

**Grotesque Bodies and the 'Other':  
Repulsive Attraction in the Work of Djuna Barnes**

**Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for  
the degree of Doctor in Philosophy by Amie Caddy**

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## **Declaration**

I confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Information derived from other sources has been indicated.

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Amie Caddy

**Grotesque Bodies and the ‘Other’:  
Repulsive Attraction in the Work of Djuna Barnes**

**Abstract**

This thesis explores Djuna Barnes’s portrayal of, and engagement with, Othered people, places and things in four of her major works: *The Book of Repulsive Women* (1915), *Ladies Almanack* (1928), *Ryder* (1928) and *Nightwood* (1936). I discuss these texts in chronological order, arguing that Barnes’s interest in marginalised figures can be pinpointed in her early journalism and first pamphlet, *Repulsive Women*, and traced as a recurring, developing theme throughout her oeuvre.

I discuss Barnes’s rejection of the portrayal of the socially ‘repulsive’ female body in *Repulsive Women*, arguing that her engagement with the grotesque in this text aligns with François Rabelais’ carnivalesque subversion of social customs. Female bodies typically pushed to the periphery of society (the ageing body, the body of the mother, the prostitute) are positioned centrally in *Repulsive Women*, creating a voyeuristic attraction-repulsion dynamic. Existing scholarship on the images in *Repulsive Women* is scarce, and lacking in depth. This study is unique in its detailed analyses of several of the images included within the collection alongside images from Barnes’s early articles and *Ladies Almanack*. I discuss these images not as companion pieces, but as significant and illuminating facets of the various works which add additional depth and meaning to the texts.

Despite Barnes’s reluctance to be affiliated with particular political groups or movements, this study argues that *Ladies Almanack* is a highly socio-political text that strongly engages with late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century sexological theories. The almanac format of the text, which draws inspiration from almanacs from the fifteenth century through to the eighteenth century, situates the work within a pre-established, far-reaching tradition, thereby writing Sapphism into traditionally heteronormative and mainstream literature. In this way, Barnes both presents an alternative history in which homosexuality is present in mainstream culture and literature, and undermines the widely regarded, instructional advice of almanacs.

I argue that within *Ryder*, Barnes turns her attention towards modernism’s focus on Oceania and the primitive, criticising the fetishisation of Othered people and cultural traditions. Within this text, primitivism and the primal are closely linked, though distinct categories. Through Wendell Ryder’s polygamy Barnes suggests that society need not look externally for primitive inspiration as both the primitive and primal are innate to humanity.

Finally, I suggest that *Nightwood* is Barnes’s most mature work and combines previously expressed motifs around the female body, Sapphism and the primitive and primal. The Other is unified within *Nightwood* by the literal, metaphorical and psychological night, while the binary present between the mainstream and the marginalised is represented in the divide between what I argue are ‘day’ and ‘night’ characters who cannot coexist. Temporality and narrative structure are deliberately obscured within *Nightwood*, and in the section of this thesis titled, ‘Erratic Rhythms and Internal Time’ I offer a new, original theory around *Nightwood*’s temporality and narrative, arguing across several pages that much of the text’s action occurs within Robin’s subconscious, or unconscious mind.

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## Abbreviations

*RW: The Book of Repulsive Women*

*LA: Ladies Almanack*

*R: Ryder*

*N: Nightwood*

## Introduction

*'I'm going to get those aerial Italians into the house if it costs me my mind.'*

Lydia Steptoe (aka Djuna Barnes), 'Naming the Rose'.<sup>1</sup>

In 1923, the magazine *Shadowland* published a short story by Djuna Barnes writing under the pen name Lydia Steptoe titled 'Naming the Rose: How to make so-called "unsafe" things, safe for the home'. In this very short piece the fifteen-year-old protagonist, who is learning about what respectable people do and do not do, threatens to sully her family home by taking a stand against society's 'little foibles', namely the exclusion of people and things that have been labelled inappropriate by her family and society. These people and objects include women wearing red, certain kinds of incense, women with muscles, cigarettes that are not from London and a 'delightful poisonous-looking woman on the corner who sells Venetian glass-ware.'<sup>2</sup> Unacceptable kinds of women dominate the story, punctuated by only the odd inanimate item that may not be brought into the home. The aerial Italians referred to in the epigraph above are muscular women whom the speaker's mother condemns for being *too* muscular. The epigraph itself is an apt representation of Barnes's fixed and firm intent throughout her literary career to represent the Other, the marginalised, the 'unacceptable' and the 'inappropriate'. The house into which Barnes brings her rejected figures – lesbians, Jews, transvestites, circus folk, the aged widow, the childish adult and somnambule – is her own, the homes of her readership, of the respectable and the unrespectable alike and, if one views Barnes's work as a kind of home itself, her entire corpus, throughout which she weaves the dejected, rejected anomalies as defined by the Anglo-American twentieth century.

There was no shortage of people interested in the unusual groups about which Barnes wrote. In fact, with an influx of 'curiosity seekers' hoping to read about and witness the reported degradation of the bohemians, Barnes enjoyed a wide readership. Given the poignancy of Barnes's once well-known and largely admired work, it is unclear why she has become relatively obscure, even to scholars working within the field of modernism. In 1999, Mary E. Galvin wrote that 'Djuna Barnes (1892-1982) was ever present in the modernist "scene," and, as Barnes herself declared late in life, she "knew everybody."' <sup>3</sup> Perhaps it is a slight

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<sup>1</sup> Lydia Steptoe (aka Djuna Barnes), 'Naming the Rose: How to make so-called "unsafe" things, safe for the home', *Shadowland* 2:8 (Mar-Aug 1923), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Mary E. Galvin, *Queer Poetics: Five Modernist Women Writers* (Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 83.

overestimation to say that Barnes knew everybody, but she did know many people. Throughout the early-to-mid-twentieth century, Barnes was not only a well-known journalist, modernist writer and artist, she was also something of a socialite, on speaking terms with figures such as T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, Mina Loy, Natalie Barney, Radclyffe Hall, Charles Henri Ford, Peggy Guggenheim, Laurence Vail, Emily Coleman, Kay Boyle, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, Courtenay Lemon, Charlie Chaplin and Ernst Hanfstaengl (prior to his Nazism and friendship with Adolf Hitler). On 18<sup>th</sup> January 1943, a review of Barnes's artistic output appeared in *TIME* Magazine, which declared, 'When Djuna Barnes showed off her first oil painting, Portrait of Alice, at Peggy Guggenheim's gallery last week, many critics were surprised to find that the woman who wrote *Nightwood* (1937) [sic] could paint with similar distinction'.<sup>4</sup> With such praise, influential connections and an existing readership, Barnes's work should logically have continued to thrive. Perhaps due to her reclusiveness in later life and firm refusal to allow new editions of her works to be published, Barnes became lost amongst the myriad of names who formed her circle of acquaintances and friends. Daniela Caselli sees Barnes's status as a relatively unknown writer as a reflection of social rejection, explaining that 'Barnes's current marginality needs to be recognised as culturally significant because it derives from the uncritical reaction to her unpleasant dissection of what works as central and what as marginal, and at which price.'<sup>5</sup> Although Barnes's oeuvre does undoubtedly focus on socially and politically marginalised groups, it also seems probable that one of the primary reasons for her lack of presence in modernism is due to the arguable obscurity of much of her work. Chad Heap explains:

The numerous accounts of bohemian thrillage that appeared on newsstands across the country in magazines ranging from the *Bookman* and *Literary Digest* to *Vanity Fair* and the *Saturday Evening Post*... generated a steady stream of curiosity seekers who hoped to sample in person the colourful atmosphere they had first encountered on the printed page.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps some people were uncomfortable with being presented with the reality faced by minority groups in their society, but there were many more who were intrigued. Thomas Heise categorises the groups written about by Barnes as 'ethnic minorities, homosexual and the poor'

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<sup>4</sup> 'Art: The Barnes Among Women' *TIME*, 18<sup>th</sup> January 1943  
content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,802550,00.html Accessed 31/5/2018.

<sup>5</sup> Daniela Caselli, *Improper Modernism: Djuna Barnes's Bewildering Corpus* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 170.

who formed an ‘underworld’.<sup>7</sup> The underworld of which Heise writes transcends individual texts and reoccurs throughout Barnes’s oeuvre.

Through her early journalism, Barnes contributed to the ‘numerous accounts’ of bohemian life which drew in large groups of the slummers Heap discussed, generating interest in these groups, rather than suppressing interest or creating the social rejection noted by Caselli. The primary difference between the early journalism, which created interest, and the later literary works, which remain largely unstudied (*Nightwood* is the exception), is the complexity and difficult opacity of the later texts. If anything, it seems to me that Barnes is more candid in her analysis and presentation of bohemian life in Greenwich Village and Paris in *The Book of Repulsive Women* (1915), *Ladies Almanack* (1928) and *Nightwood* (1936), than she had been in her articles on Greenwich Village, written in 1916.

This study brings four of Barnes’s major works to prominence again by examining her engagement with society’s marginalised figures and socio-political issues, including matters surrounding the female body, sexuality and ageing.<sup>8</sup> I have chosen to look specifically at *Repulsive Women*, *Ladies Almanack*, *Ryder* (1928) and *Nightwood* because these texts span a significant proportion of Barnes’s writing career and trace the evolution of her thinking on, engagement with and representation of marginalised groups and people. Although these texts have been explored independently, this is the first study to look at each of them in such depth together, including discussion of their artwork. The works from Barnes’s oeuvre that I have mentioned more briefly, or omitted from this thesis entirely show a more conservative version of Barnes who was conscious of the wider audience for whom she was paid to write, as, for example, was the case with many of her articles and short stories published in magazines and newspapers. For this reason, these texts offer a less comprehensive insight into Barnes’s engagement with the Other. What they do highlight, however, is her recognition that a very clear divide existed between the mainstream and the Other, and between the literary works considered acceptable for both groups.

Throughout this thesis I refer to such marginalised figures as Other and define Othered people as those positioned in opposition to a middle-class, heterosexual, youthful, white majority, or mainstream. However, there is no fixed group or section of society classed as Other within Barnes’s work. The Other refers to marginalised women in *Repulsive Women*, a

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Heise, *Urban Underworlds: A Geography of Twentieth-Century American Literature and Culture* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2011), p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Barnes’s work addresses those who are marginalised by society as well as those who live adjacent to mainstream society of their own accord.

subsection of society and very specifically the select handful of women seen by the passenger on the L train. In *Ladies Almanack*, *Ryder* and *Nightwood*, the Othered groups initially appear to have been forced to society's periphery – a small group of lesbian friends, a recalcitrant family and disparate figures who use night time as a cloak for their unusual, anti-mainstream activities. In these cases the Othered figures are marginalised because of their sexuality, ethnicity, bohemian lifestyles, age, religious views, and so on. Yet in reading *Ladies Almanack*, *Ryder* and *Nightwood*, one realises that the Othered, marginalised figures quickly take the dominant position previously held by the heteronormative, youthful, white majority. This transition takes place because these texts are written from the perspective of the original Othered, of the bohemians. These subgroups are placed at the centre of their own worlds in which the reader is immersed, and the mainstream is placed on the periphery, attempting to gain access into either the geographical locations of the bohemian communities, or to the more ethereal mentality of these subgroups. The attraction of the mainstream is resisted by the bohemian subgroups, who, in turn, look upon the mainstream as outsiders, as Other.

There are several philosophers and theorists whose discussion of the Other have influenced this work. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, or the *Phenomenology of Mind* (originally *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 1807), Georg Hegel stated that the recognition of objects implies self-consciousness (self-awareness) within the viewer, as the acceptance of another thing also implies the recognition of being separate from that thing, of being another object entirely. Hegel argued that this self-consciousness divides into Lordship and Bondage (*Herrschaft* and *Knechtschaft*), more frequently referred to as the Master/ Slave dialectic. In the view of the Master, the most important thing is freedom and recognition, and for the Slave, freedom is worthless if life is lost. The Master and the Slave form an understanding in which the Master assumes dominance. However, 'the truth of the independent consciousness is accordingly the servile consciousness of the bondsman', suggesting that the identity of the Master is centred around the control of the Slave and as such, the Master is never truly free of, nor dominant over, the Slave.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the Slave soon becomes aware of the extent to which the Master is dependent on them and a struggle for dominance ensues. Upon realising their usefulness to the Master (and thereby their leverage over the Master), the Slave rises up and can no longer be denied power. In this way, an uneasy alliance takes place in which both parties coexist, remaining in their separate spheres.

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<sup>9</sup> G. W. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 117.

The relationship between the Master and Slave can be likened to the relationship between wider society and the bohemian communities as presented in Barnes's texts. Initially, it appears that the mainstream has rejected the Othered communities and maintains control over them. However, in *Ryder* and *Nightwood*, for example, the marginalised realise the power they hold over the mainstream due to the interest shown by the mainstream in their habits and lifestyles. The heteronormative collective are drawn emotionally and physically towards the geographical spaces inhabited by the marginalised communities in these texts, reflecting the interest of the mainstream in the bohemians of Greenwich Village, as described in Barnes's 1916 articles written on the subject. In much the same way that the original Master/ Slave power dynamic is changed and ultimately reversed in Hegel's theory, the initial power dynamic between the mainstream and marginalised communities in Barnes's texts shifts, and the previous marginalisation of the bohemian communities actually becomes a chosen form of alienation.

Edmund Husserl's 1913 text, *Ideas* suggests that the individual can achieve greater conscious awareness of, and appreciation for, the Other than proposed by Hegel in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Husserl proposed that from an unenlightened state, what he termed the natural attitude, one does not give thought to their judgements about that which is outside of themselves. However, from an awakened perspective, it is possible (though difficult) for the individual to consciously think about their experiences of the world and that which they perceive as being Other. Husserl wrote:

what makes the appropriation of the essential nature of phenomenology, the understanding of the peculiar meaning of its form of inquiry, and its relation to all other sciences (to psychology in particular) so extraordinarily difficult, is that in addition to all other adjustments a new way of looking at things is necessary, one that contrasts at every point with the natural attitude of experience and thought. To move freely along this new way without ever reverting to the old viewpoints, to learn to see what stands before our eyes.<sup>10</sup>

Hegel emphasised the importance of learning about that which is separate from us, rather than assuming an innate knowledge of the external object. In this way, an interest in understanding the Other is implied, as opposed to a need to simply dominate it, as suggested by Hegel. I propose that Barnes's work pushes the reader into the enlightened state presented by Husserl, urging one to firstly recognise their judgements, biases and prejudices concerning Othered people, places and things, and secondly, to assess the validity of these judgements.

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<sup>10</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (New York: MacMillan, 1972), p. 43.

Rather than debating the ability of the individual to assess their judgements of the Other, in *Totality and Infinity* (1961) Emmanuel Levinas argued that the egocentricity of initially viewing that which is separate from oneself as Other is problematic, as this viewpoint inherently implies that there is a default, correct thing, which is ourselves. Levinas did however acknowledge that this perspective is unavoidable and that by allowing the Other to be entirely separate from oneself, one allows the Other to live uncontrolled and as they choose. The presence of another human face is vital in Levinas's view in creating this necessary distance between oneself and the Other, and in establishing a respect for the Other as a separate entity. He wrote, 'The face of the Other at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me, the idea existing to my own measure. . . . It expresses itself.'<sup>11</sup> And later, 'The face resists possession, resists my powers.'<sup>12</sup> As such, in the absence of the face, one is more easily drawn towards the inclination to control the Other. In opposition to Levinas's conviction in the power of the face, a text such as *Ryder*, for example, argues that nothing can prevent attempts to control the Other and nothing can incite respect for the Other. *Ryder* suggests that any deviation from the norm is collectively labelled as self-serving, and thus is perceived as a threat to the stability of the majority and as something which must be controlled.

In returning to Hegel's Master/ Slave dialectic, Simone de Beauvoir aligned the position of the twentieth-century man and woman to the Master/ Slave roles. She wrote, 'Certain passages in the argument employed by Hegel in defining the relation of master to slave apply much better to the relation of man to woman. . . . He it is who opens up the future to which she also reaches out.'<sup>13</sup> Texts such as *Ladies Almanack* show this notion to be false to some extent, although its female characters can only live in the manner in which they please while on the periphery of mainstream culture and within the protected space of their own close-knit communities.

Throughout this thesis, in referring to the mainstream and the Other I consider Hegel's Master/ Slave dialectic and the extent to which Husserl, Levinas and Beauvoir's theories around one's interaction with the Other are engaged with, furthered, pre-empted (in the case of Levinas and Beauvoir) and/ or challenged in Barnes's work. As Barnes's oeuvre also focuses on places and spaces that are geographically Other (being ulterior to bourgeois culture, for example, slums), I also use the term to refer to marginalised and liminal spaces.

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<sup>11</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1969), p. 51.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>13</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* trans. H. M. Parshley (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 96.

In writing specifically on the presentation of the sexual Other in *Queer Phenomenology: Orientation, Objects, Others* (2006), Sara Ahmed makes a pertinent statement about the perceived threat of any deviation from the heterosexual norm. *Queer Phenomenology* suggests that sexualities other than heterosexuality are considered to be peripheral sexualities, positing that the emergence of the notion of ‘sexual orientation’ does not make homo and heterosexuals equal, rather being homosexual is to have an orientation, whereas to be straight is to be neutral.<sup>14</sup> Ahmed also wrote that ‘queer or inverted desires are.... [assessed] in terms of the threat that homosexuality poses to the continuation of the family line, as a line of descent.’<sup>15</sup> Ahmed’s discussion of the position of Othered sexualities and the perceived threat of homosexuality to traditional family units is certainly not a modern concern. In Chapter 2, I discuss the nineteenth- and twentieth-century sexological notions which attest to the abnormality of homosexuality and the perceived threat to familial structures presented by same-sex relationships. I argue that both *Ladies Almanack* and *Nightwood* engage with these concerns and anticipate the postulations set forth by Ahmed.

In thinking about the position of the Other more generally, Jane Marcus wrote that ‘the nonAryan, nonheterosexual [sic] body is a book in which the modern failure to understand or assimilate the difference of race, class, and gender is inscribed’.<sup>16</sup> In a similar vein, Galvin suggests that ‘the fetishizing practices of heterosexist thinking condemn the possibility of diversity, variety, or multiplicity as “deviance”: inversion, perversion, corruption, or illness is made to reside within the political transgressor’s inner being, a constitutional flaw, rather than a conscious choice to resist the social order of heterosexist thinking.’<sup>17</sup> Although Marcus is not writing specifically in relation to Barnes, the bodies about which she writes are those with which Barnes presents her readers, most clearly in *Repulsive Women*, while the discomfort experienced by the reader derives from a dependence on and assumption of the reader’s normative, heterosexist point of view, that which Galvin sees as condemning diversity. Whether the reader personally identifies with or chooses a heterosexist position is irrelevant, since the omniscient narrator reappears in each text and imposes this very perspective on the reader.

Galvin also states that

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<sup>14</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientation, Objects, Others* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 69.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71-73.

<sup>16</sup> Jane Marcus, *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, London: Rutgers University Press, 2004), p. 94.

<sup>17</sup> Galvin, *Op Cit.*, p. 2.

Since the mid-1970s, a revolution of poetics and consciousness and knowledge has been happening within the lesbian community... Our poets are our theorists—theorists of language and form... theorists of the interrelationship of language, consciousness, sexuality, and social control, theorists of the deconstruction of categorical thinking, theorists of gender and identity and the unconscious.<sup>18</sup>

I would argue that Barnes had been deconstructing categorical thinking in this way since the early-twentieth century, both through her poetry and prose, expanding what Galvin terms a ‘revolution’ beyond the confines of the lesbian community. Barnes’s work challenges and disrupts convention both through her subject matter and the composition of her texts. Repeated Barnesean topics include Sapphism, grotesque bodies and the convergence of the animal and human, which disrupt neat boundaries between men and women, the acceptable and the unacceptable, and civilised and bestial. Barnes consciously queers the structure of her texts by combining words and images, modern and archaic language, and playing with time and perspective. The timeframe of much of her work is unclear, as is the perspective from which the textual events are told. With regard to queer figures, Benjamin Bateman wrote, ‘as rendered by the literary imaginations of Henry James, Oscar Wilde, E. M. Forster, and Willa Cather, queer survival is collective in nature and builds upon the interdependencies of proximate and precarious lives.’<sup>19</sup> Although queer survival is a rather post-Barnesean term, I see the interdependency noted by Bateman between the disparate but aligned as being present across Barnes’s oeuvre, in which similar Othered, queer figures recur, creating a cross-corpus alliance and commitment to the marginalised.

In agreement with Bateman’s notion of queerness as collective, Elizabeth Freeman explains that queer theory aims to ‘dissolve forms, disintegrate identities, level taxonomies, scorn the social, and even repudiate politics altogether.’<sup>20</sup> This sentiment is echoed by Marcus in her analysis of *Nightwood*’s Nikka ‘the nigger’:

Looking at Nikka’s tattoo as a defiance of the Levitical taboo against writing on the body, I see the body of the Other—the black, lesbian, transvestite, or Jew—presented as a text in the novel, a book of communal resistances of underworld outsiders to domination. Its weapon is laughter, a form of folk grotesque derived from Rabelais and surviving in circus.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin Bateman, *The Modernist Art of Queer Survival* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. xiii.

<sup>21</sup> Marcus, *Op Cit.*, p. 87.

Here, Nikka's body acts as the literal and metaphorical site of disintegration of forms and identities, which Freeman states is the aim of queer theory. Influence from the mainstream, from Heap's slummers, is rejected through subversion (laughter), and an alliance with the 'underworld'. The defence of the queered is to retreat from the majority and solidify their position as outsiders in a move of reclamation, or as Brian Glavey explains it, to keep 'at bay forces that would cause one to lose one's shape and become part of the environment.'<sup>22</sup> However, in relation to *Nightwood*, Marcus also wrote that the text 'is about merging, dissolution, and, above all, hybridization—mixed metaphors, mixed genres, mixed levels of discourse from the lofty to the low, mixed "languages" from medical practice and circus argot, church dogma and homosexual slang.'<sup>23</sup> Such merging of the 'lofty' and 'low' is in direct contrast to the 'communal resistances' of the queer to outside influence and investigation (the queer being the 'low' and the outsiders the 'lofty'). This contrast further displays the hybridisation and queering of the structural aspect of the text itself, rather than the hybridisation of high and low culture within society. In this way, Barnes implies that the merging of the mainstream and the Other is not possible, and in an act of rebellion, sullies high culture with low culture, by corrupting 'church dogma' with 'homosexual slang'.

Moving from the queer community in general, and looking specifically at the position of women, Shari Benstock poignantly notes that 'all of Djuna Barnes's writing can be read as a critique of woman's place in Western society.'<sup>24</sup> I agree with this statement and suggest that Barnes's commentary on the place of women can be seen very clearly in 'Naming the Rose':

I am going to put an end to my suffering. This is what I am going to do:

I am going to put on my gown with the uneven hems, my nine-button gloves and the hat with the longest veil, and making some excuse for myself, I shall leave the house, taking the shady side of the street. I shall bend my steps in the direction of Hell's Kitchen, and as I go I shall look at everything I've been told not to look at, and I shall, as it were, locate the rose as it stands, undefiled by any other name.

For I'm going to get those aerial Italians into the house if it costs me my mind. That Venetian glass-ware vendor shall yet sit by my *chaise-longue* and tell me just what thin glass means to her. The Australian singer shall sing one of those dangerous love songs right *at* me. I am determined.

Yes, I am going to name the rose.

Then, when I have got four or five of the most evil objects together, I am going to plunge.

I'm going to bring something home and I'm going to trust to the inspiration of the moment to find it a name as it stands before Mother.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Brian Glavey, *The Wallflower Avant-Garde: Modernism, Sexuality, and Queer Ekphrasis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 18.

<sup>23</sup> Marcus, *Op Cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>24</sup> Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris 1900-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), p. 242. Originally pub. 1986.

<sup>25</sup> Steptoe, *Op Cit.*, p. 70.

The principal threats to a woman's reputation are potential things, places and people she witnesses, alongside her own dishevelled appearance. The narrator tells the reader that she will wear what she likes and look at whatever pleases her as an act of rebellion. Thus, one infers that the standardised norm for women is to dress neatly and appropriately and behave similarly, and to engage only with others who do the same. The time period in which the story is set is unmentioned, so one can read these imposed boundaries upon women as transferable across decades, centuries, even, and as indicative of a general overarching level of suppression as highlighted by the text.

In *The Female Grotesque* (1994), Mary Russo states that regarding perceived loss of boundaries, women inadvertently make spectacles of themselves whereas men *choose* to expose themselves.<sup>26</sup> This is exactly the point that I read 'Naming the Rose' as speaking out against. By choosing to look 'unusual' and associate with 'unusual' people, 'Naming the Rose's' protagonist is seen to have lost her boundaries in the manner Russo notes, rather than having gained, or reclaimed, her power. The short story reveals this distinction early on in the text, in which the significance of the rose is explained:

For all that is back of this safe *versus* [Barnes's emphasis] unsafe question is this: that which is safe was once a rose which has been called by another name; that which is unsafe is simply a thing that has been left standing around with its original name attached to it—a thing that has received no safe caption.<sup>27</sup>

And further on: 'Brother was greeted with a tender smile when he came to breakfast saying: "Last night I dreamed that I was walking in a garden of roses."' <sup>28</sup> The reader learns that all things are socially acceptable if labelled in a certain way: a rose, not a prostitute. It is also acceptable within the family for the brother to dream of 'roses', whereas the female narrator will be sullied through association with similar 'roses'. Barnes echoes her previous sentiment, expressed within her 1916 articles on Greenwich Village, that people and things are the same, it is the definitions and categories placed upon them that separate and divide, creating a mainstream and an Other.

Frustratingly, 'Naming the Rose' is undermined by its own advertisement in *Shadowland*, much like *Ladies Almanack's* authorial note and *Nightwood's* introduction. The ad explains:

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<sup>26</sup> Mary Russo, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 53.

