ERICA L. JOHNSON

Haunted: Affective Memory in Jean Rhys's Good Morning, Midnight

Jean Rhys's 1939 novel, *Good Morning, Midnight* chronicles the movements and, for lack of a better word, memories of Sasha Jensen during a two-week stay in Paris, the city where she lived many years earlier. Far from a nostalgic return, Sasha's visit is steeped in a past for which she does *not* yearn: she willfully shuts down the many memories that resurface as she walks down all-too familiar streets and seeks anonymity in the city's cafés. Her past in Paris renders her visit a "complicated affair" of trying to avoid places, people, or things that trigger thoughts of her past. However, hotel rooms are so haunted that they actually speak to her of "old times," the streets lead her not across town but into the past, and mirrors "keep a ghost to throw back at […] one—lightly, like an echo."[1] Sasha attempts to keep her past at bay because so much of it is circumscribed by shame and humiliation; however, one of the most powerful effects of shame is precisely its preservation of experience and knowledge. Rhys shows how time itself is short-circuited by the shame affect and she thereby reconfigures the workings of memory, for what becomes of memory when there is no distance between different moments in time—when Sasha doesn't "know whether it's yesterday, today, or tomorrow[?]" (145). What is the meaning of memory when the gap between the past and present is closed? What is the nature of memory when one's knowledge of the past is almost entirely involuntary? For the shame subject, memory becomes less of a cognitive than an affective function, as we see in Rhys's singular depiction of it. Shame shrouds the whole of *Good Morning, Midnight*, and forms a connective tissue between Sasha and her past as it lives on in her body and emotions and as it restructures memory as haunting.

The last of the four novels that Rhys wrote during the modernist period, *Good Morning, Midnight* is her most experimental expression of a form of memory that she develops in her other novels as well. In the first novel she wrote, *Voyage*

[1] Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight* (New York and London: Norton, 1992), 170. Subsequent citations of *Good Morning, Midnight* will be made parenthetically.

in the Dark (1934), Rhys's protagonist, like the author, finds herself cast upon the shores of a cold and unforgiving England after having grown up in the Caribbean.[2] Anna has recourse to memories of her childhood early in the novel, and while she dwells on them in an effort to escape her dreary life in London, these memories become increasingly hallucinatory and evasive as the novel draws to its tragic close. In a despairing moment, Anna thinks, "that's when you can hear time sliding past you, like water running."[3] In effect, Anna's past is initially manifest as memories but these memories become flashbacks that overtake rather than comfort her in the nightmarish final scene; similarly, in the beginning of *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1930), Julia "found pleasure in memories, as an old woman might have done. Her mind was a confusion of memory and imagination."[4] Yet in spite of this declaration, the novel is bereft of memories with the exception of one startling, extended passage that recounts a childhood trauma, and again memory dissolves into feelings of dread that stem from the past. The chapter entitled "Childhood," in which Julia flashes back to "the first time you were afraid," opens thus: "her mind was strangely empty. It was an empty room, through which vague memories stalked like giants."[5] Rhys's representation of memory as something that gains agency over her characters and "stalks" them constitutes one of her many contributions to modernist thinking about how the mind and identity work, and how they function as structures of feeling. As Justus Nieland notes in *Feeling Modern*, "Modernity […] is a sensational affair, bringing in its wake new sensory and perceptual regimes, new structures of feeling and modes of embodied knowledge, new technologies for the emotional organization of everyday life."[6] What Rhys demonstrates throughout her writing is that affect structures modernist temporality such that memory, often regarded as an intellectual exercise, shifts into an affective mode whereby the present is "saturated by the past" (109).

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[2] Although the publication dates do not reflect it, *Voyage in the Dark* was the product of Rhys's earliest literary efforts. Written initially in diary form, the novel did not find its way to publication until she had already published two novels that she wrote later on.

[3] Jean Rhys, *Jean Rhys: The Complete Novels* (New York: Norton, 1985), 70.

[4] Rhys, *Jean Rhys: The Complete Novels*, 239.

[5] Rhys, *Jean Rhys: The Complete Novels*, 326, 324.

[6] Justus Nieland, *Feeling Modern: The Eccentricities of Public Life* (Urbana-Champagne: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 7.

Nowhere is this clearer than in *Good Morning, Midnight*, for the narrative is structured by the overlap of Sasha's past and present, and by the splicing together of distant moments in time. Moreover, Rhys's privileging of the particularly powerful affect of shame enables her to dramatize the death grip Sasha's memories have on her. From her unremitting self-consciousness about everything she does to her embrace of abjection in the novel's infamously dark conclusion, Sasha cringes before the world even when she mocks its absurd cruelty. As Rhys illustrates, shame is a deeply contaminating feeling, in the sense that it flows through relations with others and through the recesses of the psyche as well. Therefore, it can be approached as an intersubjective and as an intrapsychic phenomenon. As Liz Constable notes, shame has a "relational grammar," in that its source is others' perceptions of the self or, as Bernard Williams explains, "the basic experience connected with shame is that of being seen, inappropriately, by the wrong people, in the wrong condition."[7] In this iteration, shame arises from another's judgment and causes the shamed subject to feel that one is a failure in the eyes of others and is therefore worthless. Constable's and Williams's analyses of the extent to which shame structures and is structured by relationships between the observer and the observed is immediately relevant to Rhys's novel, in which Sasha is quite literally *seen* on nearly every page of the novel, whether by acquaintances, strangers, or even such inanimate objects as masks, mirrors, walls, and buildings, the last of which seem to Sasha to be constructed as "tall cubes of darkness, with two lighted eyes at the top to sneer" (32). Helen Carr identifies the radically relational nature of Rhys's characters in her observation that Rhys presents the reader with "[t]he nightmare (which she shared with Sartre and Beckett) of a self defined by other people," and she argues that Rhys presents a "sceptical, shaky, post-Enlightenment reworking of the seamlessly confident Cartesian self, the bold, resolute ego which marches on proclaiming, I think, therefore I am."[8] Sasha often questions her identity, and while her fragmented, floating sense of herself never coheres internally, it becomes painfully frozen and fixed when she is seen by others. In one example of this, Réné, the gigolo, sparks her sudden realization

[7] Liz Constable, "Introduction: States of Shame," in "States of Shame," ed. Liz Constable, special issue, *L'Esprit Createur* 39.4 (1999): 3-12; and Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 78.

