading Rhys's account of alienation strictly as a West Indian colonial's difficulties of making sense of her surroundings in the mother country would be too simplistic. While her reaction during the sightseeing tour is a sign of her colonial background, Rhys's account of her meeting with the metropolis further points to an imagery that dominates the second part of her autobiography, that is, an imagery presenting a deathlike existence. Indeed, the immovability experienced in Westminster Abbey, combined with the cold and colourless space of Saint Paul's before finally falling into a paralysis of sleep at the art collection render a display of deathlike passivity that, as we shall see, becomes her general state of existence in the colonial Centre.

The imagery denoting such a deathlike existence is further portrayed when Rhys's aunt takes her to see the zoo, where the entrapment and passivity experienced in the churches and art collection are transferred onto the confined animals. In sharp contrast to the green parrot at Geneva that sat on her grandmother's shoulder, the Dominica parrot Rhys sees locked up in a cage as a spectacle for the English audience is grey, and Rhys characterizes it as "the most surly, resentful parrot [she] had ever seen" (100). Pale and lifeless, the bird becomes an image of the fate awaiting Rhys in England. Similar to how Rhys is objectified and placed on display for an English crowd when joining a group of chorus girls, the parrot obtains a position of objectified exotic spectacle. The paleness of the traditionally colourful bird renders the sight as an unnatural representation of the animal, a representation that we have to consider in relation to the meaning of colours in Rhys's works. As Savory observes, "colour functions as a symbolic code" (85) in Rhys's texts, and the symbolic meanings of specific colours haunt her fiction as well as her autobiographical work. In connection to space, "[d]ull or dark colours are often identifiable as specifically English" (Savory 86), whereas bright colours are closely associated with the West Indies in the written works where she presents both landscapes. In *Smile Please*, Rhys's preference for bright colours is shown by how the "mirror images" in which she seeks identification and stability in the first part of her autobiography are described in terms of colours. While falling in love with the beauty of Morgan's Rest, with its "bright colours" (81), Rhys is similarly drawn to the colourful clothing of the black people she observes during the Corpus Christi as well as the painted

people and colourful masks of the Carnival. The act of turning to the written word is equally portrayed in an imagery of colours, as the first books she reads are described as "the red, the blue, the green, the yellow" (27). By contrast, the pale complexion of the Dominica parrot renders an image of death and decay. The parrot's faded looks reflect Rhys's own decaying body towards the end of her affair with her first lover, which I will return to towards the end of this subchapter. Similarly, the parrot's inability to respond to Rhys's greeting mirrors her own difficulties in entering the English sign system. Initially, these difficulties are grounded in her ignorance related to the meaning of words as well as English custom. After entering this sign system, however, the struggles rest in how its ruling discourses and codes of behaviour and speech obliterate opportunities of agency and self-expression. Having to follow the script of English custom (both on stage and in society in general), Rhys's self-presentation resembles the bird's pretended ability to speak, whereby it *mimics* or repeats the sounds of words instead of actually expressing itself.

In addition to the sad sight of the parrot, Rhys witnesses other animals in equal states of entrapment, and she similarly portrays them in ways that point to her own sense of imprisonment. Indeed, both the groundless pacing of the lion "with such sad eyes" (100) and the hummingbirds that Rhys perceives as "[t]rying desperately to get out" (100) become a metaphor for Rhys's own situation. Like the pacing lion moving up and down in his cage, the monotonous existence as a chorus girl is presented as that of endless repetition, each week exactly like the last, and each new town precisely like the former: "On Sunday we left for another town which was exactly like the last one, or so I thought" (110). Caught in a pattern of repetition in which she objectifies herself on stage, wearing the pale mask of English femininity, Rhys appears trapped within a deathlike existence. As Rhys comments, "[g]oing from room to room in this cold dark country, England, I never knew what it was that spurred me on and gave me an absolute certainty that there would be something else for me before long" (111-112). Seemingly driven by an idea of breaking out of this monotonous pattern by obtaining a greater sense of purpose in England, Rhys resembles the heroine of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Locked up in the "cardboard house" (*Wide Sargasso Sea*, 118) of Thornfield Hall, Antoinette similarly searches for the reason why she has been placed there: "There must be a reason. What is it that I must do?" (116). A similar image of entrapment occurs in *Good Morning Midnight* (1939), where Sasha Jansen refers to London as "a little room" (95). The imagery of the city as a little room in the otherwise cold and grey country exposes the suffocating entrapment of English society. Resembling the hummingbirds' inability to escape,

Rhys moves from "room to room" in a pattern of repetition, becoming a visual signifier of the governing power of the English sign system that hinders any form of development in her existence. Like Antoinette's imprisonment and predetermined fate in England, specifically represented by Charlotte Brönte's *Jane Eyre*, Rhys's subjectivity (or lack thereof) is already written, inscribed upon her body in a way that removes possibilities of agency outside of this structure.

The animals in the zoo are equally presented as visual representations of entrapment within English society and its system of signification, and they thus mirror the onlooker's fate in England. Significantly, it is through Rhys's eyes that the animals are portrayed as examples of such miserable imprisonment. In the words of Berger, [t]he way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe" (8). In other words, a person's way of perceiving his or her surroundings is never separated from the subject's character. This is further explained by how "[w]e never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves" (Berger 9). Therefore, an English crowd at the turn of the twentieth century might have found the sight of the exotic animals in the zoo a source of amusement, considering how, at this time, the interaction between humans and animals at the zoo was still "a socially and morally acceptable form of entertainment" (Ito 164). By contrast, Rhys's account of the confined animals closes with the following verdict: "I got such an impression of hopeless misery that I couldn't bear to look" (100). As opposed to an area signifying differences (i.e. where human and animal are separated), Rhys's view of the zoo is presented as a moment of emotional connection and mirroring reflection, as the animals resemble the colonial onlooker's existence in the mother country. Unable to utter the misery she experiences, however, she can only say yes when asked if she had enjoyed herself at the zoo. The link between onlooker and object of perception can also be read through the lens of Victorian traditions that were still prevalent at the turn of the twentieth century. During the Victorian period, "zoos also served the purpose of displaying not only creatures categorised now as animals but very often also human beings – 'primitive' people, 'savages'" (Séllei 135-136). In this way, the zoo became an area of colonial discourse, where the "uncivilized" people who were, like the animals, not considered as "human" were placed in cages. Thus, the distinction between colonial "self" and colonized "other" were preserved. Considering how the zoo is a site of colonial power, Rhys's reaction to the sight might denote, as Séllei explains, "the fear of colonial objectification and othering" (136) in the colonial. Both her racial status as Creole and her gender place her in the danger zone of being turned into the

colonial "other", as "colonial subjects, and colonial(ised) women particularly, were considered the humans closest of all to the animal world" (Séllei 136). Therefore, as a space where colonial discourse is represented, the zoo constitutes a crossing point between Rhys's colonial past and her present existence in the metropolis. Subsequently, the caged animals, as spectacles of identification for the colonial, evoke emotions of empathy and, as Séllei observed, a possible fear in Rhys.

In addition, I suggest that Rhys's portrayal of the zoo constitutes a display of her grief during her first steps in London, as she mourns the loss of the romanticized England she envisioned as a child. The zoo becomes a site in which she is able to express her disappointment and subsequent depressed state when entering the mother country, by placing it into an imagery of deathlike passivity in a place where her colonial past and metropolitan present are represented. This might be the reason why Rhys gives such a detailed description of the zoo in an autobiography that is generally economical when it comes to describing physical surroundings in great detail. Indeed, it is tempting to speculate in whether the nearly 90 years old Rhys, writing about this scene in retrospect, lingers on this moment in order to create the frame (or cage) in which her younger self was placed when entering the mother country. In any case, both the sights of the colonial Centre that she can only perceive in negative terms and the deadness of the caged animals symbolize her loss upon entering the English society. This loss is also a loss of self, as she enters into the English sign system, by which she is rendered passive and objectified. The way this is revealed during her time spent at the Academy of Dramatic Art will be explored in the following paragraphs. Ultimately, the sightseeing tour constitutes one of the scenes through which Rhys can represent her loss as a West Indian colonial woman entering the mother country.