<sup>27</sup> Steptoe, *Op Cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

Readers of this charming bit of fantasy and banter will wish to know something of the identity of the author which would appear to be concealed rather than revealed by the name she gives herself. She writes with delightful whimsicality, slightly tinged with irony, on little foibles and conventions in social habits and customs.<sup>29</sup>

‘Fantasy’, ‘banter’, ‘delightful whimsicality’, ‘little foibles’, are all words and phrases that undermine the serious issue with which ‘Naming the Rose’ contends: a socially unified rejection of particular groups and the limitations placed upon them. One cannot be sure who wrote the ad, although it does strongly resemble *Ladies Almanack*’s foreword, which describes this text as a ‘slight satirical wiggling... written (in an idle hour)’, suggesting that Barnes was the likely author of the advertisement.<sup>30</sup> Despite the diversionary tactic of *Ladies Almanack*’s foreword and the advertisement for ‘Naming the Rose’, Barnes’s concern for those rejected by society was clearly not a frivolous one as she examines and critiques such discrimination repeatedly throughout her oeuvre. Articles such as ‘Part Victory, Part Defeat at Suffrage Aviation Meet’ (1913) and ‘Seeing New York with the Soldiers’ (1918), alongside fiction that engages with debates both political and social topics position Barnes as a writer who was aware of the discord within the society in which she lived and who reacted to this discord and discrimination.

### **Unclear Modernism**

Barnes’s position within modernism generally is somewhat contentious as Barnesean scholars continue to disagree about the relationship of her oeuvre to modernism, surrealism and decadence. Peter Childs has suggested that modernism can be defined by its conscious experimentation with form and style, with the aim of deliberately breaking away from literary and artistic traditions popular prior to the late-nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> Virginia Woolf attributed this change in literature and art to the change in human nature that she witnessed ‘In or about 1910.’<sup>32</sup> Pre-empting Childs, Woolf wrote, ‘when human relations change, there is, at the same time, a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature.’<sup>33</sup> In 1910 Barnes was based in America, where human relations adapted to suit many socio-political changes created by events

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>30</sup> Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* [&] *Ladies Almanack* (New York: New Directions, 1937), p. 215. All subsequent quotations from *Ladies Almanack* are taken from this edition.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Childs, *Modernism: The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Virginia Woolf, ‘Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown’, *Collected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), pp. 320-321. Originally pub. 1923.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

such as the Industrial Revolution, high levels of immigration, suffrage and racial tensions. Readers of Barnes's work will notice both her engagement with socio-political issues and human relations, and her experimentation with form and style. It is in this way that I align Barnes with the modernist aesthetic and argue that her work is thoroughly modernist.

One can indeed find influences of the fin de siècle in Barnes's corpus through the presentation of overindulgence in bodily pleasure, crude humour and the general excess existing within several texts, such as *Repulsive Women*, *Ladies Almanack* and *Ryder*. The excess presented and explored within these texts is also present in the construction of the texts, which often take delight in excessively elaborate expression, diction and phraseology. Rachel Potter wrote that, '*Ladies Almanack* produces an extraordinarily lush language of lesbian desire',<sup>34</sup> which aptly describes Barnes's tendency towards the use of words and language for their own sake, in addition to her delight in presenting and discussing pleasure. It is true, as discussed a little further on, that these aspects of Barnes's work align with the aesthetic of decadence. However, rather than viewing the presence of decadence within Barnes's work as a reason to suggest that her connection to modernism is tenuous, I instead propose that the mixture of decadent traits, interaction with contemporary socio-political concerns and her very modern use of mixed forms and media makes Barnes's work distinctly modernist.

Monika Faltejskova attributes what she sees as Barnes's tenuous connection to modernism to unfortunate timing. She states that 'Her oeuvre became invisible for decades: the lack of critical interest in her writing coincided with the end of modernism in literature, and as such signified Barnes's position as an outsider to the modernist canon.'<sup>35</sup> Faltejskova's attribution of Barnes's difficult modernism to timing is unusual. The majority of criticism highlights Barnes's use of pre-twentieth-century traditional forms, style and language, and the high degree of decadent aesthetic across her oeuvre as reasons for her problematic modernism.

In *Modernist Articulations: A Cultural Study of Djuna Barnes, Mina Loy and Gertrude Stein* (2007), Alex Goody wrote that, 'Barnes's modernist presence is founded most strongly on her novel *Nightwood* (1936) but the achievement of that work continues to overshadow her other work'.<sup>36</sup> However, even in specific relation to *Nightwood*, Glavey suggests that Barnes displays an 'ambivalent relation to modernist aesthetic theory'.<sup>37</sup> Examination of Barnes's entire corpus

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<sup>34</sup> Rachel Potter, *Modernist Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 137.

<sup>35</sup> Monika Faltejskova, *Djuna Barnes, T. S. Eliot and the Gender Dynamics of Modernism: Tracing Nightwood* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> Alex Goody, *Modernist Articulations: A Cultural Study of Djuna Barnes, Mina Loy and Gertrude Stein* (Hampshire & NY, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 28.

<sup>37</sup> Glavey, *Op Cit.*, p. 17.

seems to complicate her placement within the modernist canon even further. This thesis aligns more closely with Caselli's argument that overall, Barnes's modernism is an 'unmodern, unfashionable, unconventional, and inopportune modernism: a queerly anachronistic modernism,'<sup>38</sup> 'an anti-modern modernism' and in doing so, challenges the notion that modernism must be inextricably tied to the new, to the avant-garde.<sup>39</sup> Although, this study is different from the works of Caselli, Goody, Glavey and others as it addresses four of Barnes's major works in equal depth, focusing on both written and visual material.

Tyrus Miller seems to offer contradictory assessments of Barnes's modernism, writing that, 'wherever Barnes's extravagance threatened to slip the bonds of modernist discipline, Eliot preempted her errancy, shepherding her back with a cautionary wag of the finger toward the antechambers of the modern literary canon.'<sup>40</sup> This statement seems to imply that (thanks to Eliot), Barnes produced unquestionably modernist work, however when directly addressing Barnes's oeuvre, Miller states that, 'essential to Barnes's whole literary corpus is a certain "positionless" quality, its generic and categorial uncertainty and its correlative unsettling of literary historical oppositions like modernism and postmodernism.'<sup>41</sup> Miller develops this point, seemingly aligning Barnes more closely with trends concurrent with postmodernism than modernism: 'Barnes's extreme stylistic mannerism and runaway figural language obtrude through her ramshackle large-scale form, hinting at the radical loss of boundaries, the promiscuous blurring of categories, the setting in play of the signifier often associated with later postmodernism.'<sup>42</sup>

In taking Barnes's oeuvre into focus, Julie Taylor wrote, 'I argue that Barnes's modernism involves a belated 'witnessing' of earlier literary forms... [and] challenges the mutually exclusive narratives that modernism was either a phenomenon of historical rupture or deceptively congruent with nineteenth-century forms.'<sup>43</sup> Preceding Taylor's argument, Galvin proposes that by engaging with the past, and with pre-twentieth-century literary and artistic forms, Barnes engages in a kind of rewriting of the past. On one hand, the combination of twentieth-century and archaic language (borrowed from the fifteenth century onwards) strengthen the connection within Barnes's work to the past, and also imbue it with what is often seen as convoluted rhetoric and heavy excess. On the other hand, the resultant effect of such a

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<sup>38</sup> Caselli, *Op Cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>40</sup> Tyrus Miller, *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts Between the World Wars* (Berkeley, LA, London: University of California Press, 1999), p. 122.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>43</sup> Julie Taylor, *Djuna Barnes and Affective Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 2.

combination is distinctly modernist, with the hybridity of form and intertextuality creating a disruptive, arguably avant-garde effect. Barnes carries this hybridity of form throughout her corpus, interweaving fiction and non-fiction, poetry and prose, written and visual.

Galvin also claims that, ‘the “otherness” her [Barnes’s] characters experience is integral to the modernist scene,’<sup>44</sup> thereby suggesting that regardless of form and style, the opposition in which Barnes’s Othered characters are placed to mainstream society automatically connects her work to a modernist interest in the position of the individual within modernity. Miller describes this ‘otherness’ as the ‘progressive breakdown of character, the disintegration of the indices of “self”’.<sup>45</sup>

In 2005, regarding *Repulsive Women*, Melissa Jane Hardie wrote that, ‘Barnes’s use of traditional verse structures and a diction usually associated with decadent writing is one demonstration of the text’s manipulation of the overdetermined relationship between modernism and decadence’.<sup>46</sup> Hardie’s suggestion builds on Deborah Parsons’ discussion of decadence in *Nightwood*. Parsons suggests that it is only ‘the energy of the Rabelaisian bawdy and the profane mysticism of surrealism, that transforms *Nightwood* from a work of decadence to one of modernism.’<sup>47</sup> In opposition to Parsons, Hardie implies a very conscious intention on the part of Barnes to engage with decadence.

In addition to debate surrounding Barnes’s position as a modernist writer exists the debate about the position of her work in specific relation to high modernism. Parsons postulates that, ‘Barnes’s allusions to primitive ritual, classical myth and Catholicism operate to different effect than high modernism’s mythic quest for a holy grail of spiritual meaning.’<sup>48</sup> Mary Lynn Broe refutes Barnes’s overarching status as a high modernist: ‘*Nightwood* has been valorized as “high modernist decadence.” Such interpretations merely confuse the real sources of this novel, which takes all culture—high and low—as its signifying practice’.<sup>49</sup> However, in regard to the placement of Barnes’s oeuvre within modernism, Broe’s argument is somewhat limited here as it focuses solely on an examination of *Nightwood*.

In agreement with Caselli and Taylor, I argue that ‘Barnes’s work is not an alternative modernism but a part of modernism, and that reading her work makes for an even more nuanced

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<sup>44</sup> Galvin, *Op Cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>45</sup> Miller, *Op Cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>46</sup> Melissa Jane Hardie, ‘Repulsive Modernism: Djuna Barnes’ “The Book of Repulsive Women”’, *Journal of Modern Literature* 29:1 (Autumn 2005), p. 122.

<sup>47</sup> Deborah Parsons, *Djuna Barnes* (Devon: Northcote House Publishers Ltd, 2003), p. 71.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>49</sup> Mary Lynn Broe, *Silence and Power: A Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes* ed. Mary Lynn Broe (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), p. 18.

model of modernist textuality.<sup>50</sup> Further, I see Barnes's work as unquestionably modernist due to the texts' interrogation of contemporary social structures. Specifically, Barnes can be situated within the context of high modernism due to the experimental nature of her work and its engagement with established and accepted intellectual theories, in addition to its resistance (particularly within *Ryder* (1928) and *Nightwood*) towards the resolution of conflict and loss.<sup>51</sup>

In my discussion of *Ladies Almanack* and nineteenth-to-twentieth-century sexological hypotheses in Chapter 2, I comment on Barnes's use of Elizabethan language combined with characters based on contemporary figures and culturally relevant themes (both relevant to twentieth-century society and present-day society). Barnes's oeuvre does not seek to detach from nineteenth-century literary traditions through a direct and obvious detour in style and form; instead, it manipulates past traditions, simultaneously reinventing and disrupting them in order to infiltrate pre-existing texts and literary styles with contemporary concerns. This 'revisionist' technique is a way of rewriting history and undermining pre-existing homophobic, anti-feminist, anti-Other literature.<sup>52</sup>

Debate around Barnes's own particular modernism continues. On 12<sup>th</sup> February 2019, Elizabeth Pender and Cathryn Setz's *Shattered Objects: Djuna Barnes's Modernism* was published with Penn State University Press. The collection of essays includes new arguments on Barnes's relationship to modernism written by Caselli, Goody, Hardie, Miller, Taylor, Bruce Gardiner, Drew Milne, Peter Nicholls, Rachel Potter, and Joanne Winning. In his review of *Shattered Objects* Scott Herring wrote, 'for once and for all, this collection proves her to be a supreme modernist amongst her towering peers', suggesting that this collection vehemently argues for Barnes's place within the modernist canon.<sup>53</sup>

### **The Most Famous Unknown and a Field of Cultured Bounty**

Barnes met Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (the Baroness) in 1916. Freytag-Loringhoven was a German Dada artist and poet, whom Barnes supported emotionally, financially and professionally. Barnes encouraged Freytag-Loringhoven to write an autobiography to

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<sup>50</sup> Taylor, *Op Cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> Joshua Kavaloski discusses the refusal of high modernist literature to resolve loss associated with death in *High Modernism: Aestheticism and Performativity in Literature of the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 185-198. I extend this suggestion to encompass loss of all forms.

<sup>52</sup> Galvin discusses Barnes's infiltration of history in *Queer Poetics*, p. 110. I refer to this technique as revisionist.

<sup>53</sup> Scott Herring, Penn State University Press, [psupress.org/books/titles/978-0-271-08220-2.html](http://psupress.org/books/titles/978-0-271-08220-2.html) Accessed 12/12/2018.

accompany a collection of her poetry in the mid-1920s, as a means to ease the dire poverty in which she lived. However, Freytag-Loringhoven never completed the autobiography and Barnes did not complete Freytag-Loringhoven's biography, which she attempted to do following the Baroness's death.<sup>54</sup> The relationship between Barnes and Loringhoven reveals Barnes's position not only as an active participant herself within the modernist movement, but also as a supporter of fellow avant-garde artists and of new work.

Freytag-Loringhoven's poem, 'FACING' (written c. 1924, pub. 2011), which is dedicated to Barnes, reveals similar concerns to Barnes's around the individuals and groups rejected by society. It begins

Sphinx

Weeps

Not.

Neither

Smiles.

All

Passed

Past.<sup>55</sup>

The speaker refers to the individual or group as a 'sphinx', a mythical creature, part human, part animal, unknowable and potentially dangerous. In this way, 'FACING' and its use of the sphinx resembles *Repulsive Women* and its portrayal of these Othered women as inhuman and threatening. The sphinx in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* (429 BCE) kills herself when Oedipus solves her riddle, which enables him to pass through the entrance she previously blocked and to eventually marry his mother.<sup>56</sup> Freud's Oedipus Complex applies Oedipus' attraction towards his mother to widespread society, suggesting that all boys repress desire for their mothers, with the superego functioning much as the sphinx, preventing the sons' lust for their

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<sup>54</sup> Freytag-Loringhoven's partial autobiography, *Baroness Elsa*, was published in 1992 by Paul Hjartarson and Douglas Spettigue: Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *Baroness Elsa* ed. Paul Hjartarson and Douglas Spettigue (London: Oberon, 1992). In 2002 a biography about the Baroness, *Baroness, Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity-A Cultural Biography* was published by Irene Gammel (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002).

<sup>55</sup> Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, 'FACING' in *Body Sweats* ed. Irene Gammel and Suzanne Zelazo (Massachusetts: MIT, 2011), p. 211.

<sup>56</sup> Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, The Internet Classics Archive, [classics.mit.edu/Sophocles/oedipus.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Sophocles/oedipus.html) Accessed 14/12/2018.

mothers crossing into the conscious mind.<sup>57</sup> The act of letting all pass by in ‘FACING’ suggests that the sphinx knowingly allows all to walk to their social and moral downfall.

It is possible that *Repulsive Women* influenced ‘FACING’, as the pamphlet was published approximately nine years prior to Freytag-Loringhoven’s poem. ‘FACING’ also recalls Barnes’s articles on Greenwich Village, in which she speaks admiringly and protectively of the bohemian community, whom others have rejected, exclaiming, ‘how charming an answer it was of Nature to make most of her mistakes lovely.’<sup>58</sup> There is, however, a resignation to the sphinx, who has accepted its rejection and

Weeps

Not.

Neither

Smiles.

This display of emotional withholding, or dejection, is embodied by each of *Repulsive Women*’s vacant figures, who have also become ambivalent to the judgement of others. The lack of emotion can also be read as the rejected party’s awareness of the innate power they now possess in having been made Other, this is the ability to pose a threat, to both attract and repulse, and to undermine that which mainstream society has established.

In a similar attack on society, but this time with its focus aimed directly at the mainstream, Freytag-Loringhoven’s poem, ‘SUBJOYRIDE’ mocks myriad advertisements lining subway walls that either claim to do wondrous but impossible things, or simply make no sense. By cutting and pasting lines of ads together the Baroness highlights and satirises society’s obsession with consumerism and shallow conformity:

Pussy Willow – keep clean

With Philadelphia Cream

Cheese.

They satisfy the man of

Largest mustard underwear –

No dosing –

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<sup>57</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* trans. & ed. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2010). Originally pub. 1899.

<sup>58</sup> Barnes, ‘Greenwich Village As It Is’, *New York*, p. 224.

Just rub it on.<sup>59</sup>

The fusion of sexual suggestion, food, practicalities like underwear and ointments for skin conditions is humorously undermining.

In many ways Freytag-Loringhoven is the living model of one of Barnes's figures from *Repulsive Women* – visually she was sensational, often repugnant to her contemporaries and most definitely consigned to the realm of the Other. Simply through her existence, Freytag-Loringhoven jostled and challenged social and political boundaries. In 1921 in the journal *Contact*, William Carlos Williams wrote of the Baroness:

a reek stood out purple from her body.... The Baroness to me was a great field of cultured bounty in spite of her psychosis, her insanity. She was right. She was courageous to an insane degree. I found myself drinking pure water from her spirit... I could not go to bed with her. Disease has no attraction for me. I couldn't. But I did feel a shame.<sup>60</sup>

Williams's positive feelings regarding Freytag-Loringhoven are based on the inspiration she provides him with in the position of a muse: he wrote of her as 'a great field of cultured bounty' from which he drew, but unstable as an individual, and as an artist. Williams then proceeds to mention that he could not 'go to bed' with the Baroness, thereby tying together his opinion of her as an artist with his opinion of her romantic and sexual potential as he saw it. Freytag-Loringhoven's genius, rightness, appeal, insanity and sickness (Williams wrote that she was 'disease'd) makes her fascinating and repulsive in equal measure, much like Barnes's repulsive women.

Barnes also suffered from intense focus on her appearance in reviews of her work and capability as a writer and artist. However in opposition to the grotesque portrayal of the Baroness, Barnes is mythologised and objectified for her beauty. In 1919 Guido Bruno (publisher of *Repulsive Women*) wrote, 'Red cheeks. Auburn hair. Gray [sic] eyes, ever sparkling with delight and mischief. Fantastic earrings in her ears, picturesquely dressed, ever ready to live and be merry: that's the real Djuna as she walks down Fifth Avenue, or sips her black coffee, a cigarette in hand, in the Café Lafayette.'<sup>61</sup> The image of a beautiful Barnes, eternally elegant and always ready with a witty comment survives and reappears in numerous

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<sup>59</sup> Freytag-Loringhoven, 'SUBJOYRIDE', *Op Cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>60</sup> William Carlos Williams, 'The Baroness Elsa von Freytag Loringhoven', *Twentieth Century Literature* 35:3 (September 1989), pp. 280-283.

<sup>61</sup> Guido Bruno, 'Fleurs du Mal à la Mode de New York—An Interview with Djuna Barnes', *Interviews* (LA: Sun & Moon Press, 1985), p. 388. Originally published in *Pearson Magazine*, 1919.

accounts of the writer and her work, despite her own protestations and claims to cynicism and social disinterest.<sup>62</sup>

While Williams's account of Freytag-Loringhoven's body reads as distasteful because of its sexual focus, the *artistic* interconnectedness of the Baroness's body to her work and art is indisputable. From the perspective of the Baroness her own body made not only another canvas, but the preferred and most powerful kind. Freytag-Loringhoven transformed her existence into an artistic and political space daily, through her choice of clothing, found and stolen jewellery, and recycled items, including tin cans, bird cages and feathers. In her article, 'How the Villagers Amuse Themselves' (1916), Barnes describes Freytag-Loringhoven's politicising and Othering of herself:

one sees the Baroness leap lightly from one of those new white taxis, with seventy black and purple anklets clanking about her secular feet. A foreign postage stamp – cancelled – perched upon her cheek; a wig of purple and gold caught roguishly up with strands from a cable: red trousers—and catch the subtle dusty perfume blown back from her—an ancient human notebook on which has been written all the follies of a past generation.<sup>63</sup>

This is a multi-layered description of Freytag-Loringhoven that serves as further example of another placing attributes on the Baroness that may or may not have been accurate. The first layer that forms Barnes's account is the very literal exiting of a taxi by Freytag-Loringhoven and the account of the clothes she wore. The second layer consists of metaphor and biased embellishment, seen entirely from the perspective of Barnes. Looking first at the basic description of the Baroness, instant binaries surface: movement versus stasis, new versus old (the taxi and the 'cancelled' 'postage stamp') and opulence versus poverty (again, the new taxi, alongside the jewellery Freytag-Loringhoven wears, versus the nondescript cable she uses to tie up her hair). The exact significance of the anklets is unspecified; however, based on the influence of tribal aesthetics on the Baroness's work, a connection to tribal custom is possible.<sup>64</sup> In parts of Kenya and northern Tanzania, the Maasai women wear black anklets and bracelets to show solidarity through struggle. Supposing the Baroness adorned herself with the black

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 386-388.

<sup>63</sup> Djuna Barnes, 'How the Villagers Amuse Themselves' in *New York* (London: Virago Press, 1990), p. 249. Originally published in *New York Morning Telegraph Sunday Magazine*, November 26, 1916.

<sup>64</sup> The Baroness's link to, and interest in, tribal culture is evident through George Grantham Bain's 1922 photograph of Freytag-Loringhoven and the Jamaican poet, Claude McKay, in which both figures wear tribal costume (see appendix). About this image, Irene Gammel and Suzanne Zelazo write, 'the composition speaks of subversion and border crossing... The coupling creates an extraordinary visual poem... the congruence symbolizing the sense of equality of the two diverse figures'. Freytag-Loringhoven, *Op Cit.*, p. 14. In this way Freytag-Loringhoven draws on tribal influence to reposition the Other as the same as, rather than different to. The influence of tribal aesthetics can be seen in the Baroness's artwork, for example *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (ca. 1920) and the ink and pastel piece, 'Facing' (c. 1924).

anklets to convey the same meaning, paired with the ‘foreign postage stamp’, the Baroness shows solidarity with the foreign, Othered people through conscious self-objectification.<sup>65</sup> The postage stamp is foreign, highlighting the Baroness’s own foreignness as a German, female avant-garde artist amongst predominantly Anglo-American male contemporaries and as a German person in America post-World War One. The stamp has been cancelled, suggesting that Freytag-Loringhoven, as a foreigner, has reached her destination in America and will remain, solidifying her status as a member of Othered groups. However, equally, the cancelled status of the stamp may suggest the opposite: the Baroness is a foreign and unknown entity who cannot return home, but the highlighted foreign nature of the stamp suggests that she is also not accepted in America.

To the basic description of the Baroness’s attire, Barnes adds her interpretation of the Baroness’s actions in the moment that she exits the taxi, informing the reader that Freytag-Loringhoven exits by ‘leaping’. Such an action seems unlikely with the seventy anklets weighing her down, but if one accepts this suggestion and views the taxi as a symbol of the West and of modernity, and the anklets as signifying unity with the marginalised and foreign, Freytag-Loringhoven’s exuberance reads as defiant rejection of societal constraints, both constraints imposed upon herself and those placed on the Other. Barnes highlights Freytag-Loringhoven’s difference to the modern and the mainstream through the ‘subtle dusty perfume’ that she assigns to the Baroness, in addition to the ‘ancient human notebook’ to which she compares her.<sup>66</sup> The *dusty* perfume that Freytag-Loringhoven emits suggests neglect and lack of value. Much like Barnes’s Corpse B in *Repulsive Women*’s poem ‘Suicide’, who is undervalued and given ‘hurried shoves this way/ And that’, the Baroness is unappreciated.<sup>67</sup> Although, contrastingly, one might read the ‘ancient human notebook’ to which Freytag-Loringhoven is compared as attributing to the Baroness a rare kind of value and worth, as though she carries with her the knowledge of humanity from the start of civilisation. However, such grandeur is undermined almost instantly by the ‘follies of *a* [my emphasis] past generation’, which are written on the notebook. The Baroness is a walking reminder of just one unremarkable and undefined previous generation. Further, she carries with her the record of this unspecified generation’s nonsense, rather than its successes. Most positively, Freytag-

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<sup>65</sup> For discussion on the jewellery of Maasai tribes, see: Lisa Skow and Larry A. Samovar, ‘Cultural Patterns of the Maasai’, *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, ed. Larry A. Samovar, et al (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2015), p. 144. Also, Sean Fiandaca, ‘5 Things You Didn’t Know About Maasai Beadwork’, *Thomson Safaris*, [thomsonsafaris.com/blog/5-things-didnt-know-maasai-beadwork/](http://thomsonsafaris.com/blog/5-things-didnt-know-maasai-beadwork/) Accessed 04/12/2018.

<sup>66</sup> Barnes, ‘How the Villagers Amuse Themselves’, *Op Cit.*, p. 249.

<sup>67</sup> Djuna Barnes, *The Book of Repulsive Women and other poems* ed. Rebecca Loncraine (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2003), p. 24. All subsequent quotations from *The Book of Repulsive Women* are taken from this edition.

Loringhoven is a walking warning, and in the most negative sense, she is merely an old collection of triviality. Ultimately, Barnes's description of the Baroness aligns with Williams's. Both writers note the Baroness's appearance, her peculiarity and the ultimate transience of her body, actions and art.

Freytag-Loringhoven continued to utilise her body as her most powerful artistic statement until her death, in December 1927. Earlier in the same year, she released an advertisement for a modelling agency that she planned on opening, which begins:

ARE YOU ASLEEP WITH SOMNOLENT MODELS?  
WAKE UP  
IN CREATIVE CROQUIS  
“ THE BARONESS ”  
FAMOUS MODEL FROM NEW YORK  
PUTS  
ART INTO POSING  
CRAFTSMANSHIP

The Baroness takes modelling, an arguably passive activity and utilises it as another medium through which to actively transform and disrupt creative stagnation, which she intends to do specifically through ‘creative croquis’.<sup>68</sup> Freytag-Loringhoven implies that modelling, art and craftsmanship are all bound together as equally skilled tasks. Alongside adorning her body to make artistic and political statements, she stripped her body to achieve the same ends, dislodging stagnant perceptions society held about the potential of women, the female body, and art.<sup>69</sup>

### **The (Ir)Relevance of the Personal**

Much work on Barnes's oeuvre notes a strong link between the texts' characters, their content and Barnes's personal life. While interesting, I argue that this line of enquiry leads most often to speculation while the literary merits and achievements of each work remain largely unnoticed, creating confusion around Barnes's intellectual intention with regard to her work.