[8] Helen Carr, *Jean Rhys* (Plymouth, UK: Northcote House Publishers, 1996), xiii.

that, contrary to her attempts to look respectable, she appears to others as "a wealthy dame trotting around Montparnasse" (72) in search of a young man; similarly, the many café scenes begin with Sasha's buffering sense of anonymity that then dissolves into the conviction that she is a figure of ridicule. She expresses the inevitability of her plight: "Now everybody in the room is staring at me; all eyes in the room are fixed on me. It has happened" (50). Her identity very much hinges on and plays out in the field of others' judgments in its relational grammar.

What is more, Rhys extends the relational grammar of shame beyond the novel to the reader, as Katharine Streip notes in her essay on the "ressentiment humor" in the novel.[9] Whereas Elaine Savory shows how the novel's wit and biting humor arguably serve as a crucial buffer against what she terms the "continuous horror of the novel's effect," even laughter assumes a disconcerting tone because so much of it refers the reader to Sasha's emotional destitution.[10] Streip writes:

> We can never successfully identify with Sasha in her abasement, because we can never attain the consummateness of her presence where all things attain meaning from her lowness […] We remain spectators with an uneasy feeling that our response to Sasha contributes to her exhibition of unhappiness as well.[11]

Since abasement is an essential quality of Sasha's character, the reader becomes implicated in her unremitting exhibition of "self-laceration."[12] The relational grammar of shame ensures that these layers of surveillance do not just engulf Sasha but they emanate from her as well to contaminate the reader.

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[9] Katharine Streip, "'Just a Cérébrale': Jean Rhys, Women's Humor, and Ressentiment," *Representations* 45 (1994): 117-44.

[10] Elaine Savory, *Jean Rhys* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 125. Savory's reading of the novel, while it takes humor to be a vital defense of Sasha's, concludes that her tragic fate at the end of the novel occurs when Sasha's humor abandons her and she moves beyond feeling to become a "zombie" of despair (126).

[11] Streip, "'Just a Cérébrale,'" 130.

[12] Streip, "'Just a Cérébrale,'" 118.

In addition to inciting feelings of "discomfort without catharsis" that derive from relations between characters within the novel and extend extratextually, Rhys privileges shame in her psychological portraiture of Sasha.[13] The significance of inanimate objects "seeing" and condemning Sasha is that the inescapable contempt of others crowds into even her most private moments when she strives to "shut the damned world out" (81). Mirrors, rooms, and streets become coextensive with other human beings through the chain link of her abasement. Rhys thus represents the intrapsychic manifestation of shame which, as Susan Miller explains, involves the internalization of the real or perceived condemnation of another and thus incurs feelings of shame within oneself.[14] One of the first investigators of the shame affect, Silvan Tomkins, argues that "at that moment when the self feels ashamed, it is felt as a sickness within the self. Shame is the most reflexive of affects in that the phenomenological distinction between the subject and object of shame is lost."[15] Tomkins explains how, even beyond the painful experience of being judged and found wanting, the shamed subject becomes enmeshed with the judgment itself so that she or he can no longer assert any distinction between—much less defense against—whomever or whatever caused the feelings in the first place. Without recourse to a source of shame, one is just taken over by the feeling itself, ensnared in the intangibility of the cumulative effect of one's past experiences.

It is precisely this aspect of shame, its intractable link to the past, that is of interest to me, for all descriptions of shame cast it in a particular, if unremarked, temporality that assumes the affect of haunting. That is, shame is identified in its pastness. Whether the topic is traumatic shame, in which case the memory of a shameful moment coincides with the jolt of its original experience, or more ideological shaming, in which case one is made to feel inferior or worthless based on myriad cues about one's sexuality, gender, ethnicity, etc., shame functions as a feedback loop, a reanimation of one or many painful moments. These characteristics are true of trauma narratives as well, but whether they stem

[13] Streip, "'Just a Cérébrale,'" 128.

[14] Susan Miller, *The Shame Experience* (Hillsdale, NY and London: The Analytic Press, 1985).

[15] Silvan Tomkins, *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader,* ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 136.

from trauma or from other sources, feelings of shame are more diffuse and all-encompassing because their origins can be multiple as well as unknowable. In her analysis of Rhys's unique presentation of melancholia, Cathleen Maslin notes the way in which Sasha's despair cannot be localized or explained in diagnostic terms. She writes, "Sasha's hyperbolic melancholia seems superimposed over an abysmal loss, a narrativisation that staves off acknowledgement of the 'real,' inaccessible, unspeakable trauma."[16] Discernible traces of trauma are interlaced with more quotidian experiences of embarrassment and dismay, and Sasha is laid low in equal measure by the daily grind of femininity and aging and by the undertow of troubling events from her past.