Rhys's first experience of London lays the foundation of the passive and monotonous existence that awaits her. Contrasted to the world in which she lost herself when reading about England in her childhood, the loss of self that she actually experiences when entering the country centres on how she objectifies herself, particularly on stage. During her time at the Academy of Dramatic Art, Rhys presents her growing awareness of the English sign system and its gender discourses. Already on the boat to England Rhys uttered her wish to become an actress in the mother country, an ambition that led her to ask her father for the opportunity to attend the Academy. Rhys's ambitions of performing on the stage quickly become juxtaposed with the performance of customs on the stage of England, and both acts are taught at the school she attends. Immediately after beginning the term at the Academy, a

world of proper manners scripted for English women, Rhys comments upon the codes of dress, speech and general behaviour among the others attending the school. Confronted with the codes of femininity and class, she is mocked because of her hideous clothes, as her aunt's idea was "to fit [her] out as cheaply as possible" (102). As Howells explains, in Rhys's fiction "[t]here is an obsessive attention to codes of dress and manners, and to girls' education, which is shown to be a decisive agent in the process of gender construction, leaving them vulnerable and unprepared for the risks of adult life" (13). Like her fictional heroines, Rhys's focus on clothes and appearances is a crucial part of her self-perception in England (contrasted to her delight in being "one of the untidiest girls in the convent" [20] as a child in Dominica).

Alongside the emphasis placed on codes of proper clothing were the rules of proper speech. Recollecting the elocution classes at the Academy, Rhys explains: "In the elocution master's class there was once a scene which puzzled me and made me feel sad" (102). While she connects the theatrical stage and the English stage of etiquette by referring to the incidence as a "scene", Rhys further reveals by this example the importance of proper performance of the English vocabulary, that is, proper pronunciation of English words. As Angier notes, "[f]rom its foundation until well into the 1960s, the Academy of Dramatic Art insisted that the King's English, the language of the ruling class, was the only possible speech for the stage" (46). While the teacher in the "scene" Rhys refers to insists upon the incorrectness of a pupil's pronunciation of the word "froth", the pupil in question refuses to pronounce the word differently. In the end, similar to the girl in the convent Rhys attended in Dominica who gave the "wrong" answer when asked about her origins (*Smile Please*, 78), the girl is dismissed from class. Following this, the elocution master left, or was dismissed, a dismissal that might have been connected to the fact that the girl's mother, Lady Agnes Grove, was "the main authority in Edwardian London on this matter of pronunciation" (Angier 47). As Rhys comments: "This gave me my first insight into the snobbishness and unkindness that went on" (103). The focus on proper performance of the English vocabulary created difficulties for Rhys's own attendance at the Academy, an issue she chooses not to comment upon in her autobiography. Rhys's accent was affected by her colonial past, and, in the words of Angier, she "had been told by English people from her childhood on that she had an 'accent', a nasty, sing-song nigger's voice" (46). Because of her difficulties in improving her pronunciation, the Administrator of the Academy wrote to Rhys's father, telling him that Rhys's accent "would seriously affect her chances of success in Drama" (qtd. in Angier 49).

Considering Rhys's own difficulties in relation to the proper English taught at the

Academy, one might wonder why she chose to focus on the example of the other girl in discussing this issue. I suggest that Rhys's choice of including the "scene" in which her fellow student pronounces the word "froth" wrong serves as a way in which Rhys might reveal women's entrapment and silencing within the ruling sign system of England. In this performance of words, there is seemingly only *one* correct performance, that is, the one uttered by the elocution master. Again we might be reminded of the nun in the convent of Rhys's childhood who sought the one right answer when asking a girl who made her. From this view of there being only one correct performance of speech in class, any alternative versions of the English script threatens its structure. Any "act" of words that deviate from this performance, then, must be excluded from class. In this way, Rhys shows how girls are silenced when not following the codes of proper speech within the English sign system. Instead of commenting on her own accent as being improper, Rhys uses an example through which she can criticize the superficial and snobbish ways of the English, while simultaneously pointing to the silencing of women within the English society. Subsequently, she uncovers how speech is connected to both class and gender. Although omitting her own difficulties related to her Creole accent, Rhys is similarly trapped within this system, silenced by her gendered and class-determined place in society, which obliterates opportunities of agency and self-construction through language. Thus, the ruling sign system's silencing of women has great consequences for Rhys during her time in England, particularly as it further underscores her deathlike existence in the country as a whole.

Within this education of female "performance" is the ideal of marriage. During her upbringing in Dominica, Rhys had been introduced to "the worry of getting married" (*Smile Please*, 51) and how marriage should be considered as young girls' goal in life. Not surprisingly, then, Rhys explains that after having received a proposal at the Academy, it made her feel "as if [she] had passed an examination" (103). Although she declines the offer of marriage, the incident presents an important part of the power politics determining the roles of men and women. The man who asks for her hand in marriage explains in the letter containing his proposal that Rhys should marry him in order to get away from her bullying landlady, as he has "come into his money" (104). While on the one hand exposing the goal of marriage prescribed for women in the English culture, the proposal illustrates how money and freedom are linked within this culture, and how both are offered by the man in marriage. Therefore, the proposal Rhys receives while at school demonstrates women's dependence on men in society at large, a dependence that will have fatal consequences for Rhys when leaving

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the Academy.

While visiting an uncle during a vacation from the Academy, Rhys learns about her father's death, and, shortly after, Rhys receives a letter from her mother telling her that they can no longer afford to keep her at the Academy. Instead of going back to Dominica, Rhys chooses to become a chorus girl, revealing a final removal from the world of her life in the West Indian landscape. Rhys's account in her autobiography of how she had to leave the Academy is, according to Angier, not true. As Angier explains, after having received the letter from the Administrator of the Academy regarding Rhys's Creole accent, her father "must have accepted the judgement of the teachers, and he couldn't afford the 'considerable time' it would take to change it" (49). Accordingly, it was not her mother, but her father (who died the next year) who made the decision of her leaving the Academy. Why, then, did Rhys rewrite this part of her self-narrative? It is possible that the aging Rhys, nearly 90 years of age when working on her autobiography, might have failed to remember the actual reason leading to her withdrawal from school. However, I will offer a different reading of Rhys's alteration of this incident in her life, an incident that had severe consequences for her time in England. Like the proposal she received at the Academy, Rhys's account of the death of her father displays women's reliance on male benefactors in the English society, both fathers and husbands. By revealing the extent of this dependence, Rhys subsequently points to the severe loss women face when this source of security disappears, a loss she herself experiences by the death of her father and, later in the autobiography, by the abandonment of her lover. Furthermore, this connection between the dependency of father and husband points to a character that haunts Rhys's fiction, that of the paternalistic lover. Generally, in her works, this figure inhabits a power-position in society, based on discourses of gender, class and race. Her first lover performs the part of paternalistic benefactor, and he becomes her escape from the deathlike existence as a chorus girl, while also playing a part in her melancholic suffering in England.

As previously stated, the monotonous existence as a chorus girl, combined with her self-objectification on stage portray a deathlike existence in which the young Rhys is caught in a pattern of repetition. Anna Morgan, one of the chorus girls of Rhys's fiction, vividly portrays this circular journey in *Voyage in the Dark*:

> You were perpetually moving to another place which was perpetually the same. There
> was always a little grey street leading to the stage-door of the theatre and another little
> grey street where your lodgings were, and rows of little houses with chimneys like the

funnels of dummy steamers and smoke the same colour as the sky; and a grey stone promenade running hard, naked and straight by the side of the grey-brown or grey-green sea; or a Corporation Street or High Street or Duke Street or Lord Street where you walked about and looked at the shops (8).

The repetition of words in this excerpt ("perpetually", "little", "grey") reveals the repetitive pattern in which the chorus girl is trapped, a pattern that is mirrored in the unchanging greyness of her surroundings. Like Rhys's first impression of England as cold and grey, her touring days, similar to Anna's, intensify this initial assessment by revealing the country to be ghostly and depressing. As explained in *Quartet* (1928) by Marya Zelli, another one of the chorus girls in Rhys's fictional universe: "One can drift like that for a long time (…) carefully hiding the fact that this wasn't what one had expected of life" (15). On her circular and unchanging journey, the homeless Rhys drifts around passively and aimlessly. The possible escape centred on men: "for chorus girls the real hope, and the real danger, came from men" (Angier 58). This "hope" offered by men is found in Rhys's portrayal of the differences between the chorus girls: "Some, though not many, were married. Some were engaged to be married (…) Some were very ambitious, determined to make a good marriage" (109). The girls who sought a career on stage, however, were "rather few and far between" (109). But, as Angier rightly observes, there were dangers inherent in the ambition of gaining a man's attention, dangers Savory points to by portraying the chorus girls' vulnerable position, as "they sell their beauty on stage, are poor and unchaperoned and long to escape their dismal lives" (93-94).