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<sup>68</sup> Croquis is the method of spending only a few minutes at most drawing a model in a particular position before he/she moves into another pose.

<sup>69</sup> For examples of Freytag-Loringhoven's critique on contemporary society, see her poems, ‘Subjoyride’ and ‘Sense into Nonsense 2. Subjoyride’, Freytag-Loringhoven, *Op Cit.*, pp. 99-102.

Rather than attempting to assess the level of personal bias that may affect Barnes's work, it is perhaps more valuable to view the work through the maxim, 'the personal is political',<sup>70</sup> as Barnes utilised her experiences as a *backdrop* to support rigorous study and examination of socio-political issues.<sup>71</sup> As such, this thesis acknowledges Barnes's personal and professional encounters and experiences where appropriate, but focuses primarily on the work as separate from its author and worthy of critical study on its own merits. Barnes's personal life as it is relevant to her work is as follows.

Barnes was born on Storm King Mountain near Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York, in 1892 and grew up on a family farm in a small log cabin built by Barnes's father, Wald Barnes. Cornwall-on-Hudson, the family farm and the cabin serve as the backdrop to the story that takes place in *Ryder*. This text questions pre-existing twentieth-century Anglo-American ideas around familial and social responsibility, and civilisation and primitivism, all of which are hung on the novel's protagonist, Wendell Ryder, who is possibly a caricature of Wald Barnes. One can almost be certain that the dysfunctional familial situation that surrounded Barnes during childhood and adolescence informs *Ryder*. Barnes's childhood home was comprised of Barnes's mother, father, the father's mistress, Barnes's grandmother and Barnes's seven siblings. This unusual arrangement of family members is replicated in *Ryder*.

In July 1912, Barnes's mother, Elizabeth, separated from Wald Barnes and moved Djuna and her siblings to New York city. The move to New York signalled the start of Barnes's journalistic career as she sought employment as a reporter to support her newly estranged family. Barnes's first article, 'The Wild Aguglia and Her Monkeys' was published by the *Brooklyn Eagle* in 1913 and her association with journalism continued throughout her writing career, including articles on and interviews with various social and political figures, who in turn influenced Barnes's early short stories. As an example, the article on Mimi Aguglia became the short story, 'What Do You See, Madam?' (1923), which centres around protagonist Mamie Saloam's primal dance adaptation of *Salome*.

In 1915 Barnes moved to New York's Greenwich Village, the setting and figures of which most likely influenced her first collection, *Repulsive Women*, which details figures seen by a passenger on the L train, travelling from Hudson Avenue to Bay Ridge. So far, very little

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<sup>70</sup> The origins of the well-known rally cry, 'the personal is political', is thought to lie with active feminist and writer, Carol Hanisch, who wrote an essay titled 'The Personal is Political', published in the anthology, *Notes From the Second Year: Women's Liberation* ed. Shulamithe Firestone and Anne Koed (1970). It is unclear however, whether Hanisch or the collection's editors chose the title.

<sup>71</sup> In *Improper Modernism*, p. 32., Caselli wrote that 'If we follow Barnes's practice in her journalism we have to take seriously the central feminist concept that 'the personal is political''. Here, I apply this idea across Barnes's oeuvre.

scholarly attention has been directed towards the visual images included within *Repulsive Women* and no in-depth studies currently exist on the collection's illustrations. In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I address this gap in scholarship and discuss several of *Repulsive Women's* images in detail.

After spending six years in New York, Barnes moved to Paris in 1921, where she met silverpoint artist, Thelma Wood, and wrote the 1928 texts *Ryder* and *Ladies Almanack*. *Ladies Almanack* draws inspiration from the circle of lesbian friends Barnes made in Paris's Left Bank. As much scholarship on *Nightwood* notes, the text centres on the tragic lives and relationships of a group of disparate and unorthodox characters living in Paris during the early 1920s with a focus on the Sapphic relationship of two women who resemble Barnes and her long-time partner, Thelma Wood. However, the extent to which this text draws on Barnes's relationships with Wood, her friends and 1920s Parisian life is debateable. In correspondence Barnes gives contradictory information regarding the personal relevance of *Nightwood*, which I discuss in Chapter 4.

In 1939, Barnes left Paris and sailed back to New York and moved into 5 Patchin Place, Greenwich Village, where she overcame alcoholism, and became a 'glamorous yet cantankerous representative of Left-Bank expatriate life'.<sup>72</sup> Professionally, between 1939 and 1982, Barnes wrote *Creatures in an Alphabet*, published posthumously (1982), and wrote and premiered what is arguably her most opaque work, *The Antiphon* (1958), which has been described as a play in which a mother and daughter act out their hatred of one another. During this time, Barnes also wrote a considerable number of poems, many of which remained unpublished during her lifetime. In 2005 Phillip Herring and Osías Stutman collected and published seventy-four of these formerly unpublished poems in *Collected Poems with Notes Toward the Memoirs*.<sup>73</sup>

Although *The Antiphon* is perhaps Barnes's most well-known play, her association with the stage began with her move to Greenwich Village, during which time she became involved with the Provincetown Players. This company was established in 1915 in Provincetown, Massachusetts and moved to Greenwich Village in 1916, gathering together writers, artists, and theatre enthusiasts. The theatre group disbanded in 1923, but prior to this, in both 1919 and 1920, the Players staged three short plays written by Barnes. These were, 'Three From the

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<sup>72</sup> Taylor, *Op Cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>73</sup> See: Djuna Barnes, *Collected Poems with Notes Toward the Memoirs* ed. Phillip Herring and Osías Stutman (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).

Earth,' 'Kurzy of the Sea,' and 'An Irish Triangle'. Of these early plays, Douglas Messerli wrote:

The plays of Djuna Barnes are unquestionably some of the most curious works of American drama. Combining the realist settings and Irish speech patterns of the plays of J. M. Synge, an Oscar Wildeian sense of wit, and an often sentimental portrait of down-and-out New Yorkers, Barnes's earliest plays are, at best, odd amalgams of styles at war with one another.<sup>74</sup>

Messerli's evaluation of these plays as 'odd' echoes American publisher T. R. Smith's rejection of the *Nightwood* manuscript, written sixty-one years prior, because he thought the novel was 'mad'.<sup>75</sup> Messerli and Smith are not alone in their criticism of Barnes's work as overly complex and messy. Natalie Coleman took issue with the shifting focus between characters in *Nightwood*,<sup>76</sup> while Barnes's 'longtime friend and admirer T. S. Eliot, who was also her English publisher'<sup>77</sup> told American publisher Robert Giroux that 'even his advice [regarding editing] was flatly rejected'.<sup>78</sup> I argue that what is often interpreted as an unintentional excess, or madness, can equally be read as complexity generated by an evasive writer who drew upon numerous far-reaching sources to inform her work. Caselli has written convincingly on this idea and this thesis contributes to the discussion that stands in support of *conscious* confusion within Barnes's oeuvre.

Both Messerli and Smith's reviews of the plays and *Nightwood* respectively suggest a lack of deliberate intention to create discord and disharmony through the 'odd amalgams of styles', despite the fact that Barnes consciously worked with layered and hybrid forms across her corpus to achieve these exact ends. An example of this intentional discord is the use of a traditional, fifteenth-century almanack format in *Ladies Almanack*, which positions the question of modernity centrally to the text through the juxtaposition of the archaic form and contemporary discussion around sexuality, health and Sapphism. In Chapter 2 I discuss further the notion that *Ladies Almanack* mimics the conservative almanac format in order to highlight the disparity between traditional 'respectable' society and the position of the Other, and further, to expose the misalignment of pre-twentieth-century social and moral values with those

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<sup>74</sup> Djuna Barnes, *At the Roots of the Stars: The Short Plays*, ed. Douglas Messerli (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1995), p. vii.

<sup>75</sup> For more on this, see: Cheryl J. Plumb, *Djuna Barnes Nightwood: The Original Version and Related Drafts* (Illinois: Dalkey Archive, 1995), p. xi. Also, Chapter 4 of this thesis.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Giroux, 'The Most Famous Unknown in the World' – Remembering Djuna Barnes', *The New York Times*, 1<sup>st</sup> December 1985 [nytimes.com/1985/12/01/books/the-most-famous-unknown-in-the-world-remembering-djuna-barnes.html](http://nytimes.com/1985/12/01/books/the-most-famous-unknown-in-the-world-remembering-djuna-barnes.html) Accessed 5/10/2018.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

introduced by modernity. This interpretation is further supported by the inclusion of the character Patience Scalpel in *Ladies Almanack*, who embodies and expresses predominant nineteenth-century thinking around homosexuality and the ‘invert’. Scalpel is positioned in contrast and opposition to every other character in the text, suggesting the twentieth century’s engulfment of many earlier traditional values. Generous leaps in literature, art and broader society marked the turn of the century and in response, *Ladies Almanack* asks why discussions and thinking around sexuality and the body failed to also move further forward.

### **Theoretical Engagement**

Throughout this thesis I engage with several major theories: the grotesque, sexology and animality. Strong similarities can be drawn between the carnivalesque-grotesque bodies of François Rabelais’ *The Life of Gargantua and of Pantagruel* (*La vie de Gargantua et de Pantagruel* (1532 – 1564)) and the bodies of Barnes’s *Repulsive Women*. Mikhail Bakhtin describes Rabelais’ characters as ‘blasphemous rather than adoring, cunning rather than intelligent; they are coarse, dirty, and rampantly physical’.<sup>79</sup> *Repulsive Women*’s figures are equally bodily, sexual and vulgar. I argue that Barnes depicts the women in this way to illustrate twentieth-century Western social perceptions of undesirable, Othered women. As Goody notes, ‘in *The Book of Repulsive Women, Ryder, and Ladies Almanack* she [Barnes] produces distinct, heterogeneous grotesque bodies... What also emerges from these texts is a mobile engagement with versions of the carnivalesque overturning of boundaries and order.’<sup>80</sup> The grotesque women also threaten and subvert social expectations through their excessive corporeality, which is perceived as blasphemous and dirty.

Additionally, I discuss John Ruskin’s presentation of the noble and ignoble, or true and false, grotesque. The noble grotesque is that which creates a lasting impression, while the impression incited by the ignoble grotesque is temporary. This thesis argues that *Repulsive Women* aligns with the noble grotesque as the experience of reading the pamphlet’s poems and viewing the images is deeply disturbing; previously distinct public and private spheres merge, human and animal combine to form monsters, and women whom society deems undesirable and asexual engage in (possibly Sapphic) orgies.

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<sup>79</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* ed. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. xix.

<sup>80</sup> Goody, *Modernist Articulations*, p. 165.

In my discussion of *Ladies Almanack* I engage predominantly with sexological theory as I see this text as a direct response to late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century sexological theories and notions. The shameless engagement in, and enjoyment of, Sapphism in *Ladies Almanack* is a continuation of that which is present in *Repulsive Women*. Patience Scalpel's disdain for the overt lesbianism of the other characters represents the predominant social rejection of such Sapphic activity, while her inability to understand the sexual or romantic desire of one woman for another is symbolic of the inability of one to process deeply unsettling true, or noble grotesque. However, the grotesquery connected to *Ladies Almanack* serves as a form of bodily reclamation, working in direct opposition to the grotesque invasion of sexological examinations and experiments.

The polygamy of *Ryder's* Wendell is grotesque because of the lack of immorality attached to his sexual exploits and the destruction he creates as a result of his promiscuity. Wendell's body is neither distorted nor discussed in depth by the narrator because his body is that of a man and society more easily accepts his sexuality. If *Ryder* is read alongside *Repulsive Women* and *Ladies Almanack* the intentional critique of the portrayal of female sexuality as grotesque and male sexuality as somewhat inconvenient, at worst, is emphasised. In addition to Wendell's grotesque behaviour, *Ryder* criticises surrealism's predilection for primitive art and culture, and the manipulation of both for self-serving means, namely as an escape from modernity. I see the primitive, primal and animality as interwoven within *Ryder*, which implies that one need not look externally for the influence of the primitive, primal and animal, as they are inherent aspects of humanity.

This thesis argues that *Nightwood* engages with the grotesque, sexology and animality, presenting facets of each in the text's various characters. The overarching, unifying motif which draws these theories together in *Nightwood* is the night, which serves as a literal, psychological and metaphorical space in which the Other exists. However, independently to the amalgamation of Sapphism, the grotesque and the animal in *Nightwood*, I view the independent theoretical standpoints as each being relevant in a discussion of socially Othered communities.

## **An Overview**

This thesis seeks to further existing Barnes scholarship by addressing both Barnes's written and visual work. I focus primarily on the images of *Repulsive Women* and *Ladies Almanack*, questioning that which can be revealed from considering the contrasting illustrative styles

adopted by Barnes across these two texts. To existing Barnesean scholarship, I also add an original hypothesis around the narrative structure of *Nightwood*, proposing that early on in the text, a structural shift occurs and the subsequent action unfolds in Robin Vote's subconscious, or unconscious mind. In relation to my discussion around *Ladies Almanack* in Chapter 2, I offer original archival research relating to several personal and professional letters from Havelock Ellis's collection, and note a (to my knowledge) previously unrealised connection between Ellis's letters and the co-authored text, *Sexual Inversion* (1896). This finding highlights the sexological situation into which *Ladies Almanack* entered in 1928.

Chapter 1 of this project focuses on *The Book of Repulsive Women*, the 'grotesque' female body and female sexuality. Russo wrote:

The word itself [grotesque], as almost every writer on the topic feels obliged to mention sooner or later, evokes the cave—the grotto-esque. Low, hidden, earthly, dark, material immanent, visceral. As bodily metaphor, the grotesque cave tends to look like (and in the most gross metaphorical sense be identified with) the cavernous anatomical female body. These associations of the female with the earthly, material, and the archaic grotesque have suggested a positive and powerful figuration of culture and womanhood to many male and female writers and artists... a certain archetypal view of these materials which is still prevalent in a vein of non-academic, "cultural feminism." This view valorizes traditional images of the earth mother, the crone, the witch, and the vampire and posits a natural connection between female body (itself naturalized) and the "primal" elements, especially the earth.

It is an easy and perilous slide from these archaic tropes to the misogyny which identifies this hidden inner space with the visceral. Blood, tears, vomit, excrement—all the detritus of the body that is separated out and placed with terror and revulsion (predominantly, though not exclusively) on the side of the feminine—are down there in that cave of abjection.<sup>81</sup>

Russo summarises the recurrent connections drawn between the grotesque cave and an imagined unfinished and vacant female body. To this I would add that the mouth – often focused upon in literature and art as the most cavernous of all female body parts – also aligns the male body to the cavernous grotesque. Of the mouth Bakhtin wrote: 'the most important of all human features for the grotesque is the mouth... the grotesque face is actually reduced to the gaping mouth'.<sup>82</sup> The association between the male mouth and the grotesque has, however, not crossed into popular culture with the same force as the female mouth and the grotesque. I would argue that the connection between the male body and consumption is lessened because of the presence of the phallus, which is frequently highlighted in imagery through caricature drawings and carnivalesque masks with extended noses, which detract from the mouth and align the male body more closely with penetration.

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<sup>81</sup> Russo, *Op Cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> Bakhtin, *Op Cit.*, p. 317.

The notion of the cavernous female body, which is in turn viewed as low and repulsive, is one that *Repulsive Women* acknowledges and forces the reader to confront. The female body as empowered through an earthly, natural, intuitive connection is absent from Barnes's pamphlet, which is interested in exposing social contempt for the female body when functioning outside of the limited confines of what is acceptable. Barnes further highlights the misogyny Russo notes through absence, the absence of male bodies in *Repulsive Women* and through the ironic title of the pamphlet *Repulsive Women*. Russo goes on to note that

we may begin a long list which would add to these types [standard grotesque types, e.g. the bearded lady, the dwarf, conjoined twins, etc.] with contemporary social and sexual deviances, and more seemingly ordinary female trouble with processes and body parts: illness, ageing, reproduction, nonreproduction, secretions, lumps, bloating, wigs, scars, make-up, and prosthesis.<sup>83</sup>

This list brings Rabelaisian grotesque into the present and is the same grotesque upon which *Repulsive Women* focuses, with its attention on the mother, the ageing woman, the homosexual woman, the dejected dancer, and so on.

In exposing the ways in which the grotesque manifests in common thoughts and modern life, it 'dramatize[s] the corruption of entire communities.'<sup>84</sup> Benstock observes that

The divided loyalty to the female body is an effect of woman's position in Western society: she quickly learns that man's desire for her body is the measure of its worth. Once that body "sags, stretches, becomes distorted" (*Ladies Almanack*, 56), it is cast aside by man. If that body is not desired by man or if its virtue is retained in chastity, woman weeps for the body's uselessness or subdues its carnal longings. As the woman ages, her body can only serve as a reminder of her lost worth.<sup>85</sup>

Benstock's analysis of the social pressure placed upon the ageing body of Woman alludes to the public and private experience of women during the ageing process and positions the female body as a simultaneously active (potentially manipulative) tool and a receptive, inactive burden. The binary between the public and private experience is presented in the voyeuristic poem 'From Fifth Avenue Up', the first poem in the *Repulsive Women* pamphlet, in which the speaker observes a woman post-Sapphic sex with one woman, or several women, referring to her as 'sagging down with bulging/ Hair to sip' (*RW* 13). The public experience of the woman's body is described through sagging and bulging, implying that she is neither upholding herself

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<sup>83</sup> Russo, *Op Cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>84</sup> John Clark, *The Modern Satiric Grotesque and Its Traditions* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1991), p. 14.

<sup>85</sup> Benstock, *Op Cit.*, p. 253.

morally nor physically, and she fails to remain within the confines established for her by society. The personal sexual and bodily experience of the woman contrasts entirely to the public experience of her body, as she spills out beyond social boundaries and threatens to leak her immoral sexuality into society. In this way, the woman typifies the leaking, unclosed grotesque female body previously discussed by Russo.

Despite the overt manner in which *Repulsive Women* addresses such contemporary issues concerning feminism, the grotesque and the queer, until recently critics have suggested that the collection formed an awkward and juvenile start to Barnes's creative career. This was a sentiment with which Barnes agreed, writing 'My first book of poems is a disgusting little item. At one time in the 1920s I collected as many copies as I could find and burned them in my mother's backyard'.<sup>86</sup> However, with the resurgence of interest in Barnes's oeuvre, new and serious attention has been directed towards this early work. Rebecca Loncraine's 2003 republication of *Repulsive Women* (which also includes poems written prior to and after *Repulsive Women*) was the first collection to republish *Repulsive Women* since the pamphlet's initial publication. Loncraine's edition focuses primarily on the poems, reducing the images in size to fit around and in between the poems, which somewhat reduces the drawings to decoration rather than presenting them as crucial aspects of the text. The original 1915 publication of *Repulsive Women* placed the poems at the front of the pamphlet and the drawings at the back. It might be suggested that this design sought to textually represent the social divide between different groupings through the separation of the written and visual. Each subsequent edition of *Repulsive Women* combines the text and drawings, pairing the poems and visual work as each editor believes most appropriate. The potential problems with the altered form of *Repulsive Women* is discussed in Chapter 1. Loncraine's brilliant introduction to the collection highlights the value of the early pamphlet, stating that, 'The early poems are reminiscent of Emily Dickinson and Christina Rossetti' (*RW* xi). Thus aligning *Repulsive Women* within an established, recognised tradition, but interestingly, a nineteenth-century tradition.

Throughout *Repulsive Women*, the combination of drawings and poems suggests intense interplay and interchangeability between the human and animal body. The collection takes the notion of the unfinished and open grotesque body and makes it grotesque instead because it is in a state of *becoming*, of transforming. Goody notes that:

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<sup>86</sup> Barnes quoted in: Hank O'Neal, *Life is painful, nasty and short... in my case it has only been painful and nasty* (New York: Paragon, 1990), p. 98.

gothic transmutations and distensions of somatic, psychic and historical experience reveal the fragile and contingent boundaries of cultural normativity and the integrity of the subject; they produce a grotesque (cultural) body that exudes and creates transgressive relations of proximity, bringing things together that should be kept apart.<sup>87</sup>

One can view *Repulsive Women*'s figures as 'gothic transmutations' employed by Barnes to expose and corrupt the fragile social boundaries of which Goody wrote, and the falsehood of normativity through the alignment of ageing and sexuality, sexuality and innocence, motherhood and neglect, and the human and the animal. 'Twilight of the Illicit' describes a woman as having 'long blank udders' and apelike 'fingers dragging' (*RW* 19). The hybridity of animal and human (typically woman) is also conveyed through the drawings within the collection, arguably, to more poignant effect. Significantly, the animals with which Barnes crosses her human figures are either threatening or 'low', such as human-size reptiles and chickens/hens. Positioned within the context of the collection, such comparisons between the bodies of women and animals highlight the bestial and inhuman filter through which patriarchal society might view Woman and the female body while it (the body of Woman) actively does that which it 'should not'. What it should not be doing is ageing, engaging in Sapphism or excreting bodily fluids. *Repulsive Women*'s unattractive and criticised bodies are those with 'belly bulging' (*RW* 13), 'out turned feet' (*RW* 13), who 'snore' (*RW* 15), 'mouthing meekly' (*RW* 16). These are 'imperfect' bodies in 'imperfect' moments. Bodies that are in use and moving into old age, bodies that have crossed the boundaries of youth, attractiveness and appropriateness, and which have become threatening and in turn, are destroyed by society.

Existing Barnesean scholarship emphasises the often-grotesque nature of Barnes's work, although, rather surprisingly, it neglects *Repulsive Women* in relation to the grotesque. This thesis seeks to build on Loncraine's emphasis of the importance of *Repulsive Women* and her discussion of the grotesque, dying body made Other. Loncraine wrote, 'Her [Barnes's] poems present live bodies as decaying flesh', which I believe reflects how the rejected female body is commonly viewed by society – nothing more than living tissue moving towards death (*RW* xii). Within this discussion, I also work with Goody's premise of the transforming and transformative body that is in the process of hybridising 'across key dualisms',<sup>88</sup> pairing the 'familiar-fantastic'.<sup>89</sup>

Barnes's interest in the place of Woman in modern society is evident from her early journalism, however when asked about her political views in relation to her fiction, she rejected

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<sup>87</sup> Goody, *Modernist Articulations*, pp. 151-152.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

any attachment to politics, and rather militantly. Perhaps this was due to what Benstock interprets as a need for individuality, and perhaps it also contributed to Barnes's rejection of *Repulsive Women*, which is highly politicised in nature. Benstock notes that:

The subjects of Barnes's early journalism show a marked interest in women's place in modern society. Adopting a feminist viewpoint, Barnes examined the sexual exploitation of women. Her feminist politics, however, were marked by her own sense of woman's struggle. She eschewed group causes and refused to become part of a "sisterhood," probably from fear of jeopardizing her individuality.<sup>90</sup>

I agree with Benstock that Barnes valued individuality, however I would suggest that her concern regarding women's place derived from a primary interest in the treatment and position of the Othered in society, rather than from a primarily feminist concern, whether public or private. Barnes's engagement with politics and feminism manifested indirectly as 'a literary theme rather than as a political argument'<sup>91</sup>, which Benstock notes 'reappears in *Ryder*, *Ladies Almanack*, and *Nightwood*'.<sup>92</sup> I would extend this suggestion to span Barnes's entire oeuvre, as her pursuit of, and interest in, the Other resurfaces in each piece of work.

The concept of the animal-becoming-human/ human-becoming-animal, or, viewed from another angle, the animal within the human as presented within *Repulsive Women* emphasises both the primal nature of female sexuality and society's unease with the expression of female sexuality. The collection explores the suggestion of social unease when considering sexual women and women's sexuality generally by presenting the female body in its working state. By working state, I mean consuming and expelling. *Repulsive Women* presents its readers with unapologetic discussion of female bodily fluids and bodily urges. Barnes further instils a sense of unease in the reader by pushing to the forefront women who are typically relegated to the periphery of society. This discussion is supported in Chapter 1 with grotesque theory and its correlation to the female body.

In her article, "'The dance of the intelligence'?: Dancing Bodies in Mina Loy' (2018), Goody discusses Loy's representation of the dancer, Isadora Duncan, as a nightingale, and the way in which 'Loy's engagement with dance in her writings exemplifies how a writer can use this corporeal art as a means to articulate a feminist sensibility.'<sup>93</sup> The poem in which Loy imagines Duncan as a nightingale is Loy's so-far-unpublished poem 'Biography of Songge

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<sup>90</sup> Benstock, *Op Cit.*, p. 238.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Alex Goody, "'The dance of the intelligence'?: Dancing Bodies in Mina Loy', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 37:1 (Spring 2018), p. 131.

Byrd' (written c. early 1950s). Goody's argument is comprehensive and convincing, however her interest in the significance of Duncan reimagined as a nightingale is brief, not being central to her argument. Goody wrote:

That Songge Byrd is imagined as a nightingale is suggested both by the final image of her "choking on the falling / Feather of a nightingale" and by her depiction in the third section, which uses the language and imagery of Bliss Carman's Sappho: One Hundred Lyrics (1904)—

With your head thrown backward  
.....  
From that throat, the throbbing  
Nightingale's<sup>94</sup>

Here, Loy refers to Duncan's death, which occurred after her scarf became caught in the rear wheel of the Amilcar in which she rode, breaking her neck.