Thus, shame is structured as an echo of experiences and feelings from the past that continue to haunt one. Karen A. McClintock implies such a temporality when she writes, "How is shame transmitted? Shame is passed down from one generation to another. Psychologists talk about scenes of shame that get stuck in the memory of the child."[17] The notion that shame is *inherited* is a particularly strong expression of the pastness of the feeling. Similarly, Gershen Kaufman explains how one more or less inherits one's own past when he observes that "Powerlessness experienced anew during adulthood reactivates that earlier governing scene of initial primary helplessness. The adult is then immediately transported back into that original scene and relives it in the present with all its affect reawakened."[18] McClintock and Kaufman suggest that shame functions through the repetition of a social or a psychological past, respectively; either way, its binding of past and present means that shame has a tremendous impact on the workings of memory. This is what Rhys dramatizes in her novel, for as we see with Sasha, the shamed subject desires nothing more than to *forget*, and therein lies a singular tension between cognition and the feelings that bind her to

[16] Cathleen Maslin, *Ferocious Things: Jean Rhys and the Politics of Melancholia* (London: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008), 125.

[17] Karen A. McClintock, *Sexual Shame: An Urgent Call to Healing* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2001), 250.

[18] Gershen Kaufman, *The Psychology of Shame: Theory and Treatment of Shame-Based Syndromes* (New York: Springer, 1989), 47.

the past. This tension produces a distinct configuration of memory in which Sasha refuses to remember yet is steeped in her past.

The impact on memory of shame or any other affect provides rich terrain for study since, as Jesse J. Prinz observes in his book *Gut Reactions*, memory has traditionally been approached in isolation from the study of feelings. In an overview of cognitive science and emotion theory, Prinz suggests that the two fields developed parallel to one another, and that memory is typically meted out to cognitive science while emotions, which appear too murky and unquantifiable for scientific study, are investigated separately. In bringing these fields of study together, Prinz aligns emotions and cognition thus: "one might be tempted to place emotions on a continuum spanning from minimally cognitive to highly cognitive."[19] However, he ultimately comes to the conclusion that, because emotions register so strongly in the body, as "bodily appraisals," they "can obviate the need for cognition, because feelings carry information. The discrete motions of our bodies convey how we are faring in the world."[20] This is precisely what Rhys demonstrates so clearly: although she represents Sasha's feelings as intrusions on her knowledge of the world, it is the cognitive property of feelings that reconfigures memory *as* the affect of haunting in *Good Morning, Midnight*, for her feelings enact a certain, unavoidable knowledge of her past.

Whereas Prinz parses cognition and emotion to useful effect, cultural and literary theorists have shown that they are both elements of affect in a broader sense. In their introduction to *Shame and Its Sisters*, Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank write: "Thus it is the inefficiency of the fit between the affect system and the cognitive system—and between either of these and the drive system—that enables learning, development, continuity, differentiation."[21] The limits of cognition are not absolute but are, rather, interlaced with other embodied and emotional forms of knowledge. That said, emotion is distinct from affect precisely in that it has a much greater overlap with cognition: emotion can be known and named as such, whereas affect flows across the body, cognition, and

[19] Jesse J. Prinz, *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 22.

[20] Prinz, *Gut Reactions*, 78.

[21] Tomkins, *Shame and Its Sisters*, 14.

the unconscious and often exceeds classification or representation. In making a distinction between the two, Jonathan Flatley writes, "[w]hereas *emotion* suggests something that happens inside and tends toward outward expression, *affect* indicates something relational and transformative."[22] Unlike emotion, which registers intellectually in such a way that it can be understood, explained, and expressed in narrative, affect can better be described as a more global force that binds one to the world and to others.

This is what leads Brian Massumi to refer to affect as "intensity," a term that captures the fluidity of affect as it underlies all of our thoughts and experiences. In "The Autonomy of Affect," Massumi shows how it disrupts sequencing and narrative, both of which are essential to the ways in which memory is typically understood to register a past experience in a subsequent moment in time. "Intensity," he writes, "would seem to be associated with nonlinear processes: resonation and feedback which momentarily suspend the linear progress of the narrative present from past to future."[23] Thus, to remember something is to "actually re-register an already felt state," a point that very much describes Rhys's representation of memory in *Good Morning, Midnight* as something that halts narrative sequence and that erupts into her protagonist's guarded consciousness as an all-encompassing re-registration of moments in her life.[24] Moreover, affect is "asocial, but not presocial": "the *trace* of past actions *including a trace of their contexts* [is] conserved in the brain and in the flesh," and "past actions and contexts [are] conserved and repeated, autonomically *re*activated."[25] Massumi could be describing Rhys's heroine directly in this assessment, for Sasha is thoroughly subject to *re*-animated feelings. In the face of the powerful feelings that emerge from her past to overtake her, she seeks numbness and nothingness. Sasha is masterful at regulating herself with drink and luminol, both of which she consumes in order to still her mind, for to remember a single moment would be to immerse herself in the timeless feelings that surface with it. As Massumi puts it, the combined meaning of actions and

[22] Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2008), 12.

[23] Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," *Cultural Critique* 31 (1995): 83-109 (86).

[24] Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," 86.

[25] Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," 91.

their contexts coalesce in "pastnesses opening onto a future, but with no present to speak of."[26]

The extent to which affect telescopes time has particular consequences for how memory operates. Jeff Pruchnic and Kim Lacey make a helpful distinction between the content of memory, on the one hand, and the "program" of memory on the other.[27] Whereas the former refers to *what* is remembered, the latter refers to *how* one remembers. In other words, there is a world of difference between the experience of deliberately recollecting the past in tranquility, for example, and that of being shocked by a sudden, unforeseen recollection. Whereas most people experience both forms of memory, Sasha's memories filter through to her consciousness in a clearly discernible "program," or mode, through which they circumvent her desire to forget. They are manifest as what Pruchnic and Lacey describe as "experiential memory," which "becomes stored in information networks and our bodies' affective responses."[28] This inflection of memory with the embodied past gives it the power to entrap Sasha, to condemn her to her past. In her words: "Since I was born, hasn't every word I've said, every thought I've thought, everything I've done, been tied up, weighted, chained?" (106).