Rhys reveals a similar wish to escape her position as chorus girl. As opposed to her wish to withdraw from the external reality by turning to the literary landscape as a child, Rhys explains how her love of books disappeared in the mother country: "In England my love and longing for books completely left me. I never felt the least desire to read anything, not even a newspaper" (111). Savory reads this alienation from the written word as a manifestation of Rhys's depression when faced with the reality of England (15). Rhys appears to share the fate of her fictional heroine Marya when entering the world of the chorus girls: "Gradually passivity replaced her early adventurousness" (*Quartet*, 15). Savory's interpretation points to how Rhys's depression is a consequence of the disappointment she felt when leaving her idea of England, a result of what she had read about it, only to experience the actual country's grey and ghostly reality. At the same time, there is an undefined object she chases, a "something else" (*Smile Please*, 112) that she believes awaits her in England. Although she characterizes

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this unnamed object as "small and limited" (112) in hindsight, I would argue that she has moved the ideal she found in the books into her external reality, and ultimately, it takes the shape of a man, that is, her first lover. While Rhys leaves this man nameless in *Smile Please*, Angier explains that his name was Lancelot Grey Hugh Smith, and that he was twice Rhys's age (61). As though searching for that one "fire" that she imagined everyone had when reading books set in England ("I concluded that either the English didn't feel the cold, which surely wasn't possible, or that everybody had a fire" [*Smile Please*, 63]), her lover becomes this source of life in the otherwise cold existence she faces in England. Apparently matching her romantic idea of England as a child, this man is like a character from one of her books come to life: "He was like all the men in all the books I had ever read about London" (114). One might detect this link between the lover and the literary landscape in the similarities between this love affair and the one found in the only book she read while one tour, namely *Forest Lovers*. According to Angier, the book is about a girl who is "thrown into the depths of degradation – called a witch, made to endure 'scorn, shame, bleeding, stripes, blindness and the swoon like death'" (60), before she is saved by a knight, the man she loves, in the end. Similarly, Rhys's suitor becomes her escape from her days as a chorus girl. Furthermore, in Rhys's description of the book, she explains that it is "about a *man* and a *girl*" (111) (my emphasis), suggesting an age difference that subsequently turns the fictional man into a paternalistic figure, which again reminds us of the older man Rhys falls in love with.

Whereas the affair is presented as the escape from her monotonous existence on tour, Rhys's brief account of the relationship at the end of the chapter "Chorus Girls", points to how she moves from one state of passive objectification to another. As she explains, despite her growing awareness of how she was not fit to be on stage, her lover wants to pay for her dancing and singing lessons. This hints at how he replaces her father's position as financial benefactor, while at the same time, it reveals how he seeks to objectify her and turn her into an object for the male gaze. Further entering into this position of passivity, Rhys explains: "The rest of the time I spent looking out of the window for the messenger boy, because he always sent his letters by messenger" (113). Her self-objectification points to how Rhys is still trapped within the English sign system and its gender-based power politics. In this instance of self-objectification, however, Rhys is also driven by the fantasy represented by her lover, seemingly believing she can "lose herself" in this fantasy in a similar way as when she lost herself in books as a child. As she painfully finds out, Rhys cannot separate herself from her place in the external reality in a similar manner through this affair, considering how, as I

will show, the man is both an image of her romantic idea of England and a representation of the reality of the English society that drove Rhys into a state of depression.

While closing the chapter dedicated to her days on tour with a brief account of her first love affair, the subsequent chapter in which Rhys gives a more detailed account of this relationship, opens with the affair's termination. By establishing the loss she suffers when abandoned by her lover at the beginning of the chapter, Rhys has already established him as a lost object of desire, turning this loss into a shadow that follows the remaining account of her relationship with her lover. Rhys's poem ("I didn't know" [114]) and resolution to "[settle] down to be miserable" (114) after being abandoned resemble the disappointment felt upon her arrival in England, as well as her lack of knowledge when confronted with the English sign system. This connection between England and the lover is expressed in Rhys's account of her feelings towards "England and the English" (165) near the end of *Smile Please*: "Disappointed love, of course" (165). The unnamed and faceless man functions as a personification of the English sign system, being a paternalistic male figure that represents power politics inherent in discourses of race, gender and class. This is particularly revealed during one of the last meetings between Rhys and her lover.

At the end of a lunch at the Savoy with her suitor and an unnamed couple, Rhys remembers how the waiter suddenly "dived under the table and came up with a very shabby powder compact which, without expression, he put on the white tablecloth" (115). Although she had gotten a new powder compact from her lover, Rhys chose to stick with the one she had used as a lucky charm through her days on tour. Now, however, she looks at it through the eyes of her English company, and "on the white tablecloth it looked abominable. Most of the gilt had worn off and the black underneath showed" (115-116). Rhys's assessment of her compact being "very shabby" suggests, as Molly Pulda notes in her analysis of this scene, "a failure of class appearances" (162). In addition, the "black underneath" the gilt displays Rhys's racial status as white Creole in England. In the words of Carr, the white Creoles were, at the turn of the twentieth century, considered as racially impure and degenerate: "They could no longer be regarded as wholly white, and certainly not as truly English" ("Intemperate and Unchaste", 46). By claiming the powder compact, Rhys is forced to claim her degraded racialized and class-based status in the English society. As Pulda notes, "young Rhys cringes in class shame and racial shame, seeing herself, through others' eyes, as inherently 'black underneath' the London leisure that gilds her colonial origins" (162). To Rhys's surprise, her lover does not comment upon her reluctance to use the powder compact

he gave her. I share Pulda's view in that the lover's silence upon the subject indicates how Rhys's old compact is a "racialized sign" (164) that the wealthy English man requires in order to keep the border between himself and the colonial Creole. I read Rhys's lover's attempts to "drag [her] into the conversation" (*Smile Please*, 115) at the table as similarly a display of this need for signs of racial difference, considering how Rhys's accent, as previously stated, revealed her colonial background. The compact's shabbiness also creates a class-based border between the two, upholding the English class system by the contrast between this powder compact and the one given to Rhys by her wealthy suitor. Rhys herself noted this hierarchal relation between them earlier in the chapter: "his class was oppressing mine. He had money. I had none" (114). Therefore, Rhys's "shabby powder compact" not only becomes a visual signifier of her status in the English society, but a manifestation of her lover's position as well. The borders related to race, gender and class that separate them are maintained, keeping Rhys in "her place" in English society.

The scene with Rhys's compact can therefore be read as an instance of female objectification, particularly shown through the symbolic function of the compact's mirror. As Brodzki and Schenck argue in their work on women's autobiographies, "[t]he archetypical female prop of the mirror has been used variously in relation to woman, and almost always *against* her" (7). One might see this in how it has been used in order to "imprison femininity: for a woman to be reassured of her 'looks' is to know she will be looked at" (Brodzki and Schenck 7). However, I will offer a different reading of the scene, centred on how the compact becomes an object of female agency and subject-formation through which Rhys claims a position as a melancholic. The compact's blackness, signifying Rhys's marginalized position in relation to race and class, serves another symbolic function similar to the function of black bile in Galenic tradition. Again I will refer to Trevor, and, this time, to his account of how black bile, which only exists in "the Galenic imagination of the body" (30), functions as a "symbolic object" through which the melancholic persona may understand and explain his or her suffering (31). As a representation of the cause of Rhys's alienated and marginalized status in society, the shabby compact is similarly an object through which she can express her depression. Had she chosen to use her lover's gift, Rhys might have performed feminine etiquette in accordance with the gender discourses of her contemporary society, and by this worn the "mask" of whiteness and wealth offered by this new and expensive compact. As Pulda claims, "[i]n using her lover's gift, young Rhys is meant to view herself within its miniature frame of male generosity and English wealth" (163). Rhys's refusal to use the gift,

however, reveals how she chooses her own frame of self-perception, centred on her melancholic suffering, and separated from the frame imposed upon her by her lover.