I suggest that by casting Duncan as a nightingale in 'Biography of Songge Byrd', Loy simultaneously acknowledges Duncan's corporal presence and her voicelessness (in the nightingale species, only males can produce song, females are mute), while also entering Duncan into the tradition and myth of the voiceless woman. Prior to the analysis of Duncan as a songbird, Goody offers a comprehensive discussion of the significance of the nightingale as a symbol throughout literature, considering the nightingale's links with myth and dance, beginning her overview with Greek mythology and the story of Philomela. In this myth, Philomela's brother-in-law, Tereus, rapes her, and cuts out her tongue to prevent her from exposing his crime. Philomela weaves a tapestry to expose the rape and sends it to her sister and Tereus's wife, Procne. In revenge, Procne kills her son by Tereus and feeds the child to her husband. Tereus realises that he has been tricked and pursues the two sisters, who have already fled. Philomela and Procne ask the gods to turn them into birds to help them escape Tereus. Philomela is turned into a nightingale and Procne into a swallow.<sup>95</sup> Thus, in this instance the Nightingale is a symbol of freedom, escape and safety. Contrastingly, in 'Biography of Songge Byrd' the nightingale is concurrently a symbol of power and weakness, freedom and restriction. Both 'Biography of Songge Byrd' and *Repulsive Women* suggest that society cannot comprehend Woman as a complete being: intelligent, bodily and verbal. Although contrastingly, Loy's depiction of Duncan as a nightingale positions the dancer as aesthetically appealing and vulnerable through her small stature and voicelessness, while

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>95</sup> Ovid, 'Book the Sixth', *Metamorphoses*, trans. Sir Samuel Garth, John Dryden, et al, The Internet Classics Archive, [classics.mit.edu/Ovid/metam.6.sixth.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Ovid/metam.6.sixth.html) Accessed 13/09/2018.

Barnes's crossbreed reptilian/human women in *Repulsive Women* are threatening and freakish. Such portrayals resurrect the nineteenth-century Madonna/Whore complex, suggesting that work remained to be done around the presentation of women even within arguably feminist literature, as Barnes and Loy simultaneously challenge restrictive views of women and undermine their own arguments through their chosen portrayals of women.

Chapter 2 of this thesis focuses on one of Barnes's more satirical works, *Ladies Almanack*, and argues that the omnipresence of light-hearted satire within the text (if satire is ever truly light-hearted) is actually the vehicle through which Barnes engages with and scathingly criticises nineteenth- and twentieth-century sexological theories about homosexuality and Sapphism. Research for this chapter led me to the archives of Havelock Ellis, as he was one of the predominant twentieth-century sexological thinkers. Ellis's letters reveal the professional and social pressure that even he – a relatively liberal nineteenth- and twentieth-century sexologist – submitted to. Whilst reviewing Ellis's letters a fascinating, if slight, change in tense alerted me to the disparity between Ellis's private thinking on homosexuality and that which he presented in his published work. This difference concerns a personal letter Ellis wrote to fellow sexologist and poet, John Addington Symonds, in which he states that he *knows* and is friends with many respectable and admirable homosexual people. Part of this letter and statement made its way into *Sexual Inversion*, co-written by Ellis and Symonds, except this time, Ellis wrote that he *knew* many homosexual people. This discovery and its implications are discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 looks at *Ryder* in relation to ideas of the primitive and animality. Throughout this thesis I suggest animality is present in the removal of *Ryder*'s characters' 'civilised' selves and the reconnection to their primal urges. These urges manifest most frequently as sexual appetite and a need for security and belonging, which is sought out through close-knit, isolated communities. Primal needs are also represented and discussed through scatology (both human and animal) in both *Ladies Almanack* and *Ryder*. John Clark states that 'What is satirically grotesque about such a subject [scatology] is obvious: proud, self-delusional man ever aspires to elevate himself and his dignity, whereas the satirist destroys such upward mobility by reducing man to defecating animal before our eyes.'<sup>96</sup> In addition to using scatology, sexual appetite and the need for community undermine Barnes's characters' claim to civilisation. Barnes criticises the strength of such desires and suggests that a strong focus on base instincts

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<sup>96</sup> Clark, *Op Cit.*, p. 116.

can be interpreted as a form of overindulgence, and this is visible through the social and moral failure of *Ryder's* Wendell, whose life is governed by his primal desires.

Primitivism as a field and category is heavily associated with ritual and superstition, whereas animality's focus is on the primal. As such I view primitivism and the primal as two distinct theoretical categories that are not interchangeable. However, it is important to acknowledge that there is some crossover between the two within Barnes's work. The classicist Jane Harrison states that, 'we know from tradition that in Athens ritual became art'.<sup>97</sup> This transition and the convergence of ritual with art and performance feeds directly into the grotesque of Rabelais, in particular, who portrays grotesque traditions as ritualistic in nature, able to undermine and subvert through the performance of, and indulgence in, animalistic, primal behaviour. Further, nineteenth-century scholars linked primitivism to animality, as this particularly striking piece of information from Ellis shows: 'The Lifuans' [an African tribe] eating habits are probably superior to those of people in the 'civilised' world. Although, in the past they did sometimes eat their children for pleasure.'<sup>98</sup> Obviously, it is not typical in the human species to eat one another, whereas there are numerous animal species in which cannibalism is frequent, thereby covertly linking the Lifuan tribe with animality. Such contemporary scholarship would surely have influenced Barnes's reading and writing on primitivism and the primitive. In a move away from Harrison and J. G. Frazer's focus on ritual and magic within primitivism, in 1972, in *Primitivism*, Michael Bell wrote, 'the term 'primitivism' refers primarily to a basic human feeling and does not denote a conscious or cohesive movement'.<sup>99</sup> I agree that primitivism cannot be applied as a broad sweeping movement, artistic or otherwise. However, the unconscious and basic human feeling of which Bell speaks does seem to me more closely affiliated with the primal innateness of animality.

In *Ryder*, Wendell Ryder functions as the primary vehicle through which the innate primitivism of the individual is explored and critiqued. The immediate consequences of Wendell's yielding to his 'basic human feeling' is displayed through the breakdown of his familial situation. *Ryder* suggests that the practical reality of catering to a purely hedonistic lifestyle and neglecting the greater good is ultimately destructive. It might be argued that this text conveys Barnes's response to the glamorisation of the primitive by her contemporaries. Bell explains that the modernist presentation of primitivism could be nothing more than 'the recreation of what many anthropologists... believed to be the most essential qualities of pre-

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<sup>97</sup> Jane Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual* (Wiltshire: Moonraker Press, 1913), p. 73.

<sup>98</sup> Havelock Ellis, *The Dance of Life* (London: Constable and Company Ltd, 1937), p. 15.

<sup>99</sup> Michael Bell, *Primitivism* ed. John D. Jump (Methuen & Co Ltd: London, 1972), p. 3.

civilized feeling and thought.’<sup>100</sup> As such, a great deal of revived modernist primitivism was founded on ignorance and is more suggestive of the basic human feelings of which Bell wrote, and that I associate with animality in *Ryder*.

In ‘The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain’ (1926), Langston Hughes writes of ‘the mountain standing in the way of any true Negro art in America’,<sup>101</sup> he describes this mountain as the ‘urge within the race toward whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mold [sic] of American standardization, and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible.’<sup>102</sup> In the early twentieth century, Dada worked in opposition to this racial mountain and turned towards African culture and Oceania for artistic inspiration. Around a decade later, surrealists did the same. Louise Tythacott wrote that

the surrealist group in the Paris of the 1920s constructed a framework of ideals, ethics and aesthetics which stood in defiant opposition to the bourgeois world view of the time.... So-called ‘primitive’ or ‘tribal’ objects, collected and admired by the surrealists, were frequently used in this attempt to convulse, unsettle, or transgress the everyday European world. Oceanic art in particular was harnessed for these ends.<sup>103</sup>

Indeed, surrealism looked to the art of Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia for reinvigoration, renewal and a shift from post-World War One modernity to the reclamation of simpler, more cohesive, reinvigorated society.

One can see the influence of tribal art on the work of Freytag-Loringhoven, specifically in pieces such as *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (c. 1920), a bone-like structure to which a collection of exotic bird feathers are attached. Prefiguring dada and surrealism, Joseph Conrad depicts the ‘noble savage’ in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), a trope that Barnes argues against through her presentation of the aberrant savage, Wendell, in *Ryder*. The poetry of D. H. Lawrence engages with but resists the notion of primitive and primal influence on the modern-day man, which I discuss in Chapter 3. Like Lawrence, Barnes also challenges the somewhat self-serving and narrow definitions of modernism’s use of the primitive as a means through which to escape modernity, particularly evident in *Ryder*, in which the abandonment of civilisation is destructive and primitivism fails against convention and modernity. However, unlike Lawrence, Barnes does not reject the notion of the inherent animality of humanity.

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>101</sup> Langstan Hughes, ‘The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain’, *Harlem Renaissance Reader* ed. David Levering Lewis (New York: Penguin, 1995), p. 91.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Louise Tythacott, ‘A ‘Convulsive Beauty’: Surrealism, Oceania and African Art’, *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 11 (1999), p. 43.

Following *Ryder*, Barnes undermines the foreign primitive and primal immediacy of Nikka in *Nightwood* by exposing the Western stereotypes that create Nikka's Otherness.<sup>104</sup> Nikka's penis is large enough that across it, one might fit the name Desdemona. Desdemona is synonymous with Shakespeare's *Othello* (1565), which in turn has become synonymous with acceptable, mainstream Western culture. Othello, Shakespeare's most famous black nobleman, kills his wife, Desdemona in a fit of rage, thereby adhering to sixteenth-century expectations of the impassioned and irrational black savage against which *Heart of Darkness* argues. Through these connections, Barnes presents the reader with the history of intrigue and bias that surrounds the Othered, foreign, 'primitive' body. However, across her oeuvre more broadly in distinction to the racial Other, Barnes's Othered people align more closely with the animal-human Gregor Samsa of Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915) and T. S. Eliot's and Hilda Doolittle's (H.D.'s) psychological Othered figures in 'Burnt Norton' (1936) and *HERmione* (w. 1927, p. 1981), respectively. In the later part of the twentieth century, the absurdist writer, Samuel Beckett added to the pre-existing collection of bodily and psychologically Othered figures, such as those presented by Barnes, Eliot and H.D.. Characters such as Nag and Nell of *Endgame* (1957) and *Not I's* (1972) Mouth are Othered through their excessive immobility. The influence of the grotesque grotto of which Kayser and Russo write is visible in the isolated focus on and emphasis of Mouth, whereas Rabelais' carnivalesque inversion of hierarchy manifests in the placement of Hamm's parents (Nag and Nell) in dustbins. In *Chronicles of Disorder: Samuel Beckett and the Cultural Politics of the Modern Novel*, David Weisberg views Beckett's animalistic reduction of his characters as a presentation of primitivism and questions whether this display of primitivism is 'an acritical intensification of modernism's subjective, existential rejection of history'.<sup>105</sup> It is modernism's use of primitivism as a means through which to reject and escape both history and present modernity that I see Barnes's work as repeatedly rejecting.

Barnes's unenthusiastic response to the twentieth-century primitivist 'movement' continued throughout her life. In 1982, the New York quarterly, *Grand Street*, published a short poem written by Barnes entitled, 'Rite of Spring'. Accompanying the submission was a note explaining that this poem, which is three lines long, was twenty years in the making, recalling Ezra Pound's difficulty in writing 'In a Station of the Metro' (1913). Scholars of the twentieth

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<sup>104</sup> Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (London: Faber & Faber, 2007), p. 14. All subsequent references to, and quotations from, *Nightwood* are taken from this edition.

<sup>105</sup> David Weisberg, *Chronicles of Disorder: Samuel Beckett and the Cultural Politics of the Modern Novel* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 61.

century will be aware of Igor Stravinsky's seminal ballet, *Le Sacre du printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*, 1913) from which Barnes's short poem, published sixty-nine years later, appears to take its name. In her recollection of Left-Bank Parisian life, 'Lament for Left Bank', published in *Town & Country* in December 1941, Barnes wrotes about *Le Sacre*.<sup>106</sup> The specific production that she focuses on is Léonide Massine's interpretation, which ran at the Prince's Theatre in London, in 1921, not the original 1913 production choreographed by Vaslav Nijinsky. Of this particular adaptation Barnes wrote:

This was the period of... the Russian Ballet [Ballet Russe], particularly *Le Sacre du Printemps*, in which an English ballerina (with a Russian name) came into her own on the same stage, I believe, where later the American composer was hissed and abused as he sat at one piano of four that should have had performers, but they failed to appear [which bought down a rain of hisses, ripe tomatoes, and opened umbrellas in the audience where Picasso sat, and Joyce and Pound, and everyone that mattered from the countesses and kings to the concierge and the cooks]. There were catcalls and bravos. Ezra Pound applauded, but there were those in the audience who raised umbrellas and some in the gallery who threw things.<sup>107</sup>

This is the only direct reference Barnes makes in published work to *Le Sacre*, and it is a weak indication of her thoughts on the controversial ballet, which sparked riots following its premier in Paris. Barnes's focus in her discussion of the ballet is the 'English ballerina', Madame Sokolova, rather than the performance itself. It is unclear what Barnes's thoughts were on the choreography and musical score. In her account, Barnes changes focus with little warning from *Le Sacre* to George Antheil, so that upon reaching the end of the above quotation, the relationship of the final two lines to the previous text is unclear. One is left wondering whether the 'catcalls and bravos' were a response to *Le Sacre*, or the Antheil fiasco. A small amount of research reveals that this rioting was actually in relation to Antheil's 'radical style and riot-causing concerts... which was attended by many of the most important artistic figures of the time' (James Joyce, Picasso, Man Ray...).<sup>108</sup> As the only judgement Barnes cared to offer on *Le Sacre* is her approval of the performance of Sokolova, one might wonder why she chose to name her poem, which took twenty years to complete, after the ballet, or at the very least, to connect 'Rite of Spring' to *Le Sacre*. A possible reason is that both Stravinsky's ballet and Barnes's poem deal with ritual and myth, and indicate that humans cannot rid themselves of their innate primitiveness. Stravinsky's ballet, defined by its rejection of classical movements

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<sup>106</sup> The most complete draft of this recollection, titled 'Vantage Ground' has been published in *Collected Poems*, ed. Phillip Herring and Osías Stutman.

<sup>107</sup> Djuna Barnes, *Collected Poems*, p. 237.

<sup>108</sup> Paul Martin, "Mr. Bloom and the Cyclops": Joyce and Antheil's Unfinished "Opéra Mécanique" in *Bronze by Gold: The Music of Joyce*, ed. Sabastian D. G. Knowles (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1991), pp. 92-93.

and music in favour of powerful, earthy rhythms and aggressive, graceless movement, depicts a community celebrating the arrival of spring through the offering of a young, virginal woman for sacrifice. The woman eventually dances herself to death. Barnes's poem, 'Rite of Spring', reads:

Man cannot purge his body of its theme  
As can the silkworm on a running thread  
Spin a shroud to re-consider in.<sup>109</sup>

The theme of which man cannot purge his body is his own primitivism, which, through the metaphor of the silkworm, the speaker suggests is innate and private. In this way, 'Rite of Spring' contrasts with *Le Sacre*, which places myth, ritual and the primitivism of the body within the communal sphere as the protagonist attempts to purge herself and her body through communal dance. Contrastingly, Herring and Stutman speculate that the 'theme' of which 'Man cannot purge his body' is mortality, based on a note that Barnes's brother, Saxon, wrote in the margin of his copy of the poem, in addition to Barnes's advanced age and encroaching death. Saxon's annotation reads, 'Profound farewell to man'.<sup>110</sup> Aaron Heisler, however, reaches the conclusion that the unshakeable theme of which "'Man" cannot rid his body is its [the body's] essential carnality.'<sup>111</sup> Arguably, the distinction between carnality and primitivism is blurred within Barnes's work, as she repeatedly depends on carnality to inform her presentation of animality, which can be traced across to primitivism, as mentioned.

The fourth and final chapter of this thesis engages with Barnes's last major work, *Nightwood*. At present, this text is frequently viewed as a lesbian novel and account of Parisian nightlife in the underworld of the Left Bank. Both Scott Herring and Heise write convincingly about the underworld they see in *Nightwood* and I attempt to expand upon their views regarding the discussion and presentation of minority groups within the text. I view *Nightwood* less as a specifically lesbian text but as an important modernist work and contribution to conversation on Othered communities that are positioned against a heteronormative, bourgeois mainstream. I also argue that *Nightwood* draws together repeating themes present across Barnes's oeuvre: the grotesque, Sapphic and primal, which can be traced as far back as the early articles and poetry. These themes combine in *Nightwood* under the overarching motif of the night. This chapter postulates that there are two distinct groupings of characters within *Nightwood*,

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<sup>109</sup> Djuna Barnes, *Collected Poems*, p. 145. Originally published in *Grand Street*, 1982.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Aaron Yale Heisler, 'Literary Memory and the Moment of Modern Music', *Modernism/modernity* 19:4, (November 2012), p 702.

representative of Barnes's recurring marginalised and mainstream. The action involving the marginalised figures predominantly takes place during the night, while the characters who conform more closely (but not entirely) to the heteronormative, bourgeois mainstream are aligned more frequently with day time.

Chapter 4 engages with existing arguments around the fractured temporality and narrative of *Nightwood*, acknowledging the connection between the text's fragmentation and depictions of trauma. Further, the unclear timeline of the text and blurring of night and day work to convey a definite contrast between the literal, psychological and emotional spaces of Othered and that of mainstream communities. Specific linear textual timelines disappear chronologically across *Repulsive Women*, *Ladies Almanack*, *Ryder* and *Nightwood*. The timeline of *Repulsive Women* is the train journey, *Ladies Almanack*'s timeline is that of the Christian calendar year and Musset's life. Although Musset's lifetime spans more than a year as she dies in old age, and so the two timelines – the single public calendar year and the private lifetime are combined to form a hybrid, queer timeline. *Ryder*'s action unfolds over an unspecified period of time and is only brought to temporal conclusion through the dissolution of the family unit. Finally, time in *Nightwood* is completely unspecified and deliberately obscured. In this way, these four major texts can be read as steps along a path which leads to complete retraction from public, social, unified life into a complete, private Otherness.

## Chapter 1

### *The (Grotesque) Book of Repulsive Women*

In November 1915, Guido Bruno of Washington Square, New York, published a pamphlet written by Barnes, which was the only collection of her poetry to be published during her lifetime: *The Book of Repulsive Women*, described in the original publication as ‘a series of eight poems, or ‘rhythms’... accompanied by five drawings’ (RW ix). These eight rhythms, or poems, take nine portraits of female figures as their focus, each of whom have been relegated to the fringe of society. The women include an aged mother, a dancer and a prostitute, through which motifs around sexuality, morality and ageing female bodies are explored. In *Totem and Taboo* (1919), Sigmund Freud states that ‘taboo, in the literal sense, includes everything that is sacred, above the ordinary, and at the same time dangerous, unclean and mysterious.’<sup>1</sup> I suggest that by combining traditional symbols of safety and/or reverence (the mother, the ageing woman) and placing them in a collection with symbols of threat (the prostitute, adult entertainer), Barnes immediately aligns her text with both kinds of taboo outlined by Freud. Parsons suggests that ‘Barnes’s writing indicates that she was well versed in Freudian concepts, and notably the understanding of sexuality as rooted in the struggle between the desires of the unconscious and the demands of modern civilization’.<sup>2</sup> In light of this statement, one can assume that the binaries encompassed by *Repulsive Women* were intended to reveal to the reader the attraction-repulsion dynamic of their own taboo interest in the grotesque women depicted within the poems. In grotesque-ing both safe and unsafe figures (by presenting the ageing woman as sexual and the cabaret dancer as dejected, for example), Barnes challenges that which society understands as taboo, grotesque, and attractive or repulsive. The pure/impure dichotomy present throughout the collection is emphasised through the contrasting presentation of bodies in ‘In General’ and ‘In Particular’ and the contrasting treatment of Corpse A and B in ‘Suicide’, which I discuss towards the end of the chapter. Alongside the incorporation and subversion of standardised taboos, Barnes manipulates accepted portrayals of beauty in mainstream twentieth-century American culture through her incorporation of images in *Repulsive Women* that resemble those found in contemporaneous fashion magazines, such as *Vogue*, for whom Barnes wrote.

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<sup>1</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the psychic lives of savages and neurotics* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1919), p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Parsons, *Op Cit.*, p.68.

Through the exploration of the presentation and reception of female bodies, the collection asks who is accountable for the positioning and defining of women. The poems treat harshly any sign of corporality or sexual activity from the nine figures. 'Seen from the L' suggests that standing naked in one's own home is enough to draw the scorn of *Repulsive Women's* speaker – the overarching voice of a disapproving society – principally because the woman who is 'nude – stretching dully', is visible to passengers on the elevated train, thus transgressing the boundary of the private into public.

In addition to the eight essentially corporeal poems contained within this collection, are five of Barnes's equally suggestive drawings. It has been noted that these drawings represent a significant departure from Barnes's early style, with their perversion, excess and crude humour pertaining to late-nineteenth-century decadence. The images ooze as much sensuality as the 'rhythms' themselves. Observations that Barnes did not utilise this decadent style within her art before *Repulsive Women* are not wholly accurate. In the years prior to the publication of *Repulsive Women*, Barnes's illustrations for several of her interviews suggest a decadence and sexuality common to the drawings of *Repulsive Women*, which are often described as Beardsley-esque. For example, the drawings of Mimi Aguglia (Fig. 1 and 2), published in 1913 and Lillian Russell (Fig. 3), published in 1914.

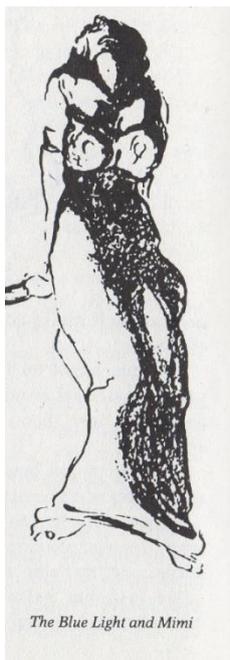


Fig. 1. 'The Blue Light and Mimi', 1913.

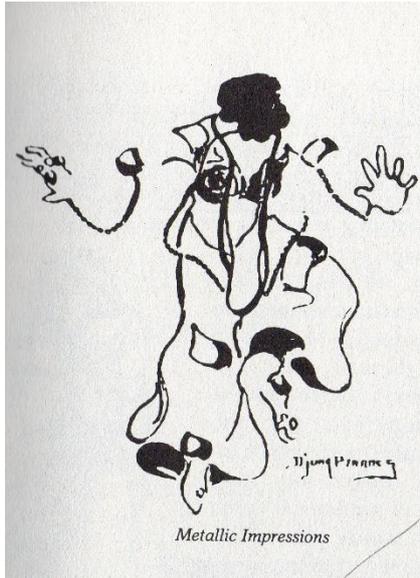


Fig. 2. Djuna Barnes, 'Metallic Impressions', 1913.

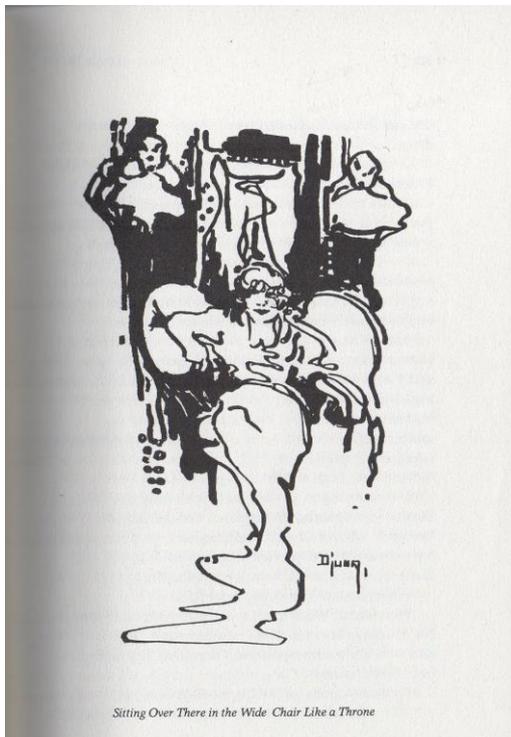


Fig. 3. Djuna Barnes, 'Sitting Over There in the Wide Chair Like a Throne', 1914.

Fig. 2 shows Aguglia with her head arched back and with a grimace on her face that appears to be a mixture of pleasure and extreme discomfort. The sensuous movement and soft lines of Fig. 1, 2 and 3, in addition to the use of unfinished lines and negative space, recall the fluidity of movement crucial to Art Nouveau (c. 1890-1910), from which *Repulsive Women* appears to take inspiration. There is a looseness and flow to these images, as their spiralling lines reinforce the bodily focus of the illustrations and the emphasis on corporeal pleasure. Fig. 1 and 2 capture

moments of movement and ecstasy, while Fig. 3 depicts opulence and luxury, which one can associate with physical comfort and enjoyment.

Meghan C. Fox wrote that Barnes transgresses boundaries through the ‘ambiguous or inconsistent borders’ of her drawings.<sup>3</sup> I would suggest that these inconsistent borders allow for the merging of woman and animal, and the descent from respectability into vice. The accompanying drawing to the poem ‘From Fifth Avenue Up’ depicts a figure who resembles a woman wearing a patterned dress, glancing coyly out from under a wide-brimmed hat (Fig. 4). The viewer follows the line of this figure’s dress downwards to see that instead of a leg, she has a bird-like talon that clutches a lantern.



Fig. 4. Djuna Barnes, (a woman with a talon), 1915.