Rhys is able to so radically reinterpret memory because she is attentive to the way in which Sasha re-registers her past through feelings of shame. Unlike memories of other feelings, like joy or even sadness, shame memories are rarely summoned voluntarily because they cannot be managed or transformed into something less painful than their origins. Even if one can change one's views about a situation that once evoked shame, the residue of the feeling remains, insinuating knowledge about one's life that one would prefer to forget. Many studies of shame trace its theorization back to Darwin, who was fascinated by the physiology of the blush, ignited as it is by nothing more than the glance of another, or by a memory.[29] This clear confluence of emotional and physical

[26] Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," 91.

[27] Jeff Pruchnic and Kim Lacey, "The Future of Forgetting: Rhetoric, Memory, Affect," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 41.5 (2011): 472-94 (475).

[28] Pruchnic and Lacey, "The Future of Forgetting," 475.

[29] See, for example, Elspeth Probyn, *Blush: Faces of Shame* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 28.

symptoms was one that Darwin saw as distinctly human, which is to say that shame links conscious to unconscious material. In crossing this distinctly human threshold, shame sutures that which can be understood consciously with that which cannot, thereby undoing classic distinctions between emotion and reason, cognition and feeling, and as I will argue, memory and forgetting. It exists at what Massumi refers to as the "vanishing point" of such binaries.[30] Similarly, in their eloquent work on Silvan Tomkins's analysis of shame, Sedgwick and Frank explain that, "where psychoanalysis has profited from the conceptual elegance of a single bar (repression) between a single continuous 'consciousness' and a single 'unconscious,' Tomkins's affect theory by contrast offers a wealth of sites of productive opacity."[31] As "intensity" or "opacity," shame exists at the site of changing social relations and subjectivity, and it bears a transformative influence on the ways in which we understand the workings of cultural mores, power relations, and identity alike.

Sally Munt, the author of *Queer Attachments*, provides a poignant illustration of this. While the source of feelings of shame may be unknown, the feelings themselves are intransigent, with the result that shame evades intellectual manipulation. Munt's experience of shame is a case in point, for although as an adult she learns to embrace and take pride in her lesbianism, she describes her childhood experience of being shamed for her sexuality as something that "hovered on the edge of consciousness […] her presence slippery and formless, but her touch stained my awareness."[32] Munt details the way in which shame is preserved in the body even if the mind seeks to purge its painful presence, explaining that shame "can take an unusual grasp of a person's whole organism, in their body, soul, and mind."[33] In Rhys's hands, shame is just such a zeitgeist. To wit, when Sasha catches two complete strangers in a café casting a contemptuous look in her direction, "my throat shuts up, my eyes sting. This is awful. Now I am going to cry. This is the worst […] If I do that I shall really have to walk under a bus when I get outside" (51). The body registers Sasha's

[30] Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," 94.

[31] Tomkins, *Shame and Its Sisters,* 13.

[32] Sally Munt, *Queer Attachments: The Cultural Politics of Shame* (New York: Ashgate, 2007), 2.

[33] Munt, *Queer Attachments,* 2.

emotions in this scene in such a way that her mind cannot stave off recognition of the feeling of shame, so all-encompassing and destructive is it. Affect theorists Felicity Callard and Constantina Papoulias also suggest that there is something primal, something that underlies conscious thought, in their definition of affect as "an amorphous, diffuse, and bodily 'experience' of stimulation impinging upon and altering the body's physiology, whereas emotions are the various structured […] and recognizable experiential states […] Thus affect is precognitive."[34] Just as Munt suggests that shame hovers at the edge of consciousness and what can be known about it, Callard and Papoulias associate the power of affect with the fact that it exceeds consciousness and cognition. This is evident in the novel as well, for Sasha's closed throat and stinging eyes presage her recognition that she has been made to feel worthless. What is more, her feelings impinge on her conscious assessment of the situation. After she leaves the café and tries to rationalize and dismiss her feelings of inadequacy about what has just passed—"Why get in a state about it?" she asks herself—her "heart beats" and her "hands go cold" (53). The contraction of the physical and the emotional is so violent that the mind cannot refute what the body registers about a scene of humiliation, a scene that accumulates within Sasha's psyche among countless other such scenes.

Because shame governs so much of *Good Morning, Midnight*, the novel features a collapsed chronotope, in which Sasha's past and present are so conflated as to become indeterminate at times. Mapped onto Sasha's stream of consciousness, both the temporal and spatial components of the novel's structure are palimpsestic. Since shame knits together body and mind, and conscious and unconscious material, time is rendered in such a way that past and present scenes of humiliation bleed into one another. Munt explains that shame is "enmeshed within the self, and therefore it is always co-implicated with existing states," and it is on this point that I wish to build in order to understand the workings of affective memory.[35] The point is that one cannot exorcise the memory of shame, for it dwells within the shame subject and exceeds temporality. A shame

[34] Felicity Callard and Constantina Papoulias, "Affect and Embodiment," in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 246-62 (247).

[35] Munt, *Queer Attachments*, 3.

experience cannot be locked away into the moment in time when it occurred, for it occurs over and over again, coinciding with each "memory" of its occurrence, and its residue is incorporated into one's subjectivity. Similarly, Sasha's holiday is not a period of refuge, nor is Paris a destination that offers new possibilities. On the contrary, the city is deeply uncanny in its collapse of the familiar with the strange, its personified streets and rooms, and its faces from the past. The novel is thus structured to mirror Sasha's state of mind as she interfaces with the present and past simultaneously. Anne B. Simpson provides an apt description of the novel's chronotope in her analysis of Rhys's "territories of the psyche":

> That Sasha is trying to escape unbidden specters from the past is evident in her insistent attempts to mute all of her perceptions through alcohol, drugs, and mindless wandering […] Because elements from the past continually threaten to emerge in full consciousness, many of her thoughts and statements are colored by her resistance to [that which] seem[s] always ready to appear, spectrally, before her.[36]