Like the partly black compact lying on a white tablecloth, Rhys stands out among the faceless and unnamed English people at the lunch table. By reducing her companions to a group of faceless and anonymous people, Rhys blends them into the background of the pale and colourless image she has fashioned of England as a whole, both of which are represented by the white tablecloth. The blackness visible on the powder compact is contrasted to this white background. While displaying Rhys's racial and class-based marginalization and consequent melancholic suffering, the blackness is an indication of what lies beneath the surface of the compact, that is, the compact's mirror. The mirror presents the self that she can only *partly* represent, in other words, the self that does not fully belong anywhere as she is alienated and marginalized in the West Indian as well as the English landscape. Thus, the blackness of the cover hides the prevalent cause of her melancholic suffering that has haunted Rhys's self-perception since the opening of *Smile Please*. Hidden beneath this black "cover", she presents her melancholic self in a manner that evokes the famous lines of Hamlet, who, dressed in mourning clothes, states: "But I have that within which passes show,/ These but the trappings and the suits of woe" (Shakespeare 1. 2. ll. 85-86). In this way, the compact functions as an instrument through which Rhys presents a melancholic subjectivity. Accordingly, she challenges the gendered boundaries of melancholia by using a feminine tool that has, as Brodzki and Schenck argued, historically kept women in a position of objectification for the pleasure of the male gaze.

The lunch at the Savoy is one of the last times Rhys sees her lover on amorous terms before he leaves her. Naming the chapter dedicated to her first affair "The Interval" suggests how this is a pause in her self-narrative, pointing to her self-objectification and consequent passive position in the relationship. Without financial support from her family and with no intention of earning her own living, she becomes a sexualized commodity, a bought object depending on a wealthy paternalistic lover that turns out to be "a villain" (*Smile Please*, 114). As opposed to the constant coldness of her days as a chorus girl, however, there is a source of comfort accompanying this self-objectification: "I got used to the warmth, the fires all over the house, the space, the comfort" (114-115). Again suggesting how her lover becomes an image of the fire she believed that every English person had when reading about the country as a child, Rhys shows how her affair is like the idea of England that she created in her childhood, the notion of the country that initially evoked her fascination with it. Like this

illusion of England, the man is characterized as a fantasy, "a dream come true" (115), and as Rhys concludes "one doesn't question dreams, or envy them" (115). This inability to question the man that, in the end, leaves her, points to an important part of Rhys's self-objectification during this affair. First, it reveals how Rhys is dependent upon the hierarchal relationship between them, considering how, in order for him to be a "dreamlike" source of warmth and comfort, she must conform to her position in society. Accordingly, as Rhys explains "I was never envious. It was right, I felt" (115), bordering on a self-annihilating objectification based on power politics within discourses of sexuality and class. Second, this inability to speak up reveals how she is bound by the English sign system, unable to raise questions from her position of sexualized commodity. By inhabiting this status in society, Rhys is placed in the role of "amateur". The "amateur", as Thomas explains, was a term used in the early twentieth-century that referred to "women sexually active outside marriage" (4), exchanging sexual favours for gifts and other benefits. Haliloğlu further notes how the amateur "has no immediate family and no fixed address, rented hotel rooms, restaurants and cafes seem to be her natural environment" (32). Lacking stability and placed in the margins of society, Rhys is unable to question the position she inhabits, restricted by the social conventions inherent in the ruling sign system.

With this in mind, I will offer a reading of the silence Rhys exhibits following the abortion that her lover, undoubtedly, paid for and supported (if not demanded). The reader might detect this silence already at the beginning of Rhys's account of the incident, as she censors the abortion by omitting the actual operation in her narrative and refers to it simply as "an illegal operation" (118). Restricted by the English sign system, Rhys cannot utter the name for this kind of operation, considering how it is, as she explains, illegal, and thus outside of socially sanctioned representability. Her reaction following this operation similarly renders an image of entrapment within the sign system. As Rhys explains: "I didn't suffer from remorse or guilt. I didn't think at all like women are supposed to think" (118). Rhys's lack of sorrow and feelings of guilt after this operation does not just point to how she differs from other women who presumably are "supposed to think" like that. Rather, this lack of sorrow after terminating her pregnancy reveals how she, in her marginalized position in society, is not *entitled* to such a reaction. Claiming the right to mourn the removal of her child would require her to step out of the sign system in which she is trapped, as the role of "mother" within this system of meaning is assigned to the institution "the wife". Thus, from her position in English society, she cannot express grief for an illegitimate child. Furthermore,

mourning the removal of her unborn child would similarly grant signification to an "impure" offspring, as the amateur was considered a threat towards racial purity. As Haliloğlu explains, the amateur's body is "a vessel that can transmit disease and can give birth; both acts potentially harbouring great risk for racial health" (34). This threat towards racial purity is further suggested by Rhys's racial status, being a white Creole, who, as previously mentioned, were not considered as wholly "white". Rhys similarly exposes this hierarchal valuation of racial purity by her reaction to the death of the Persian kitten she receives from her suitor. As she cries all the way back to her rented room, Rhys mourns the loss of the Persian kitten who is "a pedigree Persian" (119). Within the English sign system, this kitten is, in other words, represented as "worth" mourning. In this way, Rhys's inability to express grief for the unborn child reveals the silence forced upon her by the ruling sign system, while simultaneously displaying the racial and class-based limitations of representations of mourning in this system. Accordingly, her account of the time following the abortion exposes the gendered power politics of mourning that Schiesari's study on melancholia uncovers, that is, the devaluation of women's grief and restrictions of the ability to express loss forced upon the female mourner. In addition, Rhys uncovers how groups of people, marginalized according to race and class, are similarly trapped within the governing sign system in England. In this part of her memoir, then, meaning does not rest in the spoken word, but in the silences, namely what cannot be uttered on the stage of English society.

The abortion and the subsequent depiction of its outcome show how Rhys has no power over her own body, nor the English sign system. This is further revealed by the passivity exposed in her calling this period a pause in her life: "I was very tired (…) It was like a pause in my life, a peaceful time" (118). Similar to the paralysation she experienced during her sightseeing tour in London (ending in her falling asleep at the Wallace Collection), her state after the abortion can seemingly not be represented in any other way than by passivity and fatigue, as both instances of paralysation expose her difficulties in relation to the English society and its governing system of signification. Presenting this period as a "pause" points to how the young Rhys has no control over the progress of her own self-narrative in this entrapment. As she explains, her lover's cousin takes care of her during this "pause": "It seemed natural that he should take charge of everything, supplying money, somehow producing a daily woman" (118). The bond between the paternalistic benefactor and the female object is consequently preserved through the means of a middle person. Still caged within this deathlike self-objectification, Rhys's passivity points to her continued dependence

on this kind of benefactor. Thus, her existence is determined by the English sign system as well as by her dependence on the man who is, as earlier stated, characterized as a faceless personification of the sign system. Not surprisingly, then, Rhys states that "I was not at all unhappy" (118), considering how she had already learnt how, in England, it was "bad policy to *say* that you were lonely or unhappy" (116) (my emphasis). However, her lover does not come to see her after the abortion. Her pregnancy has evoked the risks of the amateur and, consequently, she must be excluded. By becoming pregnant, she has performed a role she is not entitled to have in English society, and, like the girl at the Academy who did not perform the word "froth" right, Rhys has to be removed.

Following this period of close contact with her lover's cousin (whom she interestingly names, as opposed to her lover), Rhys explains that "[i]t was starting to get cold" (119), echoing her assessment on the boat to England of how "it began to grow cold" (97). Functioning as a warning of the cold and deathlike existence that awaits her in England, the present coldness similarly points to the numbing passivity that falls upon her when removed from the warmth offered by her lover. Having booked yet another rented room, Rhys "sent [her] address to Julian and settled down to an almost completely monotonous existence" (120). This monotonous existence, like the ones previously mentioned in connection to her time as a chorus girl and during her first affair, is exposed as an entrapment within a repetitive pattern, every day being exactly like the former. There is, however, significant differences in her present state, as she is not merely drifting passively in society. Rather, Rhys's portrayal of her state suggests that she should have been excluded from this society altogether, meaning that she is existing in a deathlike existence similar to what Wilson terms "overliving". In her study, Wilson analyses works in the tragic tradition, arguing that "there is a central thread in the tragic tradition that is concerned not with dying too early but with living too long, or 'overliving'" (1). As she explains, "even young people may feel that they ought already to have died, *when they live on after extraordinary loss*" (1) (my emphasis). Rhys's state of depression following her lover's abandonment is displayed as this form of overliving, which is particularly evident in her lamentation some pages later: "'Oh, God, I'm only twenty and I'll have to go on living and living and living'" (130). The despair presented in her painful existence resembles Adam's cry of misery following the Fall in book ten of *Paradise Lost* (from which Wilson took the term "overliving"): "Why do I overlive?/ Why am I mocked with death and lengthened out/ To deathless pain?" (ll. 773-75). In her depressed state of overliving, Rhys is inflicted with one of the most common symptoms of melancholia, that is,

a severe and continuous form of sadness: "And then it became a part of me, so I would have missed it if it had gone. I am talking about sadness" (120). Miserable and solitary, Rhys is trapped in motionless repetition during the days, mirroring her deathlike state at nights: "I'm sure I slept fifteen hours out of twenty-four, and I never dreamed. I slept as if dead" (120).