Fox notes that red lanterns alerted passers-by to Parisian brothels during the fin de siècle. Although *Repulsive Women* is set in New York, Barnes spent time in Paris and would have

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<sup>3</sup> Meghan C. Fox, “Vivid and Repulsive as the Truth”: Hybridity and Sexual Difference in Djuna Barnes’s *The Book of Repulsive Women*, *The Space Between: Literature and Culture 1914-1945* 12:3 (2016) [scalar.usc.edu/works/the-space-between-literature-and-culture-1914-1945/vol12\\_2016\\_fox](http://scalar.usc.edu/works/the-space-between-literature-and-culture-1914-1945/vol12_2016_fox) Accessed 13/02/2017.

been familiar with the red lanterns as signals of brothels. Thus, in this image the respectable woman quite literally descends vertically down the page into animality and vice. The poem reads, ‘Once we’d not have called this/ Woman you –’ (RW 13), suggesting a simultaneous moral descent. That the figure holds on to a lantern – a manmade invention to keep darkness at bay – implies that women present an artificial civility, or have been superficially conditioned, but beneath the surface, remain animalistic.

As mentioned above, similarities to Art Nouveau artists such as Alphonse Mucha are visible in *Repulsive Women*’s images, in addition to the decadent drawings of Aubrey Beardsley. One might question why Barnes would combine the former artistic style, with its emphasis on beauty and pure aestheticism, and the latter style with its grotesque images of excess. I would suggest that working within the Art Nouveau and decadent tradition enabled Barnes to align the female body and its natural functions and bodily workings (decadence), with aesthetic beauty (Art Nouveau), thereby implying that the division between the grotesque and beautiful is very slight. Comparisons can also be drawn between the images of *Repulsive Women* and those that appeared in *Vogue* c.1910 through to 1930, with their depictions of fluid and exaggerated movement. It is also striking to note the similarities between Barnes’s emaciated and elongated figures, and Paris’s Casino de Paris’s poster (c. 1910) promoting the once extremely popular French actress and singer Mistinguett (1875–1956), who performed at the Moulin Rouge.

In 1910, Thomas Théodore Heine produced a sketch of dancer Loïe Fuller, which also displays the clear influence of the Art Nouveau movement, and to which Barnes’s 1916 illustrations for *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue* bear resemblance. These influences, in addition to depictions of beauty in early-twentieth-century fashion magazines are distorted by Barnes in *Repulsive Women*. In this way, *Repulsive Women* alters the popular artistic style of the time, rather than directly rejecting it. The technique of borrowing styles from past traditions and combining these with very contemporary concerns is a technique that is common throughout Barnes’s work, and one which distinguishes her as a rather backward-looking modernist.

Supporting the notion that *Repulsive Women*’s creation did not signal a complete and ongoing shift in Barnes’s drawing style is the fact that post-publication, Barnes reverted to the wide range of illustrative styles visible throughout her earlier journalistic work, as her depictions of Yvette Guilbert (Fig. 4), published 1917 and James Joyce (Fig. 6), published 1922, show.

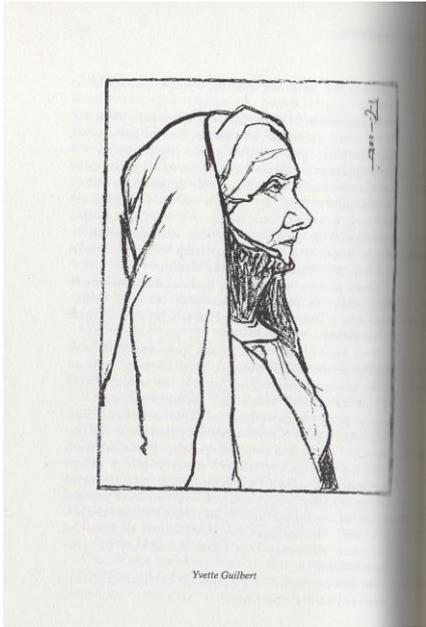


Fig. 5. Djuna Barnes, 'Yvette Guilbert', 1917.



Fig. 6. Djuna Barnes 'James Joyce', 1922.

The portrait of Guilbert is a simple and very realistic sketch in profile, while the portrait of Joyce, which depicts the writer in a rather elegant style (perhaps indicative of the high esteem in which Barnes held him), seems to anticipate the style of pop art that saturated mainstream American culture in the late 1950s.

As a reporter, Barnes adapted her illustrative style from piece to piece to best suit the individual interviews and articles, and this is a trend she continued in her fictional work.<sup>4</sup> To take an example, the woodcut-like illustrations of *Ladies Almanack* (1928) are vastly different to the drawings of *Repulsive Women* and clearly the differing styles of images work specifically well with each text. *Ladies Almanack* is written in a style that contains ‘linguistic excess produced by lists, exclamation marks and baroque adjectivation’ with a strong bawdy overtone, and, with regard to form, borrows influences from medieval almanacs through to almanacs of the late nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> As such, defined illustrations in the style of medieval woodcuts, which show buxom figures exposing bare bottoms, reclining semi-nude, are more appropriate for *Ladies Almanack* than would be the illusive, obscure and grotesque images of *Repulsive Women*. Similarly, if one imagines *Ladies Almanack*’s illustrations in place of the images in *Repulsive Women*, it is immediately noticeable that such drawings would undermine the serious social critique of the ‘repulsive’ women.

Given the depth of the images, it is significant that Barnes chose to group the drawings together at the end of the collection in *Repulsive Women*’s original publication. The placement of the poems and drawings has since been left to the discretion of the editors of each edition of *Repulsive Women*. Since Bruno’s original publication as part of his chapbook series there have been six subsequent editions of *Repulsive Women*. Alicat Bookshop overlooked Barnes’s insistence that they did not republish the collection and did so in 1948; in 1989 Bern Boyle Books published a further edition, Sun & Moon Press in 1989 and again in 1994; Fyfield Books in 2003 and in 2005 the University of Wisconsin published the *Collected Poems: With Notes Toward the Memoirs*, which includes the *Repulsive Women* collection. Throughout these various editions the differing placements of the images creates a continuity issue, which, as Fox states, entirely alters the message conveyed by the text. Fox wrote, ‘Barnes’s images are drawings, not illustrations’ and were thus never supposed to compliment or enhance one’s

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<sup>4</sup> Examples of Barnes matching drawing style to the content of articles can be seen in her interview with the Vernon Castles from January 1914, which includes an illustration of the couple that is full of movement and soft, thin lines. The loose effect of this image is appropriate for the content of the article, which reveals that the Castles were dancers with fast-paced, hectic lives. On the other hand, in the interview with Jim Brady, published in May 1914, Barnes describes Brady as a bold, straightforward character who can be found with a multitude of diamonds on his person at any given time. The accompanying illustration of Brady’s face is angular and comprised of various lines and triangles, as though Brady has been carved from diamond himself. The effect of this image contrasts entirely with that of the Vernon Castles, being somewhat cubist, with strong, very definite lines. The article, ‘Why Go Abroad?-- See Europe in Brooklyn’, published in December 1913, includes three figures who could almost be called caricatures, there is so much drama in their poses. It is difficult with these images for the viewer to make out clear or well-defined features, and even to ascertain whether one is looking at a sketch of man or a woman. These somewhat carnivalesque illustrations are appropriate for this particular article, which presents foreign countries and people as unfathomably terrifying and monstrous.

<sup>5</sup> Caselli, *Op Cit.*, p. 38.

understanding of the poems, and so ‘consequently, there is no direct correspondence between the poems and the images. Furthermore, Barnes’s use of drawings and poems makes an implicit argument about the inadequacy of a single genre to articulate her stance.’<sup>6</sup> The separation between the images and text that Fox notes is reminiscent of the lack of correspondence often seen within magazines between text and image, again suggesting a deliberate connection between contemporary fashion the fashioning of women, and *Repulsive Women*. If one adopts Fox’s view, it becomes apparent that to pair the poems and drawings is to ignore the full implication of the text, having reduced the images to companion pieces, rather than artistic pieces worthy of acknowledgement and assessment in their own right. Bruno’s 1915 publication sections off the poems from the drawings by an entirely separate heading and page, entitled ‘FIVE DRAWINGS By Djuna Barnes’, suggesting that the poems and images were never intended to be paired together, as Loncraine states. Barnes herself spoke of the collection as containing two distinct sections. In 1969 she wrote to Wolfgang Hildersheimer, ‘The Book of Repulsive Women (idiotic title) was published here ages ago... Poems they are, and not – much – ink drawings, very thin, very few.’<sup>7</sup> In addition, Barnes’s interviews and articles, which she wrote before, during and after the publication of *Repulsive Women* contain images weaved directly into the text, suggesting that had Barnes wanted the five drawings of her first poetic collection to be incorporated into the body of the text, she would have done so. One can therefore infer that Barnes’s authorial intent was that the images do not supplement the poems, but add another dimension to the collection. Considering these points, I agree with Fox that the drawings do not specifically illustrate the poems but accompany them. Viewed in this way, *Repulsive Women* depicts more women than the nine women presented in the poems.

The experience of reading the poems as separate from the drawings is markedly different to reading the poems alongside the drawings. In its original format, the images take up significantly more space, suggesting greater importance, and an emphasis on the considered use of white space and shading. Four of the five images fill between half to three quarters of a page, while the first, that of a woman walking an animal that resembles a chicken along a street and captured in a pose evocative of a catwalk strut, covers an entire page. This figure is surrounded by solid black colour and looks as though she is about to walk off the page, indicating an air of dominance and complete freedom. However, in Loncraine’s edition, this image is positioned at the bottom of the page, after the first two stanzas of ‘From Third Avenue

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<sup>6</sup> Fox, *Op Cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Djuna Barnes papers, Letter to Wolfgang Hildersheimer, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries, Series II, Box 8, Folder 28.

On' and is drastically reduced in size, giving the figure a look of containment. In this way, it seems accurate to say that in Loncraine's edition of *Repulsive Women*, the drawing does contribute to the meaning of the poem, it *illustrates* it, while the importance of the drawing as its own artistic entity has been significantly reduced.

*Bruno's Chap Books Volume II* published *Repulsive Women* alongside Richard Wagner, John W. Draper, Richard Aldington and Edna W. Underwood, whose poems centre on subjects such as love, opera, weather seasons and geographical locations. Positioned alongside these poems, *Repulsive Women* stands out for its difference to these works, in terms of poetic style, design and subject focus, which might suggest that Barnes's focus in 1915 was dissimilar to that of her contemporaries. There are, however, similarities to be found between *Repulsive Women* and Draper's poem 'The Opium Eater', in which the speaker relates an incident involving a woman, intoxicated with opium, calling out to him. This woman is introduced in a manner similar to that of Barnes's repulsive women: 'Among the many forms, she lay,/... in languorous charm'.<sup>8</sup> In the final stanza one learns that this unnamed woman lets out 'A cry of pain, it may have been;/ It may have been the voice of lust.'<sup>9</sup> The 'languorous charm' recalls 'From Fifth Avenue Up's 'lang'rous/ Length of thighs' (RW 11) while the opium eater's 'cry of pain' is reminiscent of the 'high hard cries' (RW 16) in 'From Third Avenue On'. 'The Opium Eater' weaves together sex, violence, repulsion, disgust and attraction within its lines, presenting its central figure as unsavoury, yet alluring, thus creating a similar attraction-repulsion dynamic to that which is present within *Repulsive Women*. Similarities can also be seen in the artwork of Underwood's front cover for his chapbook, *The Book of the White Peacocks* and *Repulsive Women's* images. Underwood's cover displays an illustration of a peacock standing on a tree branch. Perched at the end of the tree branch, is a naked, kneeling woman. The combination of animal and human, specifically with the human adopting an animalistic position, is similar to Barnes's images. However, a significant and crucial difference is that in Underwood's illustration, the animal and human remain distinctly separate, there is no merging of the two, no *becoming* animal or becoming human. Thus, Underwood's image may suggest bestial interplay, though it does not imply a complete destruction of the divide between the animal and the civilised, as do Barnes's drawings. Judith Butler's argument for the transitional capacity of the human body is useful in thinking about Barnes's physical

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<sup>8</sup> John W. Draper, Jr. 'The Opium Eater', *Bruno Chap Books Volume II* ed. Guido Bruno (New York, 1915), p. 31.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

assimilation of the human and animal in her drawings, and Underwood's visual division between the two. Butler wrote:

As a consequence of being in the mode of becoming, and in always living with the constitutive possibility of becoming otherwise, the body is that which can occupy the norm in myriad ways, exceed the norm, rework the norm, and expose realities to which we thought we were confined as open to transformation.<sup>10</sup>

Two of the myriad ways in which the body can 'occupy the norm' are conveyed through the physical transformation of Barnes's women into animals and the altered, animalistic behaviour of the woman in Underwood's image, who sits on the tree branch. These images subvert cultural expectations, thereby exposing the viewer to accepted and standardised notions about what Woman is, her physicality and behaviour.

### **The Early Work**

Barnes's interviews and journalistic work from 1913 onwards established her as a reporter and writer who was perpetually intrigued by that which opposed normalised people, places and things, and defined as Other by society. These interviews feature figures such as the actress, Mimi Aguglia, boxer, Jess Willard and vaudeville dancer, Ruth Roye. Throughout her literary career Barnes's focus remained on those who woke, worked and slept to a rhythm out of sync with the majority. This rhythm, that of the Other, is explored quite literally in *Repulsive Women's* eight poems, throughout which Barnes adheres mostly to tight, conventional rhyme schemes. Such poetic structure links the poems sonically to pre-twentieth-century literary traditions and further suggests that the 'repulsive' women depicted in the poems are not actually as unconventional or grotesque as they are perceived to be.

Barnes's interest in figures and things which could be considered bodily or animalistic and primal is evident in two of her articles, published prior to *Repulsive Women*, in 1914. The first, 'How it Feels to be Forcibly Fed', details Barnes's experience of being voluntarily force-fed in the manner of the Suffragettes and the second, 'The Girl and the Gorilla,' describes Barnes's meeting with a gorilla named Dina.<sup>11</sup> It is noteworthy that Barnes, noted as someone highly unapproachable and unamused by anyone being too familiar with her (traits that one of her

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<sup>10</sup> Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), p. 217.

<sup>11</sup> 'How it Feels to be Forcibly Fed' and 'The Girl and the Gorilla' were first published in *New York World Magazine* in 1914. Between 1913 and 1915 Barnes also wrote for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* and the *New York Press* on subjects including the Hippodrome circus, boxing and Broadway.

biographers, Philip Herring attributes to a ‘ladylike wish to endure her bitterness in silence [which] would manifest itself as anger at attempts to pry into her personal affairs’) volunteered for the entirely bodily and invasive experience of being force fed.<sup>12</sup> I would suggest that Barnes’s interest in the researching and writing of the article on the Suffragettes was because of the abuse of the female body and personal power, and the Suffragist resistance to patriarchal control, all issues explored within *Repulsive Women*. Force-feeding as Barnes experienced it was directly linked to the feminist, political demonstration of women’s rights. Crusades such as the Suffragist movement are directly relevant to *Repulsive Women*, as this collection addresses the question of the image and reception of women across Western society. One can also infer that the influence of Barnes’s grandmother, Zadel Barnes, who was very active within the Suffragette movement and with whom Barnes was extremely close, contributed to Barnes’s decision to undertake force-feeding and pen her experience.

Zadel began publishing in newspapers at the age of thirteen, writing prose, poetry and socio-political articles throughout her life. Her subjects included capital punishment, poverty within slums and the danger of mining. Much like Barnes, Zadel socialised in wide and varied circles that included many ‘high profile’ figures, radical reformers and literary persons, including Lady Wilde, an Irish nationalist and Oscar Wilde’s mother, the actress, Lotta Crabtree (who features in Barnes’s *Ryder*), and Eleanor Marx, Karl Marx’s daughter.<sup>13</sup> Much like *Nightwood*’s Nora and *The Antiphon*’s Victoria, Zadel hosted salons that drew in many of the most radical writers and artists of the time.

Despite a select few overtly political articles, Barnes focused her interviews on subjects who were engaged primarily with that which was primal. One such interviewee is ‘Diamond Jim Brady’ (1914), an interview about Jim Brady, who became rich through his talent for sales and became famous around New York for his enthusiasm for food and women, and his ability to satisfy an almost insatiable desire for both. Brady’s biographer, John Burke, wrote that Brady was ‘the most omnipresent eater in the nation’s history’.<sup>14</sup> Barnes’s interview with Brady conveys her lack of interest in him except for his outwardly decadent, indulgent lifestyle. There is hardly any mention of his professional success. Barnes presents Brady as highly sexual, gluttonous and materialistic – traits he shares with Barnes’s repulsive women. Yet, despite these characteristics, Barnes describes him as a ‘good sport’, highlighting the differing

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<sup>12</sup> Philip Herring, *Djuna: The Life and Word of Djuna Barnes* (New York: Penguin, 1996), p. xv.

<sup>13</sup> Much has been written about Barnes and Zadel’s (1841-1917) close relationship, which lasted until Zadel’s death. See Phillip Herring, *Djuna: The Life and Works of Djuna Barnes*, pp. 1-23.

<sup>14</sup> John Burke quoted in the introduction to ‘Diamond Jim Brady’ in Djuna Barnes, *Interviews* ed. Alyce Barry (LA: Sun & Moon Press, 1985), p. 57.

perceptions of similar actions when carried out by men and women, emphasising that grotesque boundaries are significantly different for both sexes.<sup>15</sup> Barnes quotes Brady as having said: “‘If a girl would rather be seen with me and wine than with a wedding ring and a worried look, that is her business and not mine. I am like George Moore. I like all women too well.’”<sup>16</sup> Whereas the woman under scrutiny in *Repulsive Women*’s ‘From Fifth Avenue Up’, who also likes all women, is criticised by the speaker, who presents her perceived loss of innocence with judgement: ‘Once we’d not have called this/ Woman you –’ (RW 13). The line break after ‘this’ enforces the suggestion that the woman has become so debased through her excessive sexual activity that she has been reduced to an inhuman object. As she is aged and ‘sagging’ (RW 13), she is not objectified or lusted after, but labelled grotesque for her sexual excess, ageing and leaky body.

Despite the obvious socio-political aspects of *Repulsive Women*, Barnes protested the idea that anyone should take the collection seriously. This is a view shared by Herring, who wrote: ‘If one truly cared for Djuna Barnes, one would say very little indeed about *The Book of Repulsive Women*, for she and others often wished that these eight disgusting “rhythms” accompanied by five drawings had never been published... The poems portray lesbian life in the most horribly negative terms imaginable.’<sup>17</sup> It would be interesting to know who these others were, why they so vehemently protested *Repulsive Women*’s existence and what exactly it is about the portrayal of lesbian life in *Repulsive Women* that is so awful. I would suggest that it is difficult to see any of the poems in *Repulsive Women* as offering a full portrayal of lesbian life. Rather, it seems that each poem in this text presents a snapshot in time and usually within a very specifically overt, or covert sexual context. Despite Barnes’s own protestations, and those of Herring, this text refuses to die quietly, resurfacing as a crucial part of Barnes’s oeuvre now more than ever. Contrary to suggestions that *Repulsive Women* is a juvenile embarrassment, I argue that this text addresses vital issues surrounding the female body and sexuality, and early twentieth-century, Anglo-American perceptions of and reactions and attitudes towards these topics.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64. Barnes was known for embellishing her interviews and I assume that the reference to George Moore, Irish novelist and influencer of James Joyce, might be one such instance. Moore’s first novel, *A Modern Lover* (1883) was banned in England for being too explicit.

<sup>17</sup> Herring, *Op Cit.*, p. 88.

## Public and Personal Grotesque

Johann Winckelmann and John Ruskin were predominant thinkers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (respectively) and although they had aesthetic interests quite dissimilar to Barnes, I find Winckelmann's work on archaeology and Greek sculpture and Ruskin's writing on architecture useful in reading the grotesque in Barnes. In 1755, Winckelmann wrote of the 'noble simplicity and sedate grandeur' of expression in Greek sculpture, describing the subtlety he perceived in every aspect of design, from the literal, physical contouring to the overall mental and emotional impact he believed such designs created. Winckelmann wrote:

Sudden raptures, or the enticement of a glance, are often momentary... True charms owe their durability to reflection, and hidden graces allure our enquiries: reluctant and unsatisfied we leave a coy beauty, in continual admiration of some new-fancied charm: and such are the beauties of Raphael and the ancients... regular and full of real graces.<sup>18</sup>

Winckelmann's emphasis on hidden graces and slow-revealed beauty pre-empts Ruskin's suggestion that successful grotesque art has a similar slow-working effect on the viewer. Despite the fact that the two writers focused on different artistic genres, both wrote of the instantaneous but depthless shock of juvenile art and the slow and effective subtlety of 'real [artistic] graces'.

Between 1851-1853, Ruskin published the three volumes of work which together make up *The Stones of Venice*, in which the author takes as his primary focus Venetian architecture and Italian garden ornamental designs from the Byzantine, Gothic and Renaissance periods. Throughout this body of work, Ruskin opens his discussion of the grotesque to include the different facets of grotesque art more broadly. Ruskin postulated that there are two types of grotesque: that which is noble, or true, and that which is ignoble, or false. The noble grotesque is that which leaves one feeling subtly shocked and essentially unwell, and in taking human nature as its topic, 'does so with much sorrow... [yet] in its highest forms there is an infinite tenderness'.<sup>19</sup> Sometime later, in 1989, Bernard McElroy put forth a similar theory, stating that the grotesque 'fascinates us with our own irrational dreads, and refuses to let us altogether dismiss the game after we have played it.'<sup>20</sup> If the impact of the grotesque is to last, it is

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<sup>18</sup> Johann Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks: with Instructions for the Connoisseur, and An Essay on Grace in Works of Art* ed. Henry Fuseli (London: printed for the Translator and sold by A. Millar, 1765), p. 184.

<sup>19</sup> John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice: Volume III – The Fall* originally pub. 1851-1853 (New York and Chicago: National Library Association, 2009), pp. 149-150.

<sup>20</sup> Bernard McElroy, *Fiction of the Modern Grotesque* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1989), p. 16.

necessary for this internal connection to be established. The artist of the noble grotesque is able to produce work of such depth because he ‘knows the depth of all at which he seems to mock, and would feel it at another time, or feels it in a certain undercurrent of thought even while he jests with it’.<sup>21</sup> Contrastingly, the ignoble grotesque can only create within the viewer or reader a temporary shock, as the artist ‘can feel and understand nothing, and mocks at all things with the laughter of the idiot and the cretin.’<sup>22</sup> In other words, the noble grotesque deals with genuine anxieties which have arisen from contemplation of the human condition, whereas the aim of the ignoble grotesque is to create a striking and immediate impact, though this impact only has a temporary effect. I have found these distinctions to be particularly useful in thinking about the grotesque in relation to *Repulsive Women* and suggest that this collection aligns with the noble grotesque as outlined by Ruskin.

In writing of the grotesque, Ruskin stated that, ‘The true grotesque is created by a man who feels the terrible weight of the universe’<sup>23</sup>, whereas Winckelmann believed that ‘the more tranquillity reigns in a body, the fitter it is to draw the true character of the soul’. Both Ruskin and Winckelmann concluded that the subtler and more genuine a piece of art, the more likely it is to linger in the viewer’s or reader’s mind.<sup>24</sup> It must be noted that Ruskin’s opinion about the appropriate factors in making noble grotesque art are somewhat controversial. He argued that noble grotesque art is comprised of very specific aspects: the artists must be upper class and educated, take art as their primary focus (he states that the production of art around one’s working hours or in an idle hour will yield nothing of value), maintain a good balance of serious-minded pursuit and leisurely activity, and to be able to understand beauty (which sort is not specified).<sup>25</sup> Ruskin’s theory of the perfect grotesque-art-making mind suggests primarily that he himself wrote from a very specific place (that of the upper-class, educated individual), one entirely dissimilar to Barnes. Nevertheless, I argue that *Repulsive Women* aligns quite clearly with Ruskin’s definition of a successful piece of grotesque art. *Repulsive Women* has

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<sup>21</sup> Ruskin, *Op Cit.*, p. 140.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>25</sup> For discussion of this see: Ruskin, *Op Cit.*, pp. 131-136.

The four ‘minds’ that Ruskin discusses are: the upper-class, educated minds; lower, working-class minds; idle minds of the ‘refined’ class who have nothing with which to occupy themselves but pleasure and the too-serious minds of those who have no leisure time and can only find art useful for the expression of bitter mockery. Of all these minds, only the upper-class and educated mind is suitable for the creation of genuine grotesque art. Ruskin does however suggest, on page 162, that there is a chance for the mind of the working-class artist to contribute something of worth to the grotesque tradition in the form of caricature, ‘if only we would allow them to give it shape.’ Although unlike his predecessor in grotesque study, Symonds, Ruskin did not believe that caricature and satire are present in grotesque work which is high of mind.

the capacity to create a lasting impression upon the reader beyond any initial shock. Such long-term impact is made possible when ‘the fear of the one [the artist] is true, and of true things, [and] however fantastic its expression may be, there will be reality in it, and force.’<sup>26</sup> The true fear generated by Barnes’s collection of rhythms and drawings is derived by the pamphlet’s engagement with the harsh reception of women and their ageing, sexual bodies.

Galvin suggests that rather than reading the eight poems that make up *Repulsive Women* as singular accounts of unrelated incidents, the text ‘would fare better critically if it... were read as a cycle’, or as pieces about one woman in many settings, or two women over time’.<sup>27</sup> I agree that the poems of *Repulsive Women* are linked, however I maintain that the women depicted are mostly separate, instead preferring to connect the poems through themes: sexuality, the female body and ageing, as mentioned, but also the Other, time and purity versus corruption. There is at least one obvious link between two of the poems in this collection, which Barnes makes clear through less than subtle word play in the titles of these pieces. One of these is ‘In General’, the other poem, separated from the first by two poems, is titled ‘In Particular’. ‘In General’ and ‘In Particular’ are the only two pieces in the collection that could, in fact, be about women or men, as neither poem specifies a gender. The poems could also take as their focus animals, or inanimate objects just as well as women, making a powerful statement about the connection or interchangeability between women, animals, objects and commodities.