Rhys's representation of memory as an affective property stands as a unique aesthetic accomplishment, given that memory, affect, and representation have all been theorized in various tensions with one another. Callard and Papoulias point out that psychoanalysis folds together affect and memory in the sense that a memory summoned without its accompanying affect produces no result for a patient, whereas the simultaneous arousal of a memory and its affect can be therapeutic. Yet even given this formulation, they observe that there is a distinction between memory and affect in that memory can be represented in language in a way that affect cannot. They write, "the relative independence of representation and affect means that it is representation that comes to represent, as it were, memory […] whereas affect is positioned as resistant to representation and hence to memory."[37] This observation brings us back to the point that trauma is widely recognized to be unrepresentable because it is *experienced*, in the body and in the emotions, rather than *remembered* in language. Shame, too, exceeds representation in that it is experienced and defies temporal

[36] Anne B. Simpson, *Territories of the Psyche: The Fictions of Jean Rhys* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 92.

[37] Callard and Papoulias, "Affect and Embodiment," 251.

compartmentalization. As Massumi puts it, "the skin is faster than the word."[38] From Massumi's point of view, affect "would seem to function differentially in relation to" language, because affect is

> outside expectation and adaption, as disconnected from meaningful sequencing, from narration, as it is from vital function. It is narratively de-localized, spreading over the generalized body surface, like a lateral backwash from the function-meaning interloops traveling the vertical path between head and heart.[39]

This is to say that narrative and temporalities collapse into affect as into a sinkhole, and it is this state of collapse that Rhys captures in her transmutation of cognitive memory into hauntings. The personified room which addresses Sasha with "Quite like old times" (145), in the opening lines of the novel provides evidence of this, for upon entering the room Sasha finds herself awash in her long history of rented rooms and the feelings of insecurity and despair that accompany such homelessness. Rather than evoking Sasha's memories of other hotels, the room's spectral voice prompts her to replay in her mind the previous night's scene of humiliation, and in this we see the morphing of memory into affect. Side by side, the distant yet palpably uneasy past evoked by the Parisian hotel and the immediate past of the night before, which Sasha characterizes as "a catastrophe" (9), merge in the cringe they both induce.

Not only do the hotel rooms and strangely familiar streets elicit Sasha's past, but in so doing they provide important instances of what Flatley has termed "affective mapping," a concept that he initially defines through the metaphor of moving through urban space. Flatley explains that, "our spatial environments are inevitably imbued with the feelings we have about the places we are going, the things that happen to us along the way, and the people we meet, and these emotional valences, of course, affect how we create itineraries."[40] Sasha designs her itineraries very carefully; in fact, she reminds herself time and again that "the thing is to have a programme," by which she means that she attempts to walk

[38] Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," 86.

[39] Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," 85.

[40] Flatley, *Affective Mapping*, 77-8.

down streets and patronize cafés that hold no memories for her. This strategy backfires, for while she may be able to avoid places where she *knows* she will feel unwelcome, she is ambushed at every turn by the places that elude her cognitive mapping but are possessed of the "emotional valences" of which Flatley speaks. For example, she consciously attempts to confine her impressions of walking down one street to the present, only to feel it dissolve into the past: "Walking to the music of *l'Arlésienne*, remembering the coat I wore then—a black and white check with big pockets" (86) evokes memories of having lived in a nearby hotel on the brink of starvation for three weeks and having been humiliated by a would-be lover when he discovers her state of destitution. She consciously refocuses on the present again and repeats, with determination,

> Walking to the music of *l'Arlésienne*.... I feel for the pockets of the check coat, and I am surprised when I touch the fur of the one I am wearing.... Pull yourself together, dearie. This is late October, 1937, and that old coat had its last outing a long time ago." (91)

Here we see the element of "self-estrangement" that, according to Flatley, is produced by affective mapping. In another instance of the confluence of urban and affective mapping, the city and Sasha literally speak to one another, as we see with the anthropomorphized street and hotel rooms, and in a scene in which she addresses the city directly:

> Paris is looking very nice tonight.... You are looking very nice tonight, my beautiful, my darling, and oh what a bitch you can be! But you didn't kill me after all, did you? And they couldn't kill me either....
>
> Just about here we waited for a couple of hours to see Anatole France's funeral pass. (16)

Not only do Sasha's past and present walks dissolve into one another, but the mood present in these collapses is abjection. The sensations of near-starvation and of persecution transcend their moments in time and make Sasha and her reader aware of the force of these affects on her subjectivity. As Flatley notes,

> Each affect is a very particular filter: some stuff gets in and gets tested by a feedback mechanism, and other stuff is irrelevant. In a real sense, when

> one is experiencing shame, a different world is being perceived than when one is joyful or fearful.[41]

Sasha's profound experience of shame filters out memories of joy, which are limited to shattered fragments of having felt blessed and sacred while walking around Paris during her pregnancy, or of particularly euphoria-inducing drinks. Overall, though, her feelings of shame undermine her very capacity to remember, while enveloping her in her past.

The eerie qualities of her past are abundantly evident, as fragments from her former stay in Paris seethe just beyond her control. That said, it is striking that most of her earlier, and grudging, memories go back only to this period of her early adulthood while there is a notable dearth of childhood or even adolescent memories. The most detailed scenes from her past are accounts of Sasha working odd jobs once she is already living in France on her own. While even these episodes are unwelcome reminders of her difficult life, the years and years of episodes from her earlier youth are nearly entirely blocked out. One of the most enigmatic and ghostly memories that appears to hearken back to a very early moment in her life is that of a distant place and time that erupts into Sasha's consciousness as would a fleeting memory of a dream, or a passing sensation of déjà vu. On multiple occasions, Sasha senses a "door […] being opened and shut" in her mind, and on the other side of the door is this image:

> I am lying in a hammock looking up into the branches of a tree. The sound of the sea advances and retreats as if a door were being opened and shut. All day there has been a fierce wind blowing, but at sunset it drops. The hills look like clouds and the clouds like fantastic hills. (92)