Rhys's daily walks, always ending in her return to the same rented room, evoke the image of the groundless pacing of the lion in the zoo, and, similar to the hummingbirds, she has no chance of escape. The "impression of hopeless misery" (100) she experienced in the zoo becomes an imagery through which we might see her own present existence. In effect, similar to Rhys's role as spectator in the zoo, the reader becomes the observer of an encaged and deathlike being, witnessing the pain of Rhys's state of overliving. Further revealing her deathlike state, Rhys's faded looks evoke the idea of a decaying body, and serves as a manifestation of her depression. Having lost all interest in her appearances, Rhys does not even look at her own reflection in the mirror. Also, being as solitary in the public as in the privacy of her room, she does not speak to anyone, reminding us of the silenced and grey parrot at the zoo. Rhys's portrayal of her fading looks reaches its height when she throws away the spirits found in lamps that women used in order to curl their hair at the time. As she throws the spirits on the fire, Rhys explains: "A flame jumped out of the fire and singed the ends of my eyelashes and the front of my hair. I hardly noticed this" (120). This scene shows how, in being excluded from the English society, she is no longer acting in accordance with its feminine codes of etiquette, namely the idea previously quoted from Berger's study on how women's self-perception is based on the male gaze and that they behave accordingly. At the same time, the decaying looks of the woman overliving in a state of severe depression evoke the image of a figure that Rhys was terrified of in her childhood, that is, the zombie. In discussing the function of the zombie mask (used at carnivals), Haliloğlu explains how "[w]ith the parading of the zombie – a carnivalesque figure that reveals the concern for the disintegrating body in all its mortality – it is the common public that enacts death for the benefit of the ruling classes" (56). As a figure representing the decaying body while enacting death and silence, the zombie functions as a figure through which we might read Rhys's depression. The zombie is also a recurring character in the fictional world of Rhys, as in *Wide Sargasso Sea* where Rhys's Rochester learns about the creature when reading a book about the practice of obeah. Also in this book's definition of the zombie, we might detect Rhys's state of overliving: "'A zombi is a dead person who seems to be alive or a living person who is dead'" (*Wide Sargasso Sea*, 67). Resembling the zombie's deathlike state and disintegrating

body, then, Rhys's body becomes the visual representation of her depressed state of overliving. Silenced and solitary, her decaying looks function as the instrument of uttering her loss and subsequent depression, ultimately constituting a display of her melancholic self.

Considering how Rhys's state of severe depression follows the abandonment of her lover, one might be reminded of Freud's assessment of the female melancholic that I explored in the chapter on Cavendish. Freud's examples of female melancholics, particularly the example of the abandoned bride, reveal a misogynist idea of women as inferior to – and dependent upon – a man. Similarly, Rhys's suffering might evoke echoes from Burton's *Anatomy* where he states that female melancholics are in need of a husband in order to control their melancholic state. However, such a reading of Rhys's suffering would be too simplistic. As Rhys renders her lover nameless and without identity while describing him in terms through which she aligns him with England, or rather, the romantic idea of England she constructed as a child, she displays how it is not the loss of the man that drives her into a state of depression, but rather what the man represented. Her lover functions as the last hope of the fantasy of England Rhys envisioned in her childhood, the ideal and greater meaning she sought as a chorus girl and the fire she believed every English person was in possession of in the otherwise cold country. Consequently, his abandonment becomes the final part of this "paradise lost", namely the paradise she believed England was as a child when reading about the country. Again, as in her childhood, Rhys turns to the written word. This time, however, it takes the form of her own authorial endeavours. Ultimately, as I will demonstrate in the next subchapter, by turning to the pen, Rhys claims the right to narrate her own story and form an authorial self in her otherwise entrapped position within the English sign system.

3.3   "If I stop writing my life will have been an abject failure" – The Melancholic Woman's Writing Process

In this third and final subchapter on Rhys, I will turn to the section in her autobiography where Rhys portrays how she initially started to write. I argue that, at that moment of literary creation, Rhys claims the right to establish her own authorial self, revealing a form of "resurrection" from the deathlike existence she has led in England. This instance of creative inspiration is presented as a compulsive writing process, as Rhys is driven by a force seemingly outside of her control. As she inscribes her loss into the written word, Rhys displays how the writing is rooted in her melancholic state. Her writing process is deemed as an act of uncontrolled and hysteric noise by the male tenant living in the room below Rhys's, a characterization that evokes the image of the Victorian figure of the "madwoman". This image of uncontrolled hysteria also brings to mind the melancholic woman in need of being controlled by a man, as theorized by both Burton and Freud. However, Rhys opposes both the man's and the landlady's demand of her staying passive, still driven by a compulsion to write. As I aim to demonstrate, by juxtaposing her own account of her writing process with the faceless male tenant's version of this moment of creative inspiration, Rhys further challenges the degraded position of the stereotypical female melancholic that, as Burton asserted, lacks self-control and is unable to intelligibly express her suffering. In this way, Rhys questions the gendered power politics suppressing the female melancholic by transforming her melancholic state into literary expression. A significant part of how she challenges the downgraded position of the female melancholic is by the writing instruments she employs, as they are objects of creativity that she links to symbols of femininity, similar to the powder compact that, as I explained in the previous subchapter, signified her melancholic self. In the end, as I will show, Rhys finds a sense of stability in her writing, and a "room" where the outcast can finally find a sense of belonging.

Before turning to the writing process Rhys presents in her autobiography, I will in the following explore the scene preceding this moment when she starts writing, a scene that exposes Rhys's realization of how she is in a perpetual position of alienation and separation from others. While looking at the Christmas tree she has received as a present from her former lover (whom she is still financially connected to by the cheques he sends), Rhys tries to imagine herself at a party among other people, "laughing and talking and happy" (124). Unable to envision herself in such a state of sociability and happiness, however, Rhys

concludes with the following verdict: "I would never be part of anything. I would never really belong anywhere, and I knew it, and all my life would be the same, trying to belong, and failing. Always something would go wrong. I am a stranger and I always will be, and after all I didn't really care" (124). This realization of how she will never belong anywhere, inhabiting a position of alienation from others, displays a self-recognition as outcast. Like the nine-year-old Rhys looking at herself in the mirror while exposing an awareness of her role as outcast at the opening of *Smile Please*, this scene similarly reveals how she will never belong among others. There will always be a border that she cannot cross in pursuit of such stable identification. In contrast to the young Rhys's display of self-loathing, the present recognition of her alienation renders an emptiness, an apathetic state that again points to the deadness of the life she has led in England as a whole. Her deathlike existence is further mirrored in the pattern of negatives by which she describes herself: "it would *never* happen (…) *never* be part of anything (…) *never* really belong anywhere" (124) (my emphasis). This, combined with how she refers to herself through what she is not indicates how she can only describe herself in negatives: "I *don't* like these people (…) I *don't* want their lights or the presents in gold and silver paper (…) I *don't* know what I want. And if I did I couldn't say it, for I *don't* speak their language and I *never* will" (124) (my emphasis). The repetition of this pattern of negatives illustrates the melancholic's position as alienated and outside of society. Having suffered a loss of the last hope of "England" as she envisioned the country in her childhood, followed by a state of overliving in a society that seeks to erase her, the melancholy Rhys considers whether or not to jump out of the window and, by that, complete this erasure. Again we might detect the melancholic's suicidal tendencies as theorized by Burton, where he explains how the melancholic must "offer violence unto himself, to be freed from his present insufferable pains" (1: 431). The numbing effect of alcohol offers Rhys a temporary removal from her present suffering, as will be demonstrated in the following.