### **Transitional Accountability**

If one looks at the poem titles of *Repulsive Women* as singular entities, separate from their contents, the order in which they are listed in the contents of both the original 1915 publication and Loncraine’s edition suggests both a physical journey from one location in New York to another, in addition to a metaphorical journey through life. In order, the titles are as follows: ‘From Fifth Avenue Up’, ‘In General’, ‘From Third Avenue On’, ‘Seen from the ‘L’’, ‘In Particular’, ‘Twilight of the Illicit’, ‘To a Cabaret Dancer’ and ‘Suicide’. The physical journey reads as a speaker (and viewer) who travels via a New York elevated train (the L, more commonly written as ‘El’) from Fifth Avenue to Third Avenue, witnessing the nude woman standing at her window in ‘Seen from the ‘L’’, before visiting a cabaret show and ending his or her day amongst night-time debauchery. The metaphorical and metaphysical journey at which the titles hint is that of birth to death, thereby also including a temporal journey. The

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>27</sup> Galvin, *Op Cit.*, p. 88.

words ‘twilight’ and ‘suicide’ suggest the nearing and ultimate end of one’s life, while the journey taken on the L signifies life’s journey from birth to death. While of course not every life ends in suicide, the group of figures gathered in *Repulsive Women* are presented as hopeless and through their exclusion and position as Other, relegated to the fringe of their respective communities. The interconnectedness generated through both the physical and metaphorical journeys supports Galvin’s theory of the richness that *Repulsive Women* provides when read as a set of linked poems. Importantly, the transit and the raised positioning of the L creates a tension between the realms of public and private, and adds a high degree of voyeurism (discussed below) in addition to reflecting the divide that Benstock notes in Barnes’ life between ‘the professional and public (journalism) and the private and creative (poetry and painting).’<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the several journeys explored across the collection, temporal journeys also take place in the subjects’ lives within each, separate poem. In considering temporality, Henri Bergson’s doctoral thesis, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1889) makes the distinction between measurable, clock time and one’s personal experience of time, or ‘duration, which is a succession without distinction, an interpenetration of elements... [as such] The idea of a homogeneous and measurable time is shown to be an artificial concept’.<sup>29</sup> The disparity between clock time and characters’ personal experiences of time plays out across *Repulsive Women*, *Ladies Almanack* and *Nightwood*. In addition, each of these texts deliberately misaligns linear clock time and duration in order to further complicate readers’ expectations around women’s bodies, and to confuse the supposed clear distinction between that which is normalised and that which is Other.

In his lecture, ‘The Grasping of the Absolute Flow. – Perception in a Fourfold Sense’ (c. 1905-1910), Husserl echoed Bergson’s distinction between measurable time and one’s internal experience of time, writing, ‘subjective time becomes constituted by a consciousness that is not itself temporal.’<sup>30</sup> During the same period (in 1908), as part of his argument for the unreality of time, philosopher John McTaggart developed the A-Series and B-Series, which became two philosophical standpoints in relation to time. A-series theorists posit that time can be divided into past, present and future, while advocates of B-series time philosophy

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<sup>28</sup> Benstock, *Op Cit.*, p. 238.

<sup>29</sup> Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* trans. F. L. Pogson (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1913), preface, p. vii.

<sup>30</sup> Edmund Husserl, ‘The Grasping of the Absolute Flow. – Perception in a Fourfold Sense’, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)* trans. John B. Brough (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), appendix, p. 117.

suggests that such categories are an illusion because time is actually timeless.<sup>31</sup> In Chapter 2, I discuss the misalignment between measurable time and duration, and between perceptions of past, present and future within *Ladies Almanack*, which is presented in the practical form of disjointed almanac dates and more predominantly, in the unusual behaviours of the text's characters. In Chapter 4, I explore the notion that in *Nightwood* measurable time belongs to the mainstream, while the experience of duration, as presented by Bergson, is the predominant guiding system of the Othered bohemian community. The portrait-like poems in *Repulsive Women* are the result of a snapshot in measurable time and yet the viewer's experience of these moments extends into the consideration of the women's backgrounds and lives across years. The practical experience of reading these poems, and indeed any text, brings the question of measurable time and duration into focus. One might spend minutes reading *Repulsive Women* and find the experience so pleasurable that it feels as though seconds have passed, or so arduous that the task seemed to take hours.

Time is one of the most severe threats faced by all of *Repulsive Women*'s figures. Each woman is shown to be a great deal less able and desirable in later years than she was in youth. It is time that eventually wears these figures down, changing them into grotesque caricatures of earlier versions of themselves. These women become physically repulsive and embody stark dichotomies, such as old age and motherhood, enlightened awareness and senility, sterility and sexuality. In this way, the figures of *Repulsive Women* invoke the images of the famous Kerch terracotta hags, who are pregnant but also ageing and position decay alongside birth, renewal and life. The hags' bodies are grotesque because they subvert social and medical bodily expectations, and they are repulsive because they laugh repugnantly at this subversion while their bodies expand in all directions, literally and metaphorically exceeding socially defined confines. Like *Repulsive Women*'s figures, these women are unapologetically grotesque.

In his discussion of the hags Bakhtin explains, 'It is pregnant death, a death that gives birth. There is nothing completed, nothing calm and stable in the bodies of these old hags.'<sup>32</sup> This going against nature and lack of safety and "normality" make both the terracotta hags and Barnes's repulsive women threatening. Exceptions to the repulsive ageing process as presented in *Repulsive Women* are Corpse A and Corpse B of the poem 'Suicide', which depicts two seemingly young women who have taken their own lives. Corpse A is beautiful while Corpse B is repulsive. In this case Corpse B has become grotesque before she had aged significantly. Nancy Elizabeth Gillespie wrote that, 'the dying body... is a form of the grotesque body, which

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<sup>31</sup> John Ellis McTaggart, 'The Unreality of Time', *Mind* 17:68 (1908), p. 458.

<sup>32</sup> Bakhtin, *Op Cit.*, p. 25.

was being transformed from a communal body to a private, individualistic body.<sup>33</sup> I would suggest that Barnes subverts the predominant notion of the dying body as grotesque in her presentation of Corpse A, who is treated with more consideration than the other figures in the text. In their move from public to private, the bodies of Corpse A and B are received in contrast to the bodies of the other figures in *Repulsive Women*, whose private bodies are made public due to the voyeuristic opportunity afforded to those on the L train. *Repulsive Women* thus implies that once a body ceases to be of interest to society, it is allowed privacy. It is this usually private turning inwards that the reader of *Repulsive Women* is privy to, to the slow, personal decomposition of each of these women who have turned away from, or been rejected, by their communities.

‘To a Cabaret Dancer’ presents the private body made public through performance, and the placing of the female dancer at the centre of the piece reads as a revolutionary act, given that ‘the boundaries of the normative and conventional are drawn around the cultural attributes of the masculine’,<sup>34</sup> and that ‘the female grotesque... [is] a place of risk and wretchedness.’<sup>35</sup> The action of making a woman the focus of this piece, and women the focus of the collection, forces the reader into the realm of a new and challenging unknown (even while evoking pre-established poetic traditions) as modernism sought to do, as well as encouraging readers to consider an uneasy, unfamiliar reality, as the grotesque aims to do.

Structurally, this poem also unites the collection, acting as the ‘waist’ in the body of the pieces, that link the early, very sexual and obviously grotesque poems (that one might think of as the lower body) to the latter, less explicit poems, such as ‘Suicide’ (the upper body) that close the collection. With regard to its content, ‘To a Cabaret Dancer’ implies that dance is an acceptable medium through which one may observe and critique a body. The view from the L train creates a voyeuristic and intrusive platform from which to secretly observe, while the dancer on stage invites the audience to appraise his or her form. ‘To a Cabaret Dancer’ is *Repulsive Women*’s only piece to articulate a clear chronology. The reader learns that a (presumably) young woman was attracted to a career in performance, lured in by the glamour of the stage. However, over time, with the derision of the crowd, continual sexualisation and lack of prospect, the dancer becomes demoralised and cynical, which in turn makes her less aesthetically attractive to the audience. The reader is told that ‘She ceased to search, and

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<sup>33</sup> Nancy Elizabeth Gillespie, thesis: *The Ecstatic Woman and the Grotesque: A New Lacanian Subject in the Work of Djuna Barnes and Mina Loy*, University of Sussex, 2008, p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> Frances S. Connelly, *The Grotesque in Western Art and Culture: Image at Play* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Russo, *Op Cit.*, pp. 11-12.

growing wise/ Became less fine.’ (RW 21) This recalls W. B. Yeats’s essay ‘The Looking-Glass’, in which Yeats wrote:

I have just been talking to a girl with a shrill monotonous voice and an abrupt way of moving. She is fresh from school where they have taught her history and geography... A wise theatre might make a training in strong and beautiful life the fashion, teaching before all else the heroic discipline of the looking-glass<sup>36</sup>

In this essay, Yeats discusses his theory that intellectual development makes women’s bodies shapeless and as such, women should avoid too much intellectual stimulation, choosing physical beauty instead. It is not a stretch to suggest that Barnes’s cabaret dancer makes deliberate reference to the Yeatsian dancer, given that one of Barnes’s most frequent sources was the work of Yeats, as noted by Caselli.<sup>37</sup> Yeats’s predominant interest in the dancer is her (it is predominantly a female dancer in Yeats’s work) potential use as a visual expression of attractiveness, pre-empting the symbolist fascination with the dancer as an ideal symbol of art and beauty.<sup>38</sup> In ‘To a Cabaret Dancer’, Barnes criticises Yeats’s theory of the aesthetically pleasing dancer, exposing the theory’s superficiality through her depiction of the ageing dancer who becomes less attractive to the audience and, as a result, less appreciated. Unlike Yeats, in ‘To a Cabaret Dancer’ Barnes does not criticise the dancer for seeking knowledge and becoming ‘less fine’, but questions the worth of a society that berates a woman for engaging with and experiencing life.

‘To a Cabaret Dancer’ contains many Bakhtinian carnivalesque features. For example, the reader notices the typically grotesque inclusion of disembodied body parts. One reads about the dancer’s mouth, cheeks, eyes, heart, feet and lips. The mouth and lips are particularly significant because of their moist, cavernous nature as previously mentioned. In the penultimate stanza, the sexualisation of the dancer and pun on the word ‘lips’ is clear:

A thousand jibes had driven her  
To this at last;  
Till the ruined crimson of her lips  
Grew vague and vast. (RW 21)

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<sup>36</sup> W. B. Yeats, ‘The Looking-Glass’, *Discoveries: A Volume of Essays by William Butler Yeats* (Dundrum: Dun Ember Press, 1907), p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> Caselli, *Op Cit.*, p. 179.

<sup>38</sup> For more on this see: Yeats, *Ideas of Good and Evil* (1903), any edition, and Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (London and New York: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004). Originally pub. 1957.

If these lips are also read as referring to the dancer's genitalia, far more sinister implications are introduced: prostitution, rape, violence. The 'ruined crimson' is suggestive of violence, while 'vast' is suggestive of excessive sexual activity that one would assume is undesired and/or undesirable as it is paired with the ruined crimson (blood). The first two lines of the piece establish the suggestion of sex, violence and ruination as they propose to show us what 'this' is, that to which the dancer has been reduced. The dancer has transitioned, via her unwitting deconstruction through the speaker and society, from a whole and functioning human being to a collection of body parts and eventually, to just a damaged vagina. She no longer maintains the status of a woman, or a person, instead having become 'this'. The wordplay and repetition throughout this poem, and indeed across the entire collection, makes clear that the passing of time is unkind to *Repulsive Women's* figures. The cabaret dancer's 'crimson leave[s] her cheeks' (RW 22) and moves into her genitalia. In other words, her life-force has drained away from logic and thoughts to the area that makes her useful for sex and not much else (this cannot be extended to reproduction, because the concentration of the crimson in her lips is entirely external and does not include her reproductive organs). Another interpretation of the 'crimson [that] leave[s] her cheeks' is that the focus on the dancer may have always been sexual, and the crimson in her cheeks refers to her *derrière*, rather than her face.

The mention of vague lips is also to be found in 'Seen from the 'L'', another poem in which the woman described is very obviously sexualised, primarily as a consequence of the speaker's gaze rather than any action she carries out herself. And again, the lips imply genital as well as facial:

Though her lips are vague and fancy  
In her youth –  
They bloom vivid and repulsive  
As the truth. (RW 17)

The repulsive truth here is the sexuality of this woman, in much the same way that the sexualisation of the dancer became her repulsive and ruinous truth.

The continuous use of 'we' throughout the collection makes the reader complicit in the action outlined. 'We' see the nude female figure at her window, 'we' see 'Your soft saliva, loosed/ With orgy, drip' (RW 11) and 'You, with your long blank udders' (RW 19). The reader is brought close to the action, and simply by reading the collection, is made complicit. Although the dancer in 'To a Cabaret Dancer' is not an obviously radical figure, the poem suggests that she is defiant, choosing to maintain a difficult independence rather than depend on another.

The speaker refuses to implicate the dancer in her own ruin and so she avoids all accountability. The final lines of the poem, which suggest that the dancer will continue to exist in her new, reduced state for as long as her audience and clients need her is another form of rebellion. Despite having made ‘us’ uncomfortable with her presence and confused ‘us’ as to why ‘we’ need her, she will continue without apology all the same: ‘You pay her price and wonder why/ You need her still.’ (RW 22) But the dancer does more than make the reader and society ‘wonder’, she forces one to confront ‘that which we want to have separate from our sense of reality, but still powerfully experience as real’, which in this case is a cabaret show.<sup>39</sup> In ‘As Seen from the ‘L’’, it is the naked female form, in ‘Twilight of the Illicit’, it is old age, and so on.

‘To a Cabaret Dancer’ is the only poem in *Repulsive Women* that addresses its subject directly, dedicating the poem ‘to’ the dancer, which suggests a degree of respect absent from the remaining pieces, but also implies that it is imperative the dancer hear that which the speaker says. The speaker expresses regret that the dancer has been treated poorly and shows sympathy uncommon throughout the rest of the collection. In line with this special sympathy, the speaker suggests that accountability for the damage done to the dancer is external and not her own fault. The delegation of responsibility moves through several stages. First, the blame is placed on an inanimate object and a fantasy, represented by the lights. It is the lights, or rather the lure of the stage, that has made this woman repulsive:

A thousand lights had smitten her  
Into this thing;  
Life had taken her and given her  
One place to sing. (RW 21)

The word ‘smitten’ is potentially deceptive, meaning both to strike and, colloquially, to be rather taken with someone or something. The thousand lights, then, can be read as having forced the dancer into what she has become, or as having initially enticed her into her current life. Both suggestions remove the dancer’s free will and imply that she was powerless to resist, that the entertainment business has somehow tricked her into her current situation.

Blame then shifts from the lights and promise of a dream, onto an unnamed man through the use of the pronoun ‘his’ in the fourth stanza, ‘as she groped and clung/ About his neck.’ (RW 22) At this point both the speaker and the reader remain in the position of voyeur. However, less than half way through the poem, both the pronoun ‘we’ and determiner ‘our’

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<sup>39</sup> McElroy, *Op Cit.*, p. 6.

introduce a new dimension to the question of accountability, in which the reader / audience / speaker is suddenly made culpable:

One master chord we couldn't sound  
For lost keys,  
Yet hinted of it as she sang  
Between our knees. (RW 22)

Caselli wrote that 'by knowingly claiming to be 'somewhere else' this poetry sophisticatedly and even cynically pre-empts any criticism demanding accountability.'<sup>40</sup> I would extend this argument and suggest that the collection places predominant accountability on the reader, who is positioned uncomfortably, having the dancer perform potentially seductive moves or sexual acts between their knees. Thereby shifting the reader's position from that of an onlooker discovering something repulsive, to someone actively involved in the reduction and grotesquing of the dancer. It is considerably more unsettling to peer in at this dancer's miserable life now that 'we' are responsible. Such accountability (or blame) creates antagonism in the reader regarding his or her role in demeaning the dancer and other such women. Even without direct involvement, the refusal to admit 'ignorance, [instead perceiving]... the presence of a 'mystery' outside himself' permits the fetishisation of the Other.<sup>41</sup>

Although not overtly graphic, 'To a Cabaret Dancer' is truly grotesque in the manner in which it questions society and its motivations. These less than subtle accusations are intended to haunt the reader long after the poem has been read and to imply that for a thing to be grotesque, we – the observer – must be complicit in viewing it as a repulsive, grotesque thing. That being said, the 'we' and 'our' is undefined. The 'we' could be the reader, poet and members of society, or just the speaker and the speaker's community (not the reader). If it is the former, there are three distinct separations and levels of accountability: the speaker, the poetry reader and wider society.

The poem ends with the stanza:

Until her songless soul admits  
Time comes to kill:  
You pay her price and wonder why  
You need her still. (RW 22)

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<sup>40</sup> Caselli, *Op Cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>41</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, 'Myth and Reality' in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* ed. David Lodge and Nigel Wood (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 97.

Accountability has shifted one final time; the fault is now 'Time's. Time has turned the 'thousand lights' into a 'thousand jibes' and, consequently, is shown to have greater control over the dancer's life than she does. Accountability remains with Time through to the end, although the speaker's focus reverts back to the reader, revoking 'To a Cabaret Dancer's' voyeuristic pleasures in the final lines, asking why it is that the reader/society needs someone so pathetically repulsive. Implied within these lines is also the suggestion that the actions of society in stigmatising female sexuality and labelling certain women as repulsive, or Other, have backfired and become as harmful to the perpetrators as to those stigmatised and made grotesque. 'To a Cabaret Dancer' also suggests that by making the dancer separate to us, we have made her something that we lack and, consequently, desire to continually reclaim. Thus, at the close of the poem, the reader is presented 'not with the world as we know it to be, but with the world as we fear it might be' and the reader, and more broadly, twentieth-century American society, have become more desperate and dependent than the dancer through their own actions.<sup>42</sup>

'To a Cabaret Dancer', and *Repulsive Women* as a collection more broadly, recalls the work of Egon Schiele (1890-1918), whose aesthetic practice is associated with the expressionist movement. The focus of Schiele's paintings on the body and sexuality, makes the viewer implicit in the depicted sexuality and sexualisation of the subject simply by looking and seeing. In this sense the experience of viewing Schiele's work is much like that of reading *Repulsive Women*: one cannot escape the position of voyeur. Schiele's piece, 'The Dancer Moa' (1911) makes a useful comparison to Barnes's 'To a Cabaret Dancer'. Beyond the obvious link in the titles, there is a similarity in the attitude of the figures portrayed. Schiele's figure casts a look over her right shoulder at the viewer that is both accusatory and despondent, suggesting that the gaze of the observer contributes directly to her unhappiness. Moa's body is the dominating feature of this piece, she has a small head and face. The implication is that the focus and interest of the artist, and by default the viewer, is Moa's body, much as it is with Barnes's dancer. Additionally, *Repulsive Women's* images and those of Schiele both encompass severe manipulation of form, posture and distortion of their subjects in order to challenge the reader's and viewer's acceptance of social norms in relation to the female body and the attraction or repulsiveness of women.

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<sup>42</sup> McElroy, *Op Cit.*, p. 11.

## Cats, Corpses and Cocoons

They brought her in, a shattered small/ Cocoon... shock-abbreviated/ As a city cat.

‘Suicide’ (RW 23-24)

*Repulsive Women*’s ‘Suicide’ details the treatment of two unnamed corpses (Corpse A and Corpse B). This is a poem that incorporates the tenderness that Ruskin associates with the true grotesque. Those who engage with the corpses are an unnamed group, simply referred to as ‘they’, thereby absolving the speaker and the reader of any direct responsibility and suggesting, through the accusatory tone, that the speaker blames these people for the women’s deaths. None of *Repulsive Women*’s figures are named, signifying that they have not been given this small courtesy, and they should not be differentiated from numerous Othered women in society. The anonymity of the women in ‘Suicide’ carries potentially greater significance than it does in the collection’s previous seven poems. The immediate ambiguity of both corpses exaggerates the ludicrous decision ‘they’ have made to treat one woman kindly (Corpse A) and the other severely (Corpse B). There is no obvious difference between these two corpses except the differences attributed to them by a subjective, unknown and unidentifiable group. Such illogical differentiation reinforces that ‘one of the central thematic concerns of... the entire cycle [of the poems] more generally: [is] the role that social opinion, expectations, and judgement play in our observations of these “repulsive women”.’<sup>43</sup>

‘Suicide’ is split into two sections; the first portrays a fragile female corpse, treated with respect and care, and the second, a battered female corpse, treated with clear disregard. In Loncraine’s edition, the poem is presented in two sections separated by a drawing, the shape of which resembles a grave stone. As the poem is short I have included it below:

### Suicide

Corpse A  
They brought her in, a shattered small  
Cocoon,  
With a little bruised body like  
A startled moon;  
And all the subtle symphonies of her  
A twilight rune.

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<sup>43</sup> Galvin, *Op Cit.*, p. 98.



Corpse B  
They gave her hurried shoves this way  
And that.  
Her body shock-abbreviated  
As a city cat.  
She lay out listlessly like some small mug  
Of beer gone flat. (RW 22-23)

This poem closes the collection with two women taking their own lives and a great deal of grotesque, animal imagery.<sup>44</sup> This finale reinforces the ultimate dominance of society over the repulsive women, suggesting that the only moment in which the women exercise complete control over their own lives is in their decision to end them. The invocation of an animalistic energy within ‘Suicide’ suggests that in death, once all façades are dropped, these women are instinctual, primitive, bodily creatures, at least society interprets them as such. Corpse B is described as a ‘shock-abbreviated... city cat’ (RW 24), a comparison that is suggestive of necessary shrewdness, a difficult life, potential homelessness and wandering. This metaphor also implies that corporeally, Corpse B is gaunt and undernourished. The overall effect is of something or someone unapproachable, separate and sly, enforced with the repetition of the hissing and spitting consonant ‘c’. It is fitting then, that the collection ends with the reinforcement of the notion that Woman is seen as ‘different than’, and an unknown, unknowable quantity. And for this, she is punished through ill-treatment, even after death.

In Bruno’s 1915 edition of *Repulsive Women*, the two sections of ‘Suicide’ are placed directly on top of each other. In this layout, the interplay that takes place on the page between Corpse A and Corpse B visually highlights the differences between the women and the contrasting treatment they both receive. Further, this positioning sets Corpse A and B against

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<sup>44</sup> This is only the ‘end’ of course, if one reads the poem in a linear way.

one another, almost as though they carry out a Danse Macabre as two deceased figures engaged in physical and verbal interaction. The universal purpose of the Danse Macabre is to remind onlookers of both the fragility of life and the uniting power of death, regardless of who one has been during life, or the treatment one has received from others. However, through ‘Suicide’, Barnes suggests that this salvation is not guaranteed and that even in death one may still receive judgement and ill treatment. Remembering Bakhtin’s suggestion that carnivalesque laughter works to degrade authority and undermine tradition, one can see that Barnes’s suggestion of the failings of this potential Danse Macabre undermines the unifying power of death, instead implying that the repulsion society feels for women such as Corpse B is strong enough to follow them into death.

As already mentioned, following the publication of *Repulsive Women*, animality became a common trope throughout Barnes’s corpus, often being used to convey the ‘uncivilised’ aspect of characters, and more broadly ‘the opposition between the animal and the cultural.’<sup>45</sup> In Barnes’s work, beasts also work as representatives of characters’ repressed desires. For example, in *Ryder*, in the chapter entitled ‘Amelia Dreams of the Ox of a Black Beauty’, Amelia dreams that a large, strong ox enters her bedroom. The beast approaches her bed and speaks to her in a sexually suggestive manner. Although nowhere is the theme of human and beasts merging – ‘Barnes’s Beasts Turning Human’ – more prevalent than in *Repulsive Women*.<sup>46</sup> It is in blurred, liminal spaces that the grotesque flourishes, in the moment that one thing turns into another: attractive to repulsive, humorous to horrific, human to animal or animal to human. McElroy wrote:

The artist of the grotesque... creates a context in which... distortion is possible, an implied world where men can and do find themselves metamorphosed into vermin, where playing a child’s tin drum can and does have magical efficacy. This, then, is the first quality of the special kind of terror that discharges itself in images of the grotesque: it is primitive, magical, uncanny. The grotesque... distorts or exaggerates the surface of reality in order to tell a qualitative truth about it.<sup>47</sup>

The qualitative truth that Barnes tells, through the interplay between animal and human in ‘Suicide’ is the mystery that society has attributed to Woman and the consequences of making

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<sup>45</sup> Caselli, *Op Cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>46</sup> Bonnie Kime Scott originally discussed this notion in *Refiguring Modernism: Postmodern Feminist Readings of Woolf, West and Barnes* Vol. 2 (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 71. It was later taken up by Alex Goody in *Modernist Articulations*, p. 168.

<sup>47</sup> McElroy, *Op Cit.*, p. 5.

Woman Other: reduction to the state of that which is animalistic, repulsive and primitive, or elevation to that which is unrealistic and ethereal, as with Corpse A.

In contrast to Corpse B's city cat, Corpse A is 'a shattered small/ Cocoon' (RW 23). Galvin has suggested that the cocoon denotes secrets held, specifically lesbian and sexual, and Corpse A is welcomed by society because she has kept these impulses contained. However, this theory weakens somewhat when one considers that Corpse A's cocoon has been shattered, suggesting that her secrets have been exposed. I would suggest that cocoons contain that which is not yet ready to emerge into the world, that which is in the process of transformation, implying that Corpse A was unprepared to encounter the harsh treatment received by the women within the collection. Further, a cocoon is a useful symbol of the grotesque fascination with the female body as both the giver of life and as that which consumes. The cocoon consumes and destroys the caterpillar, but also produces new life, in a new form. In this way, *Repulsive Women* is preemptive of the ideas of critics such as Frances Connelly, who wrote that, 'the grotesque does not transgress so much as it ruptures boundaries, compromising them to the point where they admit the contradiction and ambiguity of a contrasting reality.'<sup>48</sup> Once wrapped in a cocoon, and having begun the transition into a butterfly, the caterpillar exists in a hybrid state before the transition is complete, and once it is fully formed in its new body (and the boundaries are once again clear and defined), the butterfly is expelled.