The door to this memory opens in response to a Creole song Sasha hears, "Maladie de l'amour, maladie de la jeunesse," and for this reason several critics have read this scene as an embedded reference to Rhys's—and Sasha's—Caribbean childhood. The trade winds and the hills arguably evoke Rhys's native land of Dominica and this, along with other traces of heat and color, suggest that Sasha suppresses a very distant, colonial childhood that underscores her sense of

[41] Flatley, *Affective Mapping*, 16.

alterity and alienation in Europe.[42] Be this as it may, Rhys is careful not to offer explanatory material as such, so what I wish to emphasize about the unexplained, shuttered memory that surfaces in this scene is the dynamic of the memory itself. When more distant memories such as this one do emerge, they do so as do dreams, or as contingencies to her consciousness, and they are evoked by sensory perceptions like the music in this scene. Rhys's depiction of memory in such a way that she dismantles linear time and narrative calls for an affective reading of the novel, for Sasha's impressions pool together in different, seemingly random associations, in sequences as irrelevant as they are indiscernable.

As Sedgwick notes, reading for affect inherently alters interpretive method, for no longer do such traditional categories of "beyond" and "beneath" suffice, and certainly Rhys's pooling of random memories defies such explanatory approaches. Sedgwick cautions that "beyond" and "beneath" readings "turn from spatial descriptors into implicit narratives of, respectively, origin and telos."[43] To regard Sasha's past as a series of events that lie *beneath* her present state and that merely *explain* it is less fruitful than the recognition that Rhys arranges time in a non-teleological manner whereby the past and present resonate beside one another. Indeed, Sedgwick proposes the preposition "beside" as a means of liberating the text from dualistic thinking so that it may emerge into the more relational critical space of affectivity as a "kind of cognitive/affective theoretical practice among other, alternative kinds."[44] She writes, "*Beside* is an interesting preposition also because there's nothing very dualistic about it; a number of elements may lie alongside one another, though not an infinity of them. *Beside*

[42] For readings of Rhys that focus on her status as a colonial, see Veronica Marie Gregg's *Jean Rhys's Historical Imagination: Reading and Writing the Creole* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Mary Lou Emery's *Jean Rhys as "World's End": Novels of Colonial and Sexual Exile* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); Judith Raiskin's *Snow on the Canefields: Women's Writing and Creole Subjectivity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); and Erica L. Johnson's *Home, Maison, Casa: The Politics of Location in Works by Jean Rhys, Marguerite Duras, and Erminia Dell'Oro* (Madison and Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003).

[43] Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 8.

[44] Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 126.

permits a spacious agnosticism about several of the linear logics that enforce dualistic thinking."[45] Rhys's aesthetic is that of "beside," and the temporal play of "beside" is very much in evidence in the way in which she creates proliferating adjacencies among Sasha's past and present impressions.

Sasha's response to this situation in which her past coexists with her present is to seek numbness, and she returns each night to "the tube of luminal and the bottle of whisky" (176). All she wants is to "lie in bed all day, pull the curtains and shut the damned world out" (81); all she aspires to accomplish on a daily basis is to avoid certain cafés and streets that draw her back into her past. At one point, she admonishes herself: "You mustn't talk, you mustn't think, you must stop thinking. Of course, it is like that. You must let go of everything else, stop thinking...." (117). However, a street corner can evoke a scene of past humiliation, and all mirrors "throw back a ghost lightly," so that the city produces the cumulative effect of insisting that Sasha live the present through the past. These gravitations toward the past run against the ostensible narrative of *Good Morning, Midnight*, in which Sasha is supposed to spend her holiday in Paris remaking herself as a new woman. This narrative of "progress" is undone by the presentation of her entire life in a chronology of "besideness"; everything, Sasha reflects, is "on the same plane." The plotline of progress and modernization thus works to lay bare its own fallacy. Materially, Sasha manifests newness (not to be confused with youth) and modernity by getting her hair done, and by shopping for new clothes and accessories. Such acts are designed to transform her into a modern woman, to make a break from her former self. Even her self-transformation is fraught, though, as we see in the hairdresser's comment that her choice of hair color, *blonde cendré*, is "the most difficult of colours. It is very, very rarely, madame, that hair can be successfully dyed blonde cendré" (52). His assessment of Sasha's makeover is echoed by the clerk in the hat shop, who repeatedly reports that "All the hats now are very difficult. All my clients are complaining" (70). These clear attempts to escape her own history and to enter a commodified, "automaton"-like state (10), indicate the extent to which Sasha tries to shuck away her very identity, and the "difficult" nature of such an endeavor. Try as she might to arrive at emotional neutrality and to cut herself off from her past, its grip remains palpable. There is an impasse

[45] Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 8.

between her self-improvement project and the path that leads her to it in the first place. She insists to herself, "you must make your mind vacant, neutral" (17), and the new hairdo and hat make her feel "saner and happier" (70). However, the undertow of the past continues, so between Sasha's wish to empty her mind and her will to forget herself, she remains consumed by memories.