As the Christmas tree does not belong in her room, being an object signifying communal festivities, Rhys removes it from her rented room, and replaces it instead with a bottle of gin. Whereas the Christmas tree could not offer Rhys an imaginary space in which she could envision herself among others, the bottle of gin offers a source of intoxication that gives her a temporary sense of happiness, signified by the drunk laughter shared with the artist's model that comes to visit her. In this way, the self-portrait that Rhys offers in her autobiography resembles her heroines, who, as Howells explains "spend long periods alone in single rooms, usually paid for by men, waiting for men. In such situations, Rhys's women are

engaged in drinking too much or sleeping, reconstructing themselves as the blanks which patriarchal society insists that they be, and trying to forget" (13). The effect of the alcohol is thus to temporarily remove herself from her state in a society that similarly seeks to erase her, like the gap in her memory of how she obtained the bottle of gin, the "complete blank" (125) that she cannot reconstruct in her autobiography. In other words, by blotting out her miseries, the alcohol's numbing effect momentarily relieves Rhys from her present condition, similar to the effect of drinking that Sasha seeks in *Good Morning Midnight*: "when I have had a couple of drinks I shan't know whether it's yesterday, today or tomorrow" (121). This brings to mind the opening of the chapter in her autobiography in which we find this scene, where Rhys explains how she, several years later, told a Frenchman in Paris how she is able to abstract herself from her body (118). Rhys's act of self-splitting can thus be considered as a temporary removal from her melancholic state of alienation, separating herself from her place (or lack thereof) in the society that seeks to remove her. As I will show in the following, however, Rhys claims the right to present her suffering by turning to the written word, as she transforms her melancholic state into literary expression while simultaneously demonstrating a form of "resurrection" from her deathlike existence.

The section "World's End and a Beginning" constitutes the moment in which Rhys forms an authorial self through the written word. Despite this "resurrection", however, the short chapter is initially related in terms depicting death, as Rhys describes the day thus: "There were still some last dead leaves hanging on the trees. They looked like birds" (128). Having moved to a different part of London, where the busses bear signs with the words "World's End", Rhys explains that the room she rents is nearly identical to the last one she lived in, so "that moving hardly made any difference" (128). Still moving from room to room in the grey landscape of England, Rhys is seemingly still trapped in her monotonous existence. This change of living quarters will, however, result in important differences in Rhys's existence in England. As she seeks to "cheer up" (128) the table in her new room, Rhys buys quill pens in bright colours: "red, blue, green, yellow" (128). These colours bring to mind the books Rhys received from her grandmother ("the red, the blue, the green, the yellow" [27]) through which she first learned to read, which opened up an alternative world in which she was able to "lose herself" in her childhood. In connection to this resemblance between the books from her grandmother and the quill pens, Savory concludes that "[t]his relation of primary, jewel colours to books and writing situates those colours as positives in Rhys's personal palette" (16). Furthermore, as I will show, these colours become part of her

"revival" and her claim to represent her melancholic suffering. Although Rhys initially purchases the pens for ornamental purposes, these pens, in the same manner as the powder compact that she believed brought her luck as a chorus girl, have a deeper meaning than that of merely being decorative or bringing luck. As Pulda argues, "instead of talismans of luck or simply markers of femininity, these personal accessories, from compact to pen and ink, are creative" (170-171). While sharing Pulda's view in relation to the more productive aspect of the colourful objects of decoration, I argue that the pens, like the compact, become part of Rhys's self-presentation as a melancholic. Before giving a more detailed analysis of the colourful pens' function in her writing method, however, I will first explore how Rhys presents this method of writing.

Along with the quill pens, Rhys buys several black exercise books and other writing tools, concluding that "[n]ow that old table won't look so bare" (129). Returning to her rented room with what she originally sought out as objects of decoration, Rhys starts to write:

> It was after supper that night (…) that it happened. My fingers tingled, and the palms of my hands. I pulled a chair up to the table, opened an exercise book, and wrote *This is my Diary*. But it wasn't a diary. I remembered everything that had happened to me in the last year and a half. I remembered what he'd said, what I'd felt (129).

In Savory's reading of this scene, she notes that Rhys "experiences a kind of catharsis" (18) in this moment of creative inspiration. By experiencing a sensation which "almost suggests possession" (Savory 18), Rhys's writing process is presented as something beyond Rhys's absolute control. Howells similarly notes how Rhys displays this moment of literary creativity "as being outside her conscious control" (71). Although seemingly beyond Rhys's control, the force that drives her into writing down the tragic story of her love affair stems from within Rhys herself, as it is a bodily sensation beginning by a tingling in her fingers. Accordingly, her compulsion to write is both beyond her control *and* within her, presented as a drive to place her loss and consequent melancholic suffering into literary expression. Rhys's melancholic state is thus the basis for her literary pursuits, and she turns her loss into a literary product in a manner that resembles the practice of the melancholic, originating from Ficino, of converting states of depression and sorrow into "a privileged artifact" (Schiesari 8). Furthermore, Rhys's writing is portrayed as spontaneous and compulsive, as her sudden urge to write ends in her spending every waking hour writing until the story of her disappointed love affair has been written out: "Next morning I remembered at once, and my only thought

was to go on with the writing" (129). This impulsive drive within the writing process resembles Cavendish's strategy of writing, particularly displayed in "The Poetresses hasty Resolution" (*Poems and Fancies*). As I have previously demonstrated, Cavendish's writing process is displayed as an act of spontaneous composition, as she hastily writes down her texts. Rhys similarly exposes such a method of textual production in this excerpt, a method that she also reveals at the opening of the last part of her autobiography, "From a Diary: at the Ropemaker's Arms", where she explains: "This time I must not blot a line. No revision, no second thoughts. Down it shall go" (159). Although Rhys revised her texts considerably, "patiently cutting, reshaping, ordering and balancing until the satisfactory shape [was] finally achieved" (Savory 19), the autobiographical account of how she begun to write is portrayed as hasty and compulsive. Writing is thus presented as an intense drive as well as a form of revival from her state of numbing depression in her deathlike existence.

Rhys's determination to continue writing the following day is temporarily interrupted by the landlady bringing up her breakfast. Pointing out to Rhys that the male tenant living in the room below Rhys's has complained about her, the landlady explains: "He says that you walked up and down all night. He thought he heard you crying and laughing" (129). Rhys is told by the landlady that she has to stop her noisy activities and stay passive if she wishes to continue renting a room in the building. In this way, the landlady resembles the personification of "Reason" in Cavendish's poem "The Poetresses hasty Resolution" who, similarly, seeks to prevent Cavendish in her literary endeavours. Still under the spell of her writing process, Rhys pushes the landlady out when being threatened with having to move out, telling the woman that she will leave at the end of the week. The gentleman's account, as told by the landlady, of how Rhys's writing process is experienced as uncontrolled noises of laughter and crying, combined with a restless act of walking around in her room, suggest an idea of hysteria. Indeed, the outbursts of emotion and groundless pacing bring to mind a mythical figure of madness from the Victorian era, that is, the "madwoman in the attic".

The "mad" Creole in Brönte's *Jane Eyre*, frantically crying out uncontrollably while running "backwards and forwards" (Brönte 338) in her imprisonment, became a literary figure of madness in the nineteenth century. The influence of this character reaches beyond her Victorian origins, however, perhaps most notably in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's influential work on nineteenth century women writers (*The Madwoman in the Attic* [1979]). As Kathleen J. Renk notes in relation to the "mad" Creole in Brönte's novel: "The nexus for Victorian representations of female and colonial madness, her shadowy figure typifies the

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Victorian madwoman and shapes our view of the colonies as places of uncontrollable rage and madness" (88). Rhys's discontent with Brönte's portrayal of the white Creole, Bertha Mason Rochester, has been extensively commented upon by critics. In a letter to Francis Wyndham from 1964, Rhys wrote that she was "vexed at [Brönte's] portrait of the 'paper tiger' lunatic, the all wrong creole scenes, and above all by the real cruelty of Mr Rochester" (*Letters*, 262). Her dissatisfaction with Brönte's portrayal of the Creole colonial woman became the foundation for her most famous novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. While she wanted to write the "fat (and improbable) monster" (*Letters*, 149) locked up in the attic of Thornfield Hall a life in this novel, this moment in her autobiography where she claims the right to form her own identity as a writer is similarly displayed as a rebellion against the English construction of "madness" condemning her into a similar role as madwoman. Whereas the man staying in the room below Rhys's casts her as this figure of madness by his account of her nocturnal activities, the landlady subsequently compels her to keep quiet. In this way, by attempting to make her stay passive in her fits of "madness", both the man and the landlady seek to impose the English sign system's codes of proper behaviour upon her. This attempt to force Rhys into a state of passivity evokes the opening scene of *Smile Please*, where the six-year-old Rhys performs the racial, class- and gender-based performance imposed upon her by the male and maternal onlookers. In this moment of compulsive writing, however, Rhys defies the rules forced upon her by the representatives of English society, that is, the landlady and the male tenant. Refusing to stay passive, Rhys continues her literary endeavours.