Corpse A and Corpse B are described as small, implying that they may in fact be children. This would account for Corpse A's fragility and lack of accountability. It does not however, explain why Corpse B is so repulsive, unless to reinforce that simply being female is enough to warrant repulsion, but again, what about Corpse A? As it is in keeping with the rest of the collection, and seems to be the most logical interpretation, I assume that both Corpse A and Corpse B are adults, and that Corpse B's repulsiveness is suggestive, primarily, of the attributes that the unknown 'they' have posthumously bestowed upon her. The contrast between Corpse A and Corpse B is symbolic of binaries at play, which Beauvoir explores in her work, *The Second Sex* (1949):

As group symbols and social types are generally defined by means of antonyms in pairs, ambivalence will seem to be an intrinsic quality of the Eternal Feminine. The saintly mother has for correlative the cruel stepmother, the angelic young girl has the perverse virgin: thus it will be said sometimes that Mother equals Life, sometimes that Mother equals Death, that every virgin is pure spirit or flesh dedicated to the devil.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Connelly, *Op Cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>49</sup> Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 284.

The hypothesis that a woman, here described as ‘Mother’, can equally be linked to life and death recalls the grotesque sentiment that a woman’s body is synonymous with both creation and consumption. Further, the contrast drawn between the pure and evil virgins is played out in ‘Suicide’, positioning *Repulsive Women* as an important text in philosophical discussions around corporeality, and the perception and reception of women.

If ‘Suicide’’s unspecified ‘they’ satisfied their desire for Corpse A while she was alive, she too would have been transformed from the pure virgin of which Beauvoir writes, to metaphorical ‘flesh dedicated to the devil.’ *Repulsive Women* suggests that there is no in-between for women, showing instead that they are categorised harshly in line with the Victorian Madonna/Whore tradition, represented again through *Ladies Almanack*’s Patience Scalpel and *Ryder*’s Amelia.

*Repulsive Women* suggests that the onlooker’s relationship to the forbidden fluctuates between a morbid, unsatisfied fascination and repulsion. Due to society’s collective decision that Woman equals Other and is different to Man, the female body acts as a perpetual source of fascination towards which desire and disgust can be directed equally.<sup>50</sup> This dichotomy is played out in ‘Suicide’ through the imagery used to describe the two corpses alongside the physical treatment the women receive. Where Corpse A is ‘brought in’, Corpse B receives ‘hurried shoves’, where Corpse A has a ‘little brusèd body’ Corpse B is ‘shock-abbreviated’, Corpse A is like a ‘moon’, reminiscent of ‘subtle symphonies’ and ‘A twilight rune’, Corpse B is a ‘city cat’ and ‘small mug/ Of beer gone flat.’ (RW 24)

Corpse A’s association with the moon, subtle symphonies, twilight and runes help to create a persona of otherworldliness – the moon implying gentle, feminine energies and the subtle symphonies suggesting that her death portrays a quiet kind of communication, indicative of Ruskin’s noble grotesque. The gentleness and complexity of Corpse A’s communication is further implied through the phrase ‘subtle symphonies’, as symphonies must carefully weave entire orchestras together to create their overall effect. Equally, however, the suggestion of symphonies creates a contrast with the description of Corpse A, who is vocally silent. The implied musicality of symphonies brings the reader’s attention back to Corpse A’s body, as that is the only tool with which she can communicate. That *all* the subtle symphonies are a twilight rune suggests that there are many aspects of this woman that have been wasted in death, and that she represents the mistreatment and neglect of countless women – the number

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<sup>50</sup> A myth can only exist for as long as the collective are prepared to contribute to it. This is something Susan Sellers discusses in the introduction to *Myth and Fairy Tale in Contemporary Women’s Fiction* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. viii.

it might take to play all the parts of a symphony, perhaps. Corpse A is treasured, so her death alone is enough to make the ambiguous persons who move her body take notice.

The mention of 'Twilight' connects 'Suicide' to the earlier poem, 'Twilight of the Illicit', which details a woman nearing the later years of her life who is certainly not treasured by the speaker and again, the illusive 'we'. This woman has 'slack'ning arms./ With satiated fingers dragging/ At your palms' (RW 19), suggesting that all that this woman desired, and that which she literally reached out to procure, has been satisfied. She is berated for having lived fully and refusing to deny herself:

You, the massive mother of  
Illicit spawn;  
While others shrink in virtue  
You have borne.

Could this woman be who and what Corpse A would have become if she had lived a longer life and had time to upset social convention? This possibility gains momentum when looking at the lines in 'Twilight of the Illicit' that read: 'And in your living all grimaces/ Of the dead.' (RW 20) If one interprets the 'grimacing dead' as 'Suicide's' Corpse A, it would seem that she is shying away from that which she (Corpse A) would have become.

Corpse A's section ends with the image of a rune, the remains of something sacred, which Corpse A has become in death. The term 'rune' also means a letter, or secret, something mysterious and, in this context, is suggestive of a quiet message, perhaps to society. Through death Corpse A retains her mystery, and in doing so, does not threaten to present the 'they' of the poem, or society, with her 'grotesque' nature. As Beauvoir wrote about the myth of woman: 'If the definition for this concept is contradicted by the behaviour of flesh-and-blood women, it is the latter who are wrong'.<sup>51</sup> This is the consequence that *Repulsive Women* suggests that every woman faces and can only escape through early demise.

The two sections of 'Suicide' share a strict rhyming pattern (although the rhythm and pace of both sections is quite different) which is suggestive of a concealed, yet existing connection between the two corpses and between both stanzas. The momentum throughout the Corpse A section of 'Suicide' is measured and peaceful, however the first four lines of the Corpse B section are exceptionally indelicate and suggest loud, fast-paced forcefulness. This momentum is abruptly dropped in the final two lines of the piece: 'She lay out listlessly like some small mug/ Of beer gone flat.' (RW 24) Not only do these two lines undermine the strength of the

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<sup>51</sup> Beauvoir, 'Myth and Reality', *Op Cit.*, p. 95.

poem, but also Corpse B's personal power, emphasised through her comparison to a flat mug of beer. The word 'mug' plays on the colloquial meaning of someone easily overcome, or influenced, and Corpse B's connection to beer suggests that she was part of a low and cheap culture, possibly deemed unseemly by the majority, because in 1915 'respectable' women were unlikely to drink beer. The negative implications of Corpse B's connection with beer are strengthened in retrospect following the Prohibition of the 1920s to 1930s. The repeated 'I' sounds invoke a sense of lethargy, indicating that all initial urgency regarding Corpse A's suicide has been replaced with apathy. Further, the line, 'She lay out listlessly' contains strong sexual connotations. The phrasing here suggests that Corpse B actively chose to lay herself out, not that she was laid out in that position by others. In contrast to Corpse A, who is contained and who represses her grotesque sexuality within a cocoon, Corpse B is open and expressive with her body, mirroring the way in which the nude woman stands at her own window in 'Seen from the 'L''. It is unclear whether Corpse B was sexual before her suicide or only made to seem so after death, either way, her treatment is indicative of the way in which a woman becomes grotesque and undesirable once unchaste: she becomes common (a mug of beer in contrast to Corpse A's moon and very rare rune) and easily replaceable. However, far from suggesting direct disinterest, the cruel treatment of Corpse B implies an undercurrent of anger, which fuels the apparent disinterest, or, more likely, the desire to forget her. Such anger reads as the reaction to an unknown woman obliterating the mystery that surrounded her body, forcing society to encounter her fully, in a completely corporeal, realistic way.

The image that accompanies 'Suicide' is bizarre. Beardsley-esque, yes, but also proto-surrealist in its nightmare-like confusion. It is the visual representation of the grotesque animal-becoming-human and a psychedelic take on the fifteenth-century grotesque friezes discussed by Wolfgang Kayser in *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*. 'Suicide's' image depicts a semi-bare woman reclined on a stretcher, carried by one man with an eel protruding from his stomach. The woman is also supported by two emerging giraffe heads, and another distressed woman is painted onto the cloth that covers the lower half of the reclined woman. The painted woman on the cloth is positioned under the stretcher on which the first woman is carried. This image is a mass of repulsive confusion. In a sexually suggestive manner, the reclining woman massages the elongated, phallic-shaped face of one of the giraffes carrying her. Connelly wrote that 'ugliness exists on a continuum with the grotesque... Pushed beyond its normative boundaries, ugliness crosses into the grotesque, and our response changes from distaste to

disgust... The threat of the monstrous and abject turns our laughter against us.’<sup>52</sup> The image that accompanies ‘Suicide’ does not only present the animal-turning-human or human-turning-animal (which is grotesque enough to generate the initial shock produced by that which Ruskin labels the false grotesque), but extends into the true or noble grotesque because of the abject link implied between female sexuality and bestiality, and that which is vastly immoral and animalistic.

One of the most striking images in the *Repulsive Women* collection with regard to the animal-becoming-human, or human-becoming-animal, is the drawing of the woman with the rabbit or donkey ears, who has a tail protruding from her buttocks (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. Djuna Barnes, (reptilian woman), 1915.

One cannot be certain whether the tail is protruding from, or entering the figure, thus suggesting a possible grotesque invasion of one of her bodily orifices. This figure rests on one bent leg, with the other stretched out behind her, suggestive of a dance pose, whilst clutching onto a few flowers that hang limply by her side. The allusion to movement and dance can be seen as emblematic of the melding of human and bestial. This figure wears a terrible grin and, in addition to her tail and rabbit or donkey ears, has reptile-like spikes protruding from the back of her head. Barnes reused this image after *Repulsive Women* for *Bruno's Weekly* on 23<sup>rd</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Connelly, *Op Cit.*, p. 118.

September 1916, in which it was titled 'The Vampire: A Nocturn in Black'. The title choice, which focuses on the undead, is telling. This woman, who was once human, is now a monstrous Other, neither one thing nor the other. The figure's manic grin suggests a degree of insanity or at the very least, extreme depravity and when combined with her reptilian traits, suggests subhuman primordiality.

*Repulsive Women* is a clear precursor to Barnes's ongoing interest in the exchange between human and animal, and the interchangeability between the two that features throughout her oeuvre. Post-*Repulsive Women*, Barnes refined the use of animality within her work to make the interplay between human and animal subtler. Barnes's short play, 'Three From the Earth' (1919) features an interaction between an ageing woman called Kate and three young men, who are sons of Kate's former lover. Kate says to the men, 'How is that mother of yours? I remember her—she was on the stage—she danced as they say, and she sang. She had a pet monkey'.<sup>53</sup> The audience learns instantly that Kate thinks very little of the boys' mother, who resembles the tragic dancer in 'To a Cabaret Dancer' and the primal Aguglia with her monkeys. The three men are linked to oxen, and work on a farm with sheep, cows and horses, further establishing a link between their mother's body, which bore them, and animality. In 1919, shortly after the opening of 'Three From the Earth', Bruno interviewed Barnes and reviewed the play. He wrote that 'the stage settings, the actors, figures, faces, movements seem a collection of Beardsley drawings' and noted that 'the youngest boy embraces her [Kate] brutally, like an animal...'.<sup>54</sup> The decadent artistic style that Bruno notes within the play, which often includes animal imagery as a feature of its crude humour, in addition to the verbal references made to animals and the physical brutishness of the boys, suggests that Barnes extended her exploration humanity's link to animality beyond the page and into the physical reality in her work for theatre.

In discussing the use of animality in Barnes's later work one must mention the final scene of *Nightwood*, in which Robin has an inhuman, entirely animalistic encounter with Nora's dog. Some scholars have chosen to read this scene as an indication of bestiality in the sexual sense. However, I would argue that this is another instance in which the reader is privy to the animalistic force within one of Barnes's characters expanding outwards and overcoming civilisation and its restrictions, and her rejection of the limitations imposed upon the body of

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<sup>53</sup> Djuna Barnes, 'Three From the Earth', *A Night Among the Horses* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1929), p. 22. There are clear similarities between Kate's description of the mother's actions and implied personality in 'Three From the Earth' and Mimi Aguglia in Barnes's 1913 interview, 'The Wild Aguglia and Her Monkeys'.

<sup>54</sup> Bruno in Barnes, *Interviews*, p. 385.

Woman. In order to transcend these limitations, Robin must become something other than Woman. I discuss the significance of this moment in more depth in Chapter 4.

### General and Particular Repulsion

Barnes scholarship has largely avoided discussion of *Repulsive Women*'s 'In General' and 'In Particular', perhaps because these pieces are highly elusive and seem to offer little in return for a great deal of study. The two poems are full of vibrant dichotomies between such themes as desire and purity, and faith and animality, incorporated with allusions to religious certainty and fate, and control and powerlessness. 'In General' and 'In Particular' align and contrast with one another in a manner similar to the alignment and contrast between Corpse A and B in 'Suicide'. 'In Particular' discusses the body and reads as an attack on the poem's subject, while 'In General' suggests a divorce from physicality through holiness. Similarly, 'Suicide's Corpse B is corporeal and rejected, and Corpse A is innocent and respected. 'In General' and 'In Particular' display the traditionality present throughout *Repulsive Women*, but also feature fragmentation of language absent from the rest of the collection. Both poems are also linked through their parallel structures and intertwined wordplay:

#### In General

What altar cloth, what rag of worth  
Unpriced?  
What turn of card, with trick of game  
Undiced?  
And you we valued still a little  
More than Christ. (RW 14)

#### In Particular

What loin-cloth, what rag of wrong  
Unpriced?  
What turn of body, what of lust  
Undiced?  
So we've worshipped you a little  
More than Christ. (RW 18)

As previously discussed, critics have suggested that Barnes's engagement with modernist aesthetics is not always obvious because of the often-significant contrast between the form of her work, which often adheres to strict rhyme schemes and archaisms, for example, and the contemporary socio-political focus of the content. The disruption created by traditional formats combined with contemporary topics is one of the ways in which *Repulsive Women* works as a precursor for later texts, including *Ryder* and *Ladies Almanack*. Galvin suggests that in *Repulsive Women* Barnes chooses to manipulate traditional forms as a way of generating an opportunity for women to undo, undermine and rewrite history in a contemporary setting and time period, primarily through the discussion of Sapphism in a traditional format. Unlike

Galvin, I cannot see that *Repulsive Women* is preoccupied specifically with lesbian sexuality, rather, as is the case with 'To a Cabaret Dancer', sexuality is present throughout this collection, but whether heterosexual, homosexual, or both remains unspecified.

'In General' and 'In Particular' are separated by two poems in *Repulsive Women*: 'From Third Avenue On' and 'Seen from the 'L''. 'From Third Avenue On' describes a woman who has been damaged by her decision to live in a way that appeases society, despite the fact that this lifestyle is to her own detriment. However, this woman has already been corrupted by former 'high hard cries' (RW 16), which read as sexual exclamations, but now she 'does not kneel low to confess' (RW 15), having only 'A little conscience' (RW 15). Her refusal to kneel low is interpreted by Galvin as the refusal to take part any longer in promiscuous activity. In line with this argument is the fact that the woman's 'snore[s are]/ Both loud and sad' (RW 15), suggesting that lying down is something she only does now to sleep and the renunciation of physical satisfaction leaves her dejected. As 'From Third Avenue On' is positioned between 'In General' and 'In Particular', both permeated with religious terminology, one might also interpret the woman's refusal to kneel as her rejection of religion and a refusal to kneel at a literal or symbolic altar. In rejecting her faith, this figure has also rejected notions of community, religious or otherwise. The speaker of 'From Third Avenue On' exclaims, 'Ah God!' (RW 15), as though willing a higher power to save this woman's soul on her behalf.

The second poem separating 'In General' and 'In Particular' is 'Seen from the 'L'', which describes a nude woman standing visibly at her window, as mentioned previously. The dissatisfaction with which the speaker reports this incident, claiming that 'her clothing is less risky/ Than her body in its prime' suggests a fear of personal corruption or the corruption of many at the sight of this woman's naked body. In this poem, the speaker says, quite literally, what the other poems suggest: female bodies are dangerous.

'In General' comes first and introduces a stark dichotomy between the notions of control and lack of control, and religiosity and fate. In their purest forms, religion and/or faith are seen to offer a sense of inherent 'goodness', stability and security. The reliance placed on religion by the speaker and the unspecified 'we' is implied through the final two lines, 'And you we valued still a little/ More than Christ.' (RW 14) Whoever the 'you' denotes was valued even more than the group's faith. Crucially, this value is past tense. As this confession appears at the end of the piece, it transpires that this lack of faith moves over to 'In Particular' and accounts for the corporeality to be found there, as if 'In Particular' is 'In General's fallen counterpart. The notion of value in 'In General' is not entirely innocent, as value is suggestive of the ability of one to judge another, thus introducing the element of control. In a similar vein

to Corpse A, it appears that the 'you' addressed in 'In General' is a chaste woman, or a general collective, of mysterious, unknowable women.

Beauvoir states that 'Mystery is never more than a mirage that vanishes as we draw near to look at it', an assertion reflected in 'In Particular'.<sup>55</sup> In this piece, the speaker closely examines a singular woman, having moved from the collective in 'In General' to a particular. As this individual woman becomes real, the chaste façade imposed upon her drops. In *Rabelais and His World* (1965), Bakhtin discusses what he terms 'grotesque realism', stating that in the work of Rabelais, and in carnivalesque art more broadly, the body is not that of the individual, but belongs to the collective and, because of this, is viewed positively.<sup>56</sup> By extension, when the body is isolated and examined as that of the individual, our detachment from it encourages repulsion towards it. The speaker's detachment from the singularity of the lone figure in 'In Particular' allows for her harsher treatment and judgement. Although Barnes undermines the anonymity and safety of the speaker through the forced complicity of the second person 'we', repeated throughout the collection.

The atmosphere of safety within 'In General' is undermined not only through the suggestion of moral and monetary value within the poem, but also by the two questions posed by the poem:

What altar cloth, what rag of worth  
Unpriced?  
What turn of card, with trick of game  
Undiced? (*RW* 18)

The sense of doubt produced by these questions is heightened because of the short length of the piece, which means that the questions, and doubt, ultimately comprise more than half of the poem. The content of these questions raises notions of games, gambling, profit, loss, fate and unpredictable luck, and indeed the questions of whether the objectified woman or women were worth valuing and whether it had all been a 'trick'. However, significantly, 'Unpriced' and 'Undiced' rule their own lines and inform the reader that the altar cloth and rag of worth have not been priced and the gambling and game have been left unplayed, bringing the focus back to chastity, faith and control. Galvin wrote that, 'In focusing specifically on Christianity, Barnes is... drawing our attention to the source of Western culture's primary dichotomies' that of the spirit and body, innocence and experience, and so on.'<sup>57</sup> I would extend this hypothesis and suggest that not only does Barnes expose these dichotomies, but through her defilement of

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<sup>55</sup> Beauvoir, 'Myth and Reality', *Op Cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>56</sup> Bakhtin, *Op Cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>57</sup> Galvin, *Op Cit.*, p. 91.

religion (symbolic in the poem of that which is sacred), specifically makes grotesque and undermines many social structures which work specifically to hinder women.

In *Sex in Relation to Society: Studies in the Psychology in Sex* (1897), Ellis describes what he calls ‘Traditional Morality’ and ‘Ideal Morality’. Traditional Morality describes the ‘long-established practices of a community... [it] becomes the voice of conscience which speaks automatically in favour of all the rules that are thus firmly fixed, even when the individual himself no longer accepts them’, while Ideal Morality refers to ‘new social actions... [carried out by] a small though growing minority of the community.’<sup>58</sup> Through the combination of “sinful” activities (gambling, placing heightened emphasis on material possessions and showing a lack of faith) and very specifically Christian, religious terminology (altar, Christ), Barnes uses ‘In General’ to deconstruct the Traditional Morality that still held early twentieth-century American society hostage.

‘In Particular’ suggests that the Ideal Morality, with which Barnes would have Traditional Morality replaced, relates specifically to views on sexuality and the body. This poem replaces the fate, games and material wealth of ‘In General’ with tensions between desire and purity, and faith and animality. In a manner similar to that in which John Milton’s Eve is seduced away from her faith and purity by the beguiling Satan (in an interaction suggestive of bestiality) and is instead introduced to lust and animality, the woman in ‘In Particular’ incites lust within the viewer, a lust that replaces a previous sense of goodness, security and safety. ‘In General’ opens with an altar cloth, ‘In Particular’, with a loin-cloth, suggesting that corruption has already taken place in the move from the holy altar cloth to the bodily loin cloth. This loin-cloth is indicative of several things: sexuality, as this garment is worn to cover the genitals and typically little else is worn with it, leaving the rest of the body exposed, conversely drawing one’s attention to the sexual organs, also of tribal custom.

Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1890) was considered seminal in its exploration of the relationship between, and the importance of, ritual, superstition and beliefs in ‘primitive’ culture in 1915 when Barnes wrote *Repulsive Women*. By opening ‘In Particular’ with a loin-cloth, such as those worn in tribal communities, Barnes suggests a replacement of religion, which dominates ‘In General’, with ritual and superstition. Superstition focuses principally on the negative, for example, if one does or does not do or say something, there will be negative consequences. Thus, through trading religion for superstition, all elements of security have been replaced with fear in ‘In Particular’. Such a change is specifically the result of this

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<sup>58</sup> Havelock Ellis, *Sex in Relation to Society: Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (London: WM. Heinemann, 1945), pp. 224-225.

particular woman who has induced lust within the observing group. The woman is linked to primitivism and animality because she deals with the most basic and ingrained of human needs and behaviours, presenting a threat to modern (civilised) culture – much like the other women in *Repulsive Women*, and the early-twentieth-century's New Woman. Russo states that 'the grotesque, particularly as a bodily norm, emerges as a deviation from the norm', the norm in mainstream early-twentieth-century America being that women do not flaunt their sexuality or admit to their corporeal desires.<sup>59</sup>

The inherent 'wrongness' of 'In Particular's' woman is emphasised through the phrase 'what rag of wrong' (*RW* 18). The cloth is reduced from the less prized 'rag' to something completely 'wrong'. 'In Particular' ends with the replacement of 'In General's' 'value' for 'worshipped', which suggests greater attachment towards the discussed women than 'In General's' figure, or figures, and possible fanatical infatuation.

*Repulsive Women's* figures are depicted in a process of transfiguration, which Barnes uses to subvert and challenge social norms. However, rather than suggest that these bodies are vehicles for positive change, Barnes shows that because of their difference they are alienated and made Other, the labelling of which reduces their threat and allows them to be ignored. In discussing the process of normalisation, Butler wrote, 'The body has its invariably public dimension; constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere', stressing that because one's body is never entirely private, it will always be open to (mis)interpretation and grotesque-ing.<sup>60</sup>

Chapter 2 looks at Barnes's *Ladies Almanack*, which explores the Sapphic relationships of a small group of friends, through the lens of nineteenth to twentieth-century sexological scholarship. In *Ladies Almanack*, Barnes drops the fascination/repulsion dynamic by removing *Ladies Almanack's* figures from the public eye, instead situating them in a self-imposed marginalised, private space. Barnes does, however, connect these figures to the grotesque through the satiric presentation of their sexual excess.

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<sup>59</sup> Russo, *Op Cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

## Chapter 2

### Sexology, Sapphism and Almanacs

*Ladies Almanack* is set in 1920s Paris and details the Sapphic activities of a close-knit circle of friends, most likely based on Barnes's personal friends and acquaintances. The central figure within the text is the American writer and salonnière Natalie Barney, aka, Dame Evangeline Musset, who the reader follows from middle age through to death. The text centres on various events that take place in Musset's life as well as those of her peers, which are woven throughout *Ladies Almanack*. On the journey through the latter half of Musset's life the reader learns of the Sapphic activities of Barney and her circle, discovering their various perspectives on lifestyles available to homosexual women in Paris in the early twentieth century. These perspectives range from contentment to despair. The characters and their real-life counterparts are thought to be Doll Furious (Dolly Wilde), Tilly Tweed-in-Blood (Radclyffe Hall), Patience Scalpel (Mina Loy), Lady Buck-and-Balk (Una Vincenzo/Lady Troubridge), Señorita Fly-About (Mimi Franchetti), Cynic Sal (Romaine Brooks), sisters Nip and Tuck (Solita Solano and Janet Flanner respectively), Bounding Bess (Esther Murphy) and Maise Tuck-and-Frill (Djuna Barnes).<sup>1</sup> Patience Scalpel is the only heterosexual character in *Ladies Almanack*, and clearly acts as a representative for contemporary homophobic sentiment, offering successive remarks indicative of confusion about Musset's activities and lifestyle, as well as overt resistance to it. Throughout the text, an omniscient narrator plays with sexological theories, responding to these in a satiric manner, although this voice never makes their position on Sapphism or sexology known. The narrative avoidance of accountability for the judgements passed on the Sapphic relations of the characters in *Ladies Almanack* is also present in *Repulsive Women*. *Repulsive Women*'s speaker refuses to implicate themselves in the complete reduction of the women portrayed in the collection. Within *Ladies Almanack*, the modern lives and Sapphic perspectives of the majority of characters clash with Patience Scalpel's understanding of Sapphism, which obscures narrative accountability and represents the voice of society.

Not much is known about Barnes's direct involvement with and knowledge of sexology, however there is a great deal in her texts, specifically *Ladies Almanack*, to suggest a strong familiarity with the field. Christine Berni has stated that, *Ladies Almanack* 'is remarkable for

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<sup>1</sup> See: Caselli, *Op Cit.*, p. 37.

its opposition to the fixed classifications of gender advanced by the new science of sexology.<sup>2</sup> While with reference to *Nightwood*, Faltejskova has noted that ‘Barnes’s concept of ‘the third sex’ bears the influence of the new science of sexology developing at the time of her writing the novel, namely of two prominent English sexologists, Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter.’<sup>3</sup> In addition, Georgina Taylor stated that ‘Djuna Barnes expressed a profound interest in Freud’<sup>4</sup>, which Jane Marcus has suggested is evident in Barnes’s description of Dr O’Connor’s living space in *Nightwood* (a theory which I discuss in Chapter 4).