These memories might more accurately be described as flashbacks, déjà vu, or dream states. Lingering on the verge of her consciousness and reason, her memories overtake her and consume her. At one point, Sasha is sitting in a café, where she feels the "*cringing* desire to explain my presence in the place" (106, emphasis mine), trying to numb her mind with Pernod, but even this respite is subject to the incursions of the past when someone opens the door to the café and

> you can see outside into the street. And the street walks in. It is one of those streets—dark, powerful, magical.... "Oh, there you are," it says, walking in at the door, "there you are. Where have you been all this long time?" Nobody else knows me, but the street knows me. (107)

The street drags in a flash of memory: "(But sometimes it was sunny.... Walking along in the sun in a gay dress, striped red and blue.... I won't walk along that street again)" (107-8). Rhys's use of ellipses and parentheses indicates that the memory of the sunny street arises at the margins of Sasha's consciousness, as an afterthought or daydream. There are several scenes in which the streets of Paris lead to the past when familiar corners evoke Sasha's memories of having been there before, as would be the case for any returning traveler. However, Rhys takes this mechanism of memory to another level by imbuing the street outside the café with agency. It does not spark a memory within Sasha so much as hurl knowledge of the past at her. This exteriorization of psychological material divests Sasha of any ability to govern her thoughts, and the predatory tone of the anthropomorphized street further implies that she is subject to continual judgment and persecution. In another expression of the autonomy of her past, Sasha refers to it repeatedly as a mechanical entity that runs of its own accord, whether she refers to her "film-mind" (176) or to the "gramophone record […] going strong in my head: 'Here this happened, here that happened'" (17). The configuration of Sasha's memories as possessed of their own agency, and the

dream-like presentation of her early memories and the interruptive nature of her Parisian past, then begs the question: is this memory at all?

Not exactly, if a memory is a conscious recall or reflection on the past, whether voluntary or involuntary. Sasha's past lurks in her unconscious or preconscious and brushes up against or erupts into her consciousness through its own agency. Prinz explains that

> Emotions often do not occur as acts of cognition. […] We seem to be helpless spectators to our emotional responses. When we react emotionally to a snake or an exam, it is not by act of will. […] In fact, we often explicitly try not to be afraid […] But fear takes over.[46]

Furthermore, the emotional jolt that defies a cognitive approach to the world takes over in not only the moment in which one reacts emotionally, but in subsequent reflections on the experience. Because past and present experiences exist beside, rather than beyond or beneath one another, Sasha is subject to all of the difficulties of her life even during her "holiday." This would explain why she tries to keep her memories at bay, and why she tries (and fails) to govern her past by obliterating it in her own drug-induced oblivion. The feelings surrounding all of her experiences cause them to intrude on her consciousness.

Although Rhys's novel moderates two distinct periods of time in Sasha's life, those periods overlap affectively so that Sasha's memories are themselves transmuted into pure hauntings. Everything about Sasha's life, from the trauma of childhood abuse to her quotidian existence, conspires to make her feel shame. In addition to having a personal history of abandonment and loss, Sasha's daily life is conditioned by the more material factors of poverty, aging, and alcoholism, all of which feed into her sense that she is always condemned to the same difficulties she has always known. This configuration of the present as a tense that is always experienced through the past has been classified by Derrida as "hauntology," a term that indicates the ontological properties of overlapping temporalities.[47] He sees history as a haunting presence which, even when it is

[46] Prinz, *Gut Reactions*, 49.

[47] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

forgotten, bears forcefully on reality. Much as a ghost emanates from the past and haunts the present with unknown and known material alike, material from the past shapes subjectivity in the sense that it contaminates one's sense of who one *is*. Another influential theorist of haunting, Avery Gordon, explains in *Ghostly Matters* that the feelings that connect us to the past serve as crucial transmitters of those swaths of history that exceed memory. Gordon classifies these feelings as "haunting," explaining that "Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition."[48] While Gordon's interest in haunting is in its role in asserting social reality, mine is in the extent to which haunting is itself an affect—and one that links the past and the present in modernist literature. Indeed, haunting is one of the most powerful of affects, for it is by haunting that material from the past makes itself known to us in spite of willful forgetting—or even ignorance. In other words, you can be haunted by things you do not remember and, equally, by things you never knew in the first place. What is interesting is that, in dealing with postmodern and postcolonial texts and contexts, Gordon seeks out the effects of hauntings in order to trace out social realities that have been rendered absent and, indeed, to undo the binary of presence and absence in order to gain access to that which does *not* register in other sociological and historical discourses. She explains, "Following the ghosts […] is about putting life back in where only a vague memory or a bare trace was visible to those who bothered to look."[49] Gordon's goal of recovering overlooked experience by attending to the ways in which such experience haunts postmodern social reality contrasts with Rhys's modernism, in which the past is an anxious burden to be thrown off for newness. However, both Gordon's search for the ghosts of the past and Sasha's rejection of them speak to their power. Haunting is the affect through which the past—social as well as personal—registers most powerfully in our psyches.

Good Morning, Midnight is divided into four parts, the third of which dwells on the Paris of her youth rather than splicing together the past and the present as do

[48] Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 8.

[49] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 22.

the other sections. This section exemplifies the novel's dynamic of haunting and something of a meta-example of affective memory. Back in her hotel room after an evening spent in the company of other expatriates and exiles, Sasha looks around "This damned room—it's saturated with the past.... It's all the rooms I've ever slept in, all the streets I've ever walked in. Now the whole thing moves in an ordered, undulating procession past my eyes. Rooms, streets, streets, rooms...." (109). Rhys then segues to Part Three through Sasha's reflections on "being hungry, being cold, being hurt, being ridiculed" (109). Part Two drifts from this mood off into Part Three as though into a dream. What is more, Part Three more or less recounts her husband's humiliating betrayal and abandonment of Sasha as well as the death of their newborn, all traumatic events that Sasha sees as reflections of her own inadequacy as a wife and mother, with the result that the past assaults her self-esteem and, like the novel's many hotel rooms, she finds herself "saturated with the past" in spite of her desire, within the chapter, "Not to think. Only to watch the branches of that tree and the pattern they make standing out against a cold sky. Above all, not to think...." (139). The chapter is the most fragmented and broken of this highly fragmented novel and it ultimately devolves into a repetition of the opening lines of the text—"The room says: 'Quite like old times. Yes?... No?... Yes.'" (145). The haunted hotel room Sasha enters at the beginning of the novel turns out to be a repetition of other haunted hotels she has occupied, and given the crushing events recounted in the chapter it is not surprising that they fall into the elliptical patterns of a trauma narrative. At the end of the section Sasha comes back to her present moment as though waking. This bracketing of the past in her subconscious indicates that Sasha's memories are like dreams, flashbacks, and other pre-cognitive forms of psychic material that become manifest through affect. They haunt her.