The unnamed man's account of Rhys's nightly fits of emotional outbursts and the consequent attempt at silencing her expose the general accrediting of melancholia in women, particularly as it is explained in Burton's *Anatomy*, where the melancholic woman lacks both self-control and the ability to express herself. As I revealed in the chapter on Cavendish, in Burton's portrayal of female melancholics, he asserts that they cannot control their condition and are unable to place their suffering into words "though they be in great pain, agony, and frequently complain, grieving , sighing, weeping, and discontented still, *sine causa manifesta* [without apparent cause]" (1: 416). The nameless man's subsequent attempt to pacify Rhys further points to the female melancholic's need of a man to control her, as theorized by both Burton and Freud. In this way, the faceless male tenant functions as a personification of the male construction of female melancholics. Significantly, the man living in the room underneath Rhys's does not *see* her in her writing process. This border separating them is mirrored in the border between his account of Rhys's act of writing in terms of uncontrolled

madness and her own narrative of this process in which she displays it as a drive in pursuit of placing her melancholic suffering into the written word. As she juxtaposes both versions of her melancholic suffering, Rhys points to the degraded position of female melancholics while simultaneously challenging the gendered construction of melancholia by her portrayal of her own literary creations.

In the exercise books, Rhys records her love affair from beginning to end. In this way, the books become literary monuments of Rhys's loss in England, in which she inscribes the last hope of the idea of England she envisioned as a child and the subsequent depression following the loss of this illusion. A significant part of this account rests in her explanation of how she retrospectively records "what he'd said, what [she'd] felt" (129). By this distinction, Rhys reveals the unnamed lover's coldness and lack of emotional attachment, which are attributes that the author elsewhere applies to the English people in general. As she states in one of her unpublished essays: "It is great crime to feel intensely about anything in England because if the average Englishman felt intensely about anything, England as it is could not exist; or certainly, the ruling class in England could not continue to exist" (qtd. in Savory 194). Moreover, this distinction between what Rhys had felt and what her suitor had said during their affair points to the power politics related to language in the English sign system's gender discourses and the subsequent silence forced upon Rhys by her place in this system. In other words, this division between the lover's speech and Rhys's feelings presents a gender-based distinction revealing Rhys's lack of self-expression in her role as sexualized object. This demonstration of how language is used against her reappears later in her autobiography, where she explains how "most English people kept knives under their tongues to stab [her]" (169). In this moment of literary production, however, Rhys claims the right to establish her voice through the written word.

Interestingly, the means though which this act of self-expression is enabled are connected to objects of female cosmetics on the table in her rented room. As she originally purchases the pens for decorative purposes, seeking to place them next to her personal cosmetics that cannot sufficiently brighten up the table in her room, the colourful pens are linked to these objects signifying femininity. Thus, in Rhys's act of placing her loss and melancholic suffering into literary expression as well as establishing her voice through the written word, she employs objects linked to symbols of femininity. Like the powder compact that she exposed as an object of female self-construction as opposed to a cause of self-objectification, these pens encompass another form of self-presentation closely linked to signs

of femininity. Furthermore, the black exercise books serve a similar function as the blackened compact, as both are objects that signify Rhys's melancholic self. As stated in the previous subchapter, beneath the compact's darkened cover, Rhys's melancholic state is presented by the compact's mirror that, like the mirror at the opening of *Smile Please*, displays the outcast, revealing the cause for her melancholy that has haunted her from the beginning of her memoir. These notebooks similarly "have that within which passes show" (Shakespeare 1. 2. l. 85), as, beneath the black cover, Rhys has inscribed her melancholic self, the self that, as she painfully realized at the end of the affair she records, will never belong anywhere.

Moreover, in the words of Pulda, the brightly coloured pens "may have been bought as a reminder of the vivid palette of Dominica" (171), which hints at the colour-based distinction between England and Dominica explored in the previous subchapter in connection to the function of colours in Rhys's texts. Another indicator of the connection between the function of the pens and the West Indian landscape of her childhood can be found in how Rhys, while searching for items that might decorate her table, associates the last dead leaves on the trees with birds. Mirroring the image of the lifeless and grey Dominica parrot in the zoo at the beginning of her journey in England, this imagery of lifeless birds at "World's End" both indicates the deathlike existence that she has led in England and, as will become clear, marks the end of this state of passivity. Indeed, by purchasing the quill pens, Rhys breaks out of the confines displayed by the mirroring between herself and the grey and lifeless parrot, obtaining brightly coloured feathers used in order to express herself through writing. In other words, by these colourful pens, she is "resurrected" from the deathlike existence. The black exercise books and the brightly coloured pens constitute a mechanism of self-expression similar to the dress Sasha wishes to own in *Good Morning, Midnight*: "It is a black dress with wide sleeves embroidered in vivid colours – red, green, blue, purple. It is my dress" (25). The colourful dress, with sleeves evoking the image of wings, signifies a similar form of self-construction as Rhys's writing instruments. We might detect a comparable form of self-expression by the medium of bright colours in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, where the colours of Sasha's dress are echoed in Antoinette's act of cross-stitching roses in the convent: "We can colour the roses as we choose and mine are green, blue and purple. Underneath, I will write my name in fire red" (29). Both the dress and the signed product of cross-stitching encompass means of self-construction signifying femininity, similar to the quills (linked to female cosmetics) and the compact in Rhys's autobiography. Thus, I read Rhys's way of representing her authorial self through the means of the colourful quill pens as a rebellion against the codes of the English

sign system that has kept the colonial Creole woman in the margins and silenced her.

Although she writes "*This is my Diary*" (129) when opening her exercise book, Rhys quickly counters this statement in her autobiography by explaining how it was not in fact a diary she wrote. According to Emily O. Wittman, Rhys's clarification suggests that "date- and event-driven diaries capture only the facts of what happens and put the past squarely behind the diarist, whereas what she wrote in her exercise notebooks put her present state first and allowed her to work back and forth between her devastation and the events that caused it" (195). Wittman's observation calls attention to important aspects of Rhys's writing as a liberating process in which she may shape the past from her own point of view. Although she cannot change the tragic story of her love affair, her literary production enables her to place her past into a narrative she herself forms, unrestrained by the format of the diary. However, while revealing how Rhys's act of writing is an emancipating process, Wittman's comment seems somewhat simplistic. Indeed, despite how Rhys denies that the exercise books were a diary, a question remains: why did she initially refer to the books as a diary at all? In the following, I will offer a reading of Rhys's original characterization of her notebooks.

The personal diary, as a genre signifying life writing and self-presentation, enables Rhys to inscribe a self within the text. In the words of Margo Culley, "[t]he pages of the diary might be thought of as a kind of mirror before which the diarist stands assuming this posture or that" (219). As she places her past self in the text, however, Rhys removes herself from her state of self-objectification, inscribing her object-position in the love affair into the narrative while claiming a position as creating subject by narrating her own story. Furthermore, as Philippe Lejeune explains, "[t]he diary is virtually unfinishable from the beginning, because there is always a time lived beyond the writing, making it necessary to write anew, and one day, this time beyond will take the shape of death" (191). In this way, although the notebooks portray her relationship with her lover, and subsequently present a closed story of her past, Rhys's initial identification of the notebooks as a diary opens for a continued narrative following this story. Indeed, as Culley states, "[w]hile the novel and autobiography may be thought of as artistic wholes, the diary is always in process, always in some sense a fragment" (220). Accordingly, Rhys's act of inscribing her loss into this genre suggests that she seeks to separate herself from the deathlike existence she has suffered in England, which culminated during the time spent with her lover. Placing the story of her past in this genre points to an awakening from this existence, by turning her affair into a fragment of her continuing life story, over which she claims control by her writing. Therefore, introducing her notebooks as a

diary further demonstrates how Rhys's writing process can be considered as a "resurrection".