That shame is a primal mood through which Sasha's past and present are enmeshed is evident in one singular, wholly decontextualized memory that, like the hammock scene, is startling because it arises from her otherwise thoroughly muted childhood. Moreover, this memory is one of abuse and humiliation. Rhys drops this moment into the last few pages of the novel after a break in the text, with the effect that there is no indication of what triggered the memory in the first place. Symptomatically, this rare glimpse into Sasha's distant past is inscribed in present tense:

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

In spite of the clearly formative nature of Sasha's relationship with the man, there is no other reference to this scene in the entire novel, so while Sasha does repeat various expressions of contempt or humiliation, she never reflects upon or returns to what is clearly an early scene of trauma. Like a film, which is composed of thousands of stills that combine into a picture in motion, Sasha's mind is animated by episodic moments, most of which she attempts to tamp down into her unconscious. Patricia Moran, in her reading of the aesthetic of trauma that governs Rhys's oeuvre as a whole, observes that the reader is confronted with "painful and half-glimpsed memories of the past [which] haunt" her protagonists, and adds that

> traumatic events live on in the protagonists' present lives, in the fragmented narrative chronology, in the protagonists' inability to remember or unwillingness to narrate crucial information, in the disruption of the narrative by memories that pose more questions than they answer, and above all in the haunted, obsessive thought patterns of the protagonists.[50]

The half-glimpsed memory of an abusive loved one is cut off from the rest of the narrative, but it arguably anchors the shame affect that pervades the novel. There is no question that the man shames her, as when he brings home other women and forces Sasha to wait on them. Sasha tries to splice the memory out of her

[50] Patricia Moran, *The Aesthetic of Trauma in Virginia Woolf and Jean Rhys* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 118.

"film-mind" to no avail. Thus, although she does not return to the ghost of this scene elsewhere in the novel, its final thrust into her consciousness occurs at a telling moment, as she climbs up to her hotel room to meet a most disturbing fate.

Sasha is thus, literally, a revenant. Animated by the past to which she helplessly returns during her Parisian sojourn, she is a spectral figment of her present moment. Indeed, there is a subtext of ghostliness throughout the novel, from Sasha's encounter with her own ghosts in the novel's many mirrors to her dream about the ghost of a dead father, to the spectral, creepy neighbor—the "ghost of the landing" (14)—who hisses insults at her and whose mortal embrace she welcomes at the novel's end.[51] Awaiting his malicious advances, she lies "very still, with my arm over my eyes. As still as if I were dead…." (190). Hence, whether she thinks of herself as a mechanical being or as a specter among specters, Sasha's only recourse to her painful state of existence is to disassociate herself from her body and her mind, as they work in tandem to register ongoing shame.

Massumi argues that careful readings of affect introduce new subjectivities that exceed plotted positions or assigned categories of identity, and this is why he introduces the notion of intensities as a means of understanding the workings of these new subjectivities.[52] This is certainly true of Sasha, whom critics have attempted to understand in terms of such fixed categories of identity as class (she is poor), ethnicity (she is arguably Creole), gender (as Sasha herself marvels ironically, "God it's funny to be a woman!"), and age (she is horrified by references to her as *la vielle*, the old lady). Much more salient than these aspects of her character is the connective tissue of shame that that links Sasha's feelings about her youth and age, her gender, and her inability to earn or hold on to

[51] See Simpson's reading of the "*Hamlet* dream" in *Territories of the Psyche* for a thorough exegesis of it. On the topics of ghosts and specters, Sue Thomas also emphasizes Sasha's perceived "monstrosity" throughout the text as a "sexual vampire" in *The Worlding of Jean Rhys* (New York: Greenwood, 1999), 127, 138. All of these figures convey not only Sasha's alterity, but also the way in which the distance between Sasha and "normal" femininity is *frightening* and *dangerous*.

[52] Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002).

money. In other words, her subjectivity is structured upon the intensities of the shame she feels about her age, class, and indecipherable ethnicity and nationality. Her apparent lack of voluntary memory, and the agency that her memories take on in the course of the novel, denote this model of subjectivity.

Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* exemplifies the haunting nature of affective memory in its portrayal of the particular affect of shame, but Michael Wood points out that memory is affectively structured in modernism more broadly and in Proust in particular, whose philosophy Wood paraphrases thus: "We don't recall the past, he says, until we stumble into a sensation, catch an old scent or the sight of an old glove."[53] We might consider any number of modernist characters who, although they do summon some memories voluntarily, are also seized by the dread of darker affective knowledge about love, fate, and life. Perhaps it is the modernist fascination with time itself that prompts authors to push memory into the realm of haunting; perhaps it is, as Flatley suggests, that the very notion of modernism is grafted onto loss in that the word "modern" means "now," which "implies a problematic sense of anteriority, the sense that the past is lost and gone."[54] That which is lost, unknown, or unknowable cannot be remembered, but it can certainly resonate within us. Sasha, the revenant, the woman who feels that "it hurts, when you have been dead, to come alive" (182), is aware of the spectral nature of modern existence. After all, time "is a blank in my head—years, days, hours, everything is a blank in my head" (21); she can remember nothing. Yet what endures is her sense of the world's glaring contempt, felt in different intensities. To give Sasha the last word: "'I think most human beings have cruel eyes.' That rosy, wooden, innocent cruelty. I know" (97). Or at least she feels it in her bones.

Pace University, New York

[53] Michael Wood, "Proust: The Music of Memory," in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, 109-122 (111).

[54] Flatley, *Affective Mapping,* 28.