Explaining how the written works are not a diary indicates Rhys's ambivalent position in relation to this revival, an ambivalence the reader might detect in the twenty-year-old Rhys's painful closing words in the notebooks of how she must "go on living and living and living" (130). As explained in the previous subchapter, this utterance signifies how she is in a state of overliving in her depression following the abandonment of her lover. Placing it as the closing words in her exercise books suggests an attempt of separating herself from her state of overliving by enclosing it in the diary (which was not actually a diary), as she is "resurrected" by her literary endeavours. Reiterating this sentence in her autobiography before concluding that she "knew then that it was finished and that there was no more to say" (130) renders an image of pain and emptiness at the end of her compulsive writing process. The closing words of this moment of inspiration might therefore evoke Sasha's remark towards the end of *Good Morning Midnight* of how "it hurts, when you have been dead, to come alive" (153). Like her heroine's painful realization of the impossibility of complete revival from her ghostlike existence, Rhys is still bound by the verdict she exposed in the deterministic realization preceding her writing process of how she "would never really belong anywhere" (124). Rather than being separated from her melancholic state by inscribing her loss into the notebooks, Rhys's "rebirth", indicated by the chapter's title ("World's End and a Beginning"), centres on how she starts to write. While she claims the right to express her own story and form an authorial self by turning to the colourful pens, she is still presenting herself as the sorrowful melancholic: "I can't say I felt happy or relieved, more as if something had finished and a weight had gone" (131). However, Rhys has found a literary space in which she might place her sorrow and loss, which accompanies her on her journey "whenever [she] moved" (130), from rented room to rented room. The notebooks serve as a symbol of the loss she has suffered, the last part of the hope for warmth and sense of belonging she believed that England would offer. Moreover, writing offers Rhys an alternative space of belonging after realizing that she would never belong anywhere, as, in the words of Savory, "[Rhys's] country was essentially the page" (3). Writing becomes the stable frame for the outcast that belongs nowhere, her place for self-expression and the portable "room" in which she can inscribe her melancholic self. In the end, her very existence in the material world seems connected to her writing, as she explains towards the end of her autobiography: "I must write. If I stop writing my life will have been an abject failure. It is that already to other people. But it could be an abject failure to myself. I will not have earned death" (163).

4   Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to demonstrate the ways in which Margaret Cavendish and Jean Rhys present a melancholic subjectivity in their autobiographies, challenging the traditional gender-determined distinctions that separate the allegedly inarticulate melancholic woman from her eloquent male counterpart. By analysing their manner of representing depression, grief and loss, I have sought to inscribe Cavendish and Rhys into the critical tradition of discussing melancholy as a major creative force as well as an established category of authorial self-understanding. Such opportunities of creativity and self-understanding connected to melancholy has generally been considered as unachievable for women, as Schiesari observed in her study. As I have revealed through this thesis, in both Cavendish's *A True Relation of My Birth, Breeding and Life* and Rhys's *Smile Please: An Unfinished Autobiography*, melancholy serves as the very basis for the authors' self-presented path to a sense of self. While acknowledging the historical "gap" separating the two authors, their melancholic subjectivities is a common denominator in both autobiographical self-portrayals, which we see in the following summary of my thesis.

As I uncovered in the chapter on Cavendish, the melancholic subjectivity displayed by the author is multifaceted. First, this subjectivity centres on the object-losses that Cavendish suffered during the Civil War. By employing Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia", I revealed how Cavendish's self-portrayal resembles Freud's melancholic in that she presents herself as having incorporated the critical gaze of her siblings, which becomes a cause of self-criticism as well as reproaches directed towards herself when in the public eye. This loss of her siblings' gaze is part of her road to a self, separated from the homogenous unity of her childhood home. I also explored how Cavendish turns object-losses of the war, in the form of deceased family members, into literary monuments. She subsequently expresses loss and grief in an eloquent and rhetorically rich manner, which challenges the traditional assumption of there being a gender-based distinction between the productive mourning of the male melancholic and the excessive and uncontrolled grief of women. Finally, Cavendish's self-proclaimed melancholy disposition, connected to her bashful nature, is revealed as a source of literary creation in the private sphere (as opposed to a cause of self-criticism in the public sphere). Cavendish's isolated writing resembles Milton's view of the melancholic's solitary contemplation as empowering and productive, by which he, according to Trevor, moved away from the destructive nature of melancholia emphasized by authors like Burton and Donne

(153). As opposed to the female melancholic presented by Burton, Cavendish reveals her melancholy to be a source of artistic productivity.

The chapter on Rhys opened with an analysis of Rhys's portrayal of her childhood in Dominica. In turning to Freud's and Kristeva's studies on the melancholic condition, I revealed how Rhys demonstrated a melancholic subjectivity rooted in her role as outcast within her family and in society in general. The young Rhys's search for a maternal object, signifying a sense of belonging and fixed identification, culminated in how she eventually lost herself in the world of books. The idealized image of England that she formed as a child through reading is lost, however, in her experience with the actual country. The loss of self that she suffered by being trapped in the English sign system, as well as the loss of the ideal of England she believed to find in the mother country render Rhys in a state of depression. She presents her depressed state in ways that suggest a deathlike existence. In contrast to the inarticulate female melancholic's inability to express her loss, needing the control of male domination, Rhys displays a melancholic subjectivity through these representations of her depressed state. The final part of my analysis of Rhys's autobiography explored how Rhys initially started to write, encompassing a moment in which she claims the right to narrate her own story and form an authorial self. Her literary endeavours are rooted in her melancholic suffering, as she converts the loss of the ideal she believed to find in England into the written word. By separating her own account of her writing method from the version of the male tenant living in the room below hers, a version that reminds us of the inexpressible female melancholic, Rhys subsequently challenges the gendered borders of melancholia.

As this thesis discloses, both Cavendish and Rhys present themselves in terms of object-losses and melancholic states in their autobiographies, the latter specifically demonstrated in Rhys's portrayals of a deathlike existence in her state of depression and Cavendish's self-proclaimed melancholy disposition. Moreover, in both Cavendish's and Rhys's autobiographies, the authors' writing process is presented as a compulsive drive to express themselves in their melancholic states. This is revealed by Cavendish's hasty process of writing and Rhys's compulsive writing process, in which she turns her melancholic suffering into the written word. Such a compulsive motivation to write suggests how the melancholic women need to express themselves in order to represent their melancholic subjectivity in the written word, which deviates from accounts such as Burton's of the inexpressibility of the female melancholic. Significantly, both Cavendish and Rhys turn to various objects connected to femininity in representing their literary endeavours. Whereas

Cavendish links the generally considered male instrument of the pen and the predominantly feminine tool of the needle by her imagery of "spinning" in her writing process, Rhys connects the colourful pens by which she first starts to write with feminine objects of cosmetics. Rhys also turns to objects closely connected to femininity, such as the powder compact, in presenting her melancholic subjectivity. In this way, both authors link their melancholic writing process to the feminine, presenting these "items" as products of creation, autonomy and self-construction as opposed to objectification. For both melancholic authors, the literary realm is a source of liberation and artistic productivity.

By exploring how Cavendish and Rhys present autobiographical self-portraits as melancholics and, significantly, melancholic writers, this thesis has also aimed to show how a critical reconsideration of melancholia as a culturally excluding category of self-understanding might open up for women to be considered as melancholic writers. Further study on this subject could profitably analyse women writers from various periods and their self-presentation in both autobiographical writings and fictional works, with the purpose of exploring these through a framework of scholarly works on melancholia. Moreover, as Schiesari hinted at in her study, future investigations on the subject could benefit from exploring the dimensions of class and race (both of which I touched upon in relation to Rhys), in order to reassess the cultural valuation of the representation of melancholy, loss, grief and depression. In other words, the task for future studies centres on giving a reassessment of the representation of melancholia among representatives of culturally marginalized groups in the aim of breaking down the cultural hierarchy in the discourse of melancholia and render new insight into the melancholic persona.

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