From the late nineteenth century through to the publication of *Ladies Almanack* in 1928, and indeed for some time after, those in the field of sexology worked fervently at attempting to discover the ‘cause’ of homosexuality, while also attempting to unearth the various kinds of homosexuality that were believed to exist. Yet perhaps the most important focus of late-nineteenth-century sexological research was the search for a cure for homosexuality. To fully discuss the kinds of propositions about homosexuality to which *Ladies Almanack* responds, it is first necessary to establish that sexology derived from problematic theories within the taxonomisation and hierarchical thinking around men and women, and heterosexual and homosexual relationships. In *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928*, Martha Vicinus discusses the reasons for ‘women’s erotic friendships’ being ‘constantly marginalised as “second best” to heterosexual marriage’.<sup>5</sup> The points outlined are unsurprising and offer a more realistic viewpoint than that of *Ladies Almanack* concerning the high failure rate of Sapphic relationships in the early-twentieth century. Vicinus explains that practical concerns, such as finances and familial obligations were often paramount in hindering the long-term success of same-sex female relationships. *Ladies Almanack*’s Lady Buck-and-Balk complains of the practical instability of Sapphic relationships, while the other characters negate this instability by marginalising themselves from mainstream society in order to live the lifestyles they choose. I would argue that Lady Buck-and-Balk’s dissatisfaction and the characters’ chosen isolation suggests that Barnes was well aware of the practical problems and pessimism surrounding Sapphic relationships.

In 1886, Richard von Krafft-Ebing published *Psychopathia Sexualis*, which offers insight into homosexuality based on findings derived from forensic science. Krafft-Ebing believed that

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<sup>2</sup> Christine Berni, ‘“A Nose-Length into the Matter”: Sexology and Lesbian Desire in Djuna Barnes’s “Ladies Almanack”’, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 20:3 (1999), p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> Monika Faltejskova, *Op Cit.*, p. 168.

<sup>4</sup> Georgina Taylor, *H.D. and the Public Sphere of Modernist Women Writers 1913-1946: Talking Women* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), p. 100.

<sup>5</sup> Martha Vicinus, *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. xv.

a scientific perspective was lacking from sexological theory, believing that psychologists and poets could only take the exploration so far.<sup>6</sup> *Psychopathia Sexualis* promoted several notions challenged by *Ladies Almanack*, principally that ‘normal’ women should have little to no sexual desire, that love necessarily implies sexual attraction and that sexual intercourse can only be carried out by persons of the opposite sex (and when these conditions are not filled, the love is only indicative of friendship), and that homosexual people make up a third sex, otherwise referred to as Urnings.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to the notion that homosexual people existed outside of society as a separate kind of human, Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds proposed that homosexuality is woven into every area of society and has its roots in a long, traceable past:

What can be regarded as true sexual inversion can be traced in Europe from the beginning of the Christian era... especially among two classes—men of exceptional ability and criminals; and also, it may be added, among those neurotic and degenerate individuals who may be said to lie between these classes, and on or over the borders of both.<sup>8</sup>

As Ellis and Symonds presuppose that homosexuality has always affected people from various backgrounds, they naturally make a case for the widespread nature of homosexuality up to and including the late nineteenth century (when this statement was published in *Sexual Inversion* (1897)). On the one hand, through the suggestion that homosexuality is as much a part of culture as heterosexuality, Ellis and Symonds appear to imbue homosexuality with the gravitas of a long and ingrained history. On the other hand, homosexuality is spoken of as something very unfortunate, having only affected such a large segment of society because it circulates like a contagious disease. One learns that the curing of ‘inverts’<sup>9</sup> can be achieved by advocating good ‘physical hygiene’, but only while children are still young, once past puberty, it is too late for the individual to be saved.<sup>10</sup> *Sexual Inversion* reads as though it has two authors with two somewhat opposed perspectives, one trying to move forward and promote a progressive view, and the other, keen to find a cure for this perceived sexual abomination.

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<sup>6</sup> Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to Antipathic Sexual Instinct* ed. F. J. Rebman (New York: Rebman Company, 1906), preface, p. vi.

<sup>7</sup> A German term first published by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–95) in *Forschungen über das Räthsel der mannmännlichen Liebe (Research into the Riddle of Man-Male Love)* published in 1864. ‘Urning’ was initially used to refer to homosexual men and later, homosexual women.

<sup>8</sup> Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, ed. Ivan Crozier (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 104.

<sup>9</sup> An alternative word to Urnings used frequently by Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds in *Sexual Inversion*, and later by Radclyffe Hall in *The Well of Loneliness* (1928).

<sup>10</sup> For more about this, see Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, p. 210.

*Sexual Inversion* is a significant text because it is one of the few, during the late nineteenth century, to address the topic of homosexuality amongst women. One of the limited number of psychologists to address this topic prior to Ellis and Symonds was the American psychologist, James Kiernan, in his 1884 paper ‘Insanity: Sexual Perversion’. As Kiernan features in the bibliography for *Sexual Inversion* it is clear that Ellis and Symonds drew inspiration from Kiernan’s work in this area, writing, ‘It [homosexuality] is not easy to detect in women because we are used to seeing a greater level of intimacy between women than men.’<sup>11</sup> Of course, this view is limited and not entirely appropriate or relevant from a twenty-first-century perspective. However, it provides a useful insight into thinking about how female homosexuality was viewed and approached at the end of the nineteenth century.

The format of *Ladies Almanack* is that of an early modern almanac. The significance of this format should not be underestimated. Adopting a tradition so thoroughly embedded in the past, within religion and tradition, and which carries with it centuries of trusted guidance, provided Barnes with an authoritative form which to launch her discussion of Sapphism, Musset and Musset’s circle.

The hybridity of genres and artistic mediums within the almanac format gave Barnes the opportunity to continue the trend of combining genres that is synonymous with her work – a trend that she began early on with her journalistic pieces. The hybridisation of *Ladies Almanack*, created through the incorporation of riddles, poems, anecdotes and anniversaries, allows Barnes and the speaker of the text to maintain complete anonymity and unaccountability. This lack of accountability is increased by the fact that *Ladies Almanack* incorporates often-archaic language, while the brazenness with which Musset and the narrator discuss the Sapphic topics is very modern. By combining the two styles, Barnes suggests that homosexuality permeated culture and texts long before the early twentieth century, or even the late eighteenth century, when interest in the field of sexology grew exponentially. By working the current ‘hot topic’ of homosexuality into a vastly traditional format, Barnes quickly destabilises the structure of the almanac, ridiculing and playing with the traditional kinds of information and advice typically offered by almanacs. For example, the illustrations

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<sup>11</sup> For more on Kiernan’s argument on this aspect of homosexuality, see: ‘Insanity: Sexual Perversion’, *Detroit Lancet* 7:11 (May 1884), p. 483. Beyond his influence on Ellis’s discussion of homosexuality in women, Kiernan was influential in the discussion of homosexuality more broadly, inventing the terms homosexual and heterosexual in 1892, in ‘Responsibility in Sexual Perversion’, *Chicago Medical Recorder* 3 May 1892, pp. 185-210.

accompanying the text are drawn in an overtly bawdy style, seeming to mock the pious images of early modern almanacs, such as those found in *The Ladies Diary*.<sup>12</sup>

The archives of Ellis reveal a predominantly progressive and forward-thinking theorist and physician unfortunately influenced, albeit reluctantly, by the conventions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On 18<sup>th</sup> June 1892, Ellis wrote a telling note to Symonds saying the following: ‘My attention has been frequently drawn to it [homosexuality] of late; partly through often finding how it exists to a greater or less extent in many persons whom I know, or know of, and whom I much love and respect’.<sup>13</sup> This is noteworthy firstly because Ellis was unsupported by the majority in displaying respect for homosexual people, and secondly, because this casual comment between acquaintances later appeared in *Sexual Inversion* in a sadly altered state. Apparently, Ellis yielded to convention, editing his initial sentiment to the following: ‘several persons for whom I *felt* respect and admiration *were* the congenital subjects of the abnormality [emphasis my own].’<sup>14</sup> The use of past tense here presents three possibilities: firstly, that Ellis’s thoughts about and feelings towards these people he spoke of once admiring had, by this point, changed. Secondly, being aware of the dialogue into which he was entering, Ellis knew that openly admitting to seeing nothing (or at least very little) wrong with homosexuality was too bold of a statement to make. Thirdly, that homosexual people he knew were no longer homosexual by the time he published *Sexual Inversion*, backing contemporary theories which stated that homosexuality is something chosen, or the result of an imbalance or disorder and can, and should, be cured. In all cases, the change of tense in this statement is poignant indeed, as Ellis was one of the more progressive sexologists of the time and yet he still took the professional stance that homosexuality was an unfortunate disorder. This small edit conveys the extreme anti-Sapphic, anti-homosexual dialogue into which *Ladies Almanack* entered and to which Barnes responded.

In *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality* (1984) Michel Foucault wrote that throughout the eighteenth to twentieth century, medicine replaced the church as the unofficial governor of sexuality, establishing guidelines for navigating and discussing sexuality.<sup>15</sup> Under the broad term ‘medicine’, Foucault includes physicians, sexologists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists. Foucault argues that the studies and reports released by these medical professionals helped launch a new dialogue around sex and sexuality, allowing such ‘experts’

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<sup>12</sup> For an interesting discussion on this, see: Caselli, *Improper Modernism*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>13</sup> British Library Department of Manuscripts, No. ADD70524, Havelock Ellis Papers, letter from Ellis to Symonds, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1892.

<sup>14</sup> Ellis and Symonds, *Op Cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>15</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality: 1* (London: Penguin, 1998), p.14.

to discuss the subject at a safe distance, without the risk of seeming personally interested. These professionals classed homosexuality as another form of perversion. Foucault suggests that the dialogue and appearance of detachment that such professional distance provided was in fact false.

Foucault questions whether the newly emerged desire of the eighteenth century to discuss sexuality actually provided a way for those who wrote and spoke about sex and sexuality to satisfy their personal interest in the topic, disguised as contribution to scholarly knowledge. Foucault wrote, ‘we must ask whether, since the nineteenth century, the *Scientia sexualis*—under the guise of its decent positivism—has not functioned, at least to a certain extent, as an *ars erotica*.’ This statement takes the suggestion further, the implication being that those engaged in the field of sexology actually derived clear *pleasure* from their discussion of sexual ‘perversions’. By extension, one can infer that it did not serve these experts to move homosexuality out of the realm of non-conformist behaviour. The narrator of *Ladies Almanack* is somewhat complicit in this trend. Omniscient and unlocatable, the narrator delights in recounting the Sapphic exploits of Musset and her circle, all the time maintaining the safe distance of anonymity.

In contrast to the speaker of *Ladies Almanack*, ‘N.’, the speaker of Natalie Barney’s *Women Lovers or The Third Woman* (written c. 1926, pub. 2016) situates herself directly in the centre of Sapphic activity. This text was unpublished during Barney’s lifetime. However, Chelsea Ray, who published the work in 2016, states that an accompanying note to the manuscript suggests that it was written around 1926, two years before the private printing and limited circulation (1,050 copies) of *Ladies Almanack*. *Women Lovers* mirrors *Ladies Almanack*’s textual queering through the incorporation of mixed styles including prose, verse, drama and dialogue interweaved and placed side by side, thereby suggesting that Sapphism is present throughout all kinds of art, in much the same manner suggested by *Ladies Almanack*. The two texts appear to share a high degree of interplay, though it is unclear which text was written first and which was the response. The possibility that *Ladies Almanack* was meant as a direct response to *Women Lovers* implies that *Ladies Almanack* was intended as more than the ‘slight satiric wiggling’ that Barnes claimed in the text’s foreword, added in 1972.

*Women Lovers* is set up similarly to *Ladies Almanack*: it is an overt and unapologetic account of Sapphism and Sapphic relationships, desires and casual affairs. The characters in *Women Lovers* are also thinly veiled versions of Barney’s circle of friends (the same circle of which Barnes writes in *Ladies Almanack*), and given names based on the personalities of their real-life counterparts, such as N.M., or the Newly Miserable Woman (Barnes), R., or Dearest

Friend (Romaine Brooks) and Woman N. Loved the Most (Elisabeth de Gramont). The satiric representations of close friends and acquaintances in both *Ladies Almanack* and *Women Lovers*, in addition to the initial limited press run of *Ladies Almanack* may suggest that the texts were primarily intended for a select readership. However, as *Ladies Almanack* was reprinted after its initial run, I would argue that the text simply held another layer for those who attended Barney's salon, whilst in the main, it responded to wider sexological concerns.

There is no firm proof that *Women Lovers* was written in 1926, prior to *Ladies Almanack* and so Barney may have responded to Barnes's text. However, it is very possible that Barnes may have seen the manuscript of *Women Lovers*. Cause for slight confusion in the creation timeline of *Women Lovers* and *Ladies Almanack* is the sentence in *Women Lovers* which reads, 'I knew it was dangerous to rescue someone who appeared to be drowning—but how could I help it and how would I be worthy of being an example for you if my courage hadn't been strong enough in the first place to carry you like a cross?'.<sup>16</sup> This sentence is spoken by the protagonist of *Women Lovers*, N. (aka Barney). In *Ladies Almanack*, the speaker introduces Musset (Barney) as 'one grand red cross'. Further lines suggest additional interplay between *Women Lovers* and Barnes's work, such as the following: 'I am like those house cats that, during mating season, grow thin from having to live like alley cats.'<sup>17</sup> This line is similar to the style of language used by Barnes in *Repulsive Women* and recalls the poem 'Suicide', which reads: 'Her body shock-abbreviated/ As a city cat./ She lay out listlessly (RW 24). Practically, it might have been difficult for Barnes to read the full manuscript of *Women Lovers*, as Barney originally wrote the text in French and despite living in Paris for a number of years, Barnes's French was rudimentary.

A prominent dissimilarity between *Women Lovers* and *Ladies Almanack* exists in the attitudes expressed towards the Sapphic relationships and interactions presented in the two texts. Where Barnes's narrator maintains the distance of Foucault's sexologists and speaks as one looking in with detached curiosity, Barney's speaker engages in the dialogue on homosexuality actively and openly, even, perhaps, commenting upon the notion of the 'third sex' through the title *The Third Woman*.<sup>18</sup> This title situates Barney at the centre of the sexological discussion. Whitney Chadwick suggests that Barney's openness regarding her

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<sup>16</sup> Natalie Barney, *Women Lovers or the Third Woman* ed. & trans. Chelsea Ray (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), p. 110.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>18</sup> Barnes does, however, engage directly with the concept of Urnings in *Nightwood*, in which Matthew O'Connor remarks, 'the third sex... contains life but resembles the doll'. Barnes, *Nightwood*, p. 134. Presumably referring to the inability of same-sex couples to reproduce and alluding to the gifted doll in place of a child in lesbian partnerships.

Sapphic desires and activity was a result of her wealth, which ‘empowered... Barney, enabling ... [her] to live freely and contribute to the early twentieth century’s construction of lesbians as an aristocratic’ financially and sexually independent woman. Indeed, Barney’s financial independence alleviated the practical difficulty of being in a lesbian relationship, about which Vicinus writes. The middle ground that *Ladies Almanack* takes, between Barney’s attachment and the sexologists’ detachment reinforces the text’s position as an informative work, bringing the unknown Sapphic world to a wider audience and bridging the gap between the two.

Barney seems to write exclusively to an already ‘initiated’ audience. The poem ‘Tonight...’ from *Women Lovers* reads, ‘Tonight Sappho sleeps in dreams with Cyprus.../ I give myself to your shadow, and in your name arrives/ My body’s extraordinary pleasure, untouched by men’.<sup>19</sup> Two things are striking here when compared to *Ladies Almanack*. The first is the blatant manner in which the speaker lets the reader know that her desire is for another woman (‘Sappho’, ‘untouched by men’). The second, is the seriousness suggested within these lines. Satire is entirely absent from this poem. Both obscurity and satire shield *Ladies Almanack*’s reader and protect its author from backlash against the potentially shocking content.

The works of art and literature Barney includes in *Women Lovers* are numerous, and include, Titian’s painting, *Sacred and Profane Love* (1514), Jean de la Fontaine’s fable *Deux Pigeons s’aimaient d’amour tender* (c. 1688), Shelley’s *Epipsychidion* (1821) and Baudelaire’s ‘To the Reader’ (1857), as well as the mention of Bacchantes – the female followers of Bacchus, Roman god of wine and ecstasy. Analysis of just one of these references makes the relevance of Barney’s allusions clear in relation to *Women Lovers* and the wider sexological debate: Titian’s *Sacred and Profane* is a work which still baffles those who try to extract meaning from its symbolism today, however predominant theories around this painting suggest that it seeks to show the difference between divine love and lusty, earthly love through the depictions of the clothed woman and the mostly nude woman. So far, nobody has been willing to nominate either the clothed woman, or the nude woman as the definite representative of either divine love, or of earthly/lusty love. An alternative theory agrees that both kinds of love are implied through the presence of the contrasting women, but that the cherub in between the women (Cupid, perhaps) draws the two together, thus implying that both kinds of love are required, or are naturally inseparable in ‘true’ love. Whichever interpretation one chooses it is clear through these grand allusions, which suggest that the only certainty around love is that it cannot be defined or fixed, that Barney sought to challenge negative perceptions around the perceived

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<sup>19</sup> Barney, *Op Cit.*, p. 5.

abnormality of Sapphism. If that which is ‘normal’ (defined as heterosexual love in *Sacred and Profane*) cannot be defined, it follows that that which is ‘abnormal’ also cannot be defined.

N. says, ‘I propose to you the creation of an association—stronger than any union—because it includes all unions.’<sup>20</sup> In this moment N. approaches Derrida-like deconstruction of language and its implications. The term ‘union’ usually implies a romantic or sexual connection, whereas two colleagues or casual acquaintances may have an association. In this way, N. interrupts the sexological debate by creating a new language through which to discuss Sapphism, thereby also creating a new space, separate from that which is inhabited by sexologist and anti-homosexual feeling and theory. Barnes creates a similar space in *Ladies Almanack* through timelessness and dislocation. While *Women Lovers* looks to the new and *Ladies Almanack* looks to the past, both suggest that there is no pre-existing space in early-twentieth-century society for homosexuality.

In addition to Barney, Barnes’s contemporary, Romaine Brooks (*Ladies Almanack*’s Cynic Sal) was also engaged in challenging and recreating notions of homosexuality and womanhood. However, Brooks began this quest over a decade before the publication of *Ladies Almanack* and the creation of *Women Lovers*. Chadwick explains that Brooks’s work, ‘*The Cross of France*, 1914... marks the true beginning of a group of paintings of heroic femininity... in which female figures are stripped of the specificity of time, place, and social context; clothed in voluminous drapes of skins; and positioned alone in nature.’<sup>21</sup> Again, the ambiguousness of time and place, and the use of vagueness to undermine pre-established notions surrounding women and Sapphism is a technique shared by *Ladies Almanack*.

Brooks created, in Chadwick’s words,

a personal vision of physically, spiritually, and intellectually powerful female image—a kind of twentieth-century “woman warrior”—out of a confluence of aesthetic, political, and sexual attitudes... she became perhaps the first female painter since Artemisia Gentileschi in the seventeenth century to define an imagery of heroic femininity.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to Gentileschi, Brooks’s paintings of strong female figures are absent of male figures, often showing a sole female figure against an undefined, grey background. Like Barnes and Barney, Brooks chooses to create a world predominantly woman-led. Brooks’s focus was ‘the search for an idealistic representation of the female figure to images of particular women...

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> Whitney Chadwick, *Amazons in the Drawing Room: The Art of Romaine Brooks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 27.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

they [Brooks's paintings from the 1920s] represent a self-conscious attempt to produce and circulate a new imagery of the twentieth-century lesbian.<sup>23</sup> In searching, Brooks also drew on her inner circle to project innovative ideas about women and homosexuality to a previously uninvited and uninformed audience. These particular women were many of the same Barnes wrote of in *Ladies Almanack* and Barney in *Women Lovers*. For example, *L'Amazone* (1920) is a painting of Natalie Barney, in which Barney sits, wrapped in a fur coat, with styled hair and a pleasant expression on her face. The overall effect is one of elegance and none of the brashness with which Barnes attributes her in *Ladies Almanack*. *Una, Lady Troubridge* (1924) portrays Una Troubridge as confident and wily. This presentation is also in contrast to Barnes's depiction of Troubridge as Lady Buck-and-Balk, who longs for the security of marriage and exclaims, 'Think how tender are the Hearts of Women, at their toughest!' (*LA* 232).

### **Unstable Homosexuality**

In a letter from Ellis to Symonds, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1893, Ellis explains his belief that the realm of female homosexuality had thus far been neglected, he wrote, 'It is fortunate that I have been impressed by the frequency of homosexuality – both congenital and acquired – in in [sic] women, since you seem to have ignored this side of the subject.'<sup>24</sup> The manner in which Ellis and Symonds then proceed to explore this topic is concerning and makes evident the need for a text such as *Ladies Almanack* to exist, having been written by a woman with experience of her own lesbian relationship, and those of her homosexual friends. *Sexual Inversion* details Case XL, which discusses the investigation of 'Miss M.' Case XL describes the manner in which a twenty-nine-year-old woman is stripped naked, reduced to body parts, which are consequently labelled as abnormal, and touched sexually by a doctor who tries to incite sexual excitement in Miss M. When Miss M. fails to become aroused, a report is written up stating her clear abnormality. Nothing is said of the abusive treatment she receives and the obvious contribution of this abuse to the natural absence of arousal in this specific situation.<sup>25</sup> Case XL is almost a direct mirror for the month of March in *Ladies Almanack*, in which Dame Musset reveals to Lady Buck-and-Balk, Tilly Tweed-in-Blood and Maisie Tuck-and-Frill that she was abused by a surgeon as a child. Dame Musset says, 'When I wish to contemplate the highest

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>24</sup> British Library Department of Manuscripts, No. ADD70524, Havelock Ellis Papers, letter from Ellis to Symonds, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1893.

<sup>25</sup> Ellis and Symonds, *Op Cit.*, pp. 134-137.

Pitch to which Irony has climbed, and when I really desire to *wallow* in impersonal Tragedy... I think of that day, forty years ago, when I, a Child of ten, was deflowered by the Hand of a Surgeon!' (LA 236). In reply to her peers' shouts of injustice, Musset says 'I am my Revenge!' (LA 238). Musset's revenge is her rejection of men. This exclamation suggests that the only revenge available to Musset is the internal alteration of her character, which she hopes affects society. Musset's revenge has, however, involved making an outcast of herself. In this way, her lesbianism is both the result of sexual trauma/abuse and an act of rebellion.

Much like Krafft-Ebing, Charles A. Ford demeans homosexual relationships. In 'Homosexual Practices of Institutionalized Females' (1929) Ford suggests that romantic notes, or notes which indicate any kind of increased affection, passed between institutionalised female inmates, suggests clear homosexual activity.<sup>26</sup> Of course, Barnes and Zadel were not institutionalised, but Barnes was a child and confined to the familial situation.<sup>27</sup> The problem with such a claim is apparent when applied to Barnes's personal life. Ford's theory suggests that the notes passed between Barnes and her grandmother Zadel, which contained drawings of, and comments about, their breasts implies without doubt that Barnes and her grandmother were involved in an incestuous, lesbian relationship, which is obviously a contentious claim.<sup>28</sup> Ford later notes that once a woman involved in what he deems to be a homosexual relationship – if just through note-passing – leaves the institution, all attraction to the same sex vanishes because the reality of being in a same sex relationship is undesirable in the presence of other options.<sup>29</sup>

Although written thirty-three years after *Sexual Inversion*, Ford's theory is reminiscent of the suggestion made by Ellis and Symonds that women who are confined to small spaces together are likely to adopt homosexual tendencies, simply by being in close contact with one another for extended periods of time. In the following example, Ellis and Symonds write of women who perform on stage: 'The pell-mell of the dressing-rooms, the wait of perhaps two hours between the performances, during which all the girls are cooped up, in a state of inaction and of excitement, in a few crowded dressing-rooms, affords every opportunity for the growth of this particular kind of [homosexual] sentiment.'<sup>30</sup> The belief that close quarters and little external stimulation lead to homosexual encounters was shared by Barnes's contemporary,

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<sup>26</sup> Charles A. Ford, 'Homosexual Practices of Institutionalized Females', *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 23:4 (Ohio: State Bureau of Juvenile Research, 1929), pp. 442-448.

<sup>27</sup> As a child Barnes was home-schooled and received little formal education.

<sup>28</sup> Philip Herring discusses this more in his biography of Barnes: *Djuna: The Life and Work of Djuna Barnes*, pp. 54-59.

<sup>29</sup> Ford, *Op Cit.*, p. 448.

<sup>30</sup> Ellis and Symonds, *Op Cit.*, p. 164.

Ernest Hemingway. In *A Moveable Feast* (1964), Hemingway recounts part of a conversation on homosexuality that took place between himself and Gertrude Stein. Hemingway says to Stein, ““What about the old man with the beautiful manners and a great name who came to the hospital in Italy... and behaved perfectly, and then one day I would have to tell the nurse never to let that man into the room again?””.<sup>31</sup> Stein’s response to Hemingway is equally interesting:

‘You know nothing about any of this really, Hemingway,’ she said. ‘You’ve met known [sic] criminals and sick people and vicious people. The main thing is that the act male homosexuals commit is ugly and repugnant and afterwards they are disgusted with themselves. They drink and take drugs, to palliate this, but they are disgusted with the act and they are always changing partners and cannot be really happy... In women it is the opposite. They do nothing that they are disgusted by and nothing that is repulsive and afterwards they are happy and they can lead happy lives together.’<sup>32</sup>

This extract suggests that the men and women who were a part of homosexual communities battled with one another over the status and moral validity of their separate kinds of homosexuality, as well as with the external forces that rejected homosexuality altogether. In another moment during this conversation, Hemingway states the necessity of being prepared ‘to kill a man, know how to do it and really know that you would do it in order not to be interfered with.’<sup>33</sup> Hemingway’s contribution to his and Stein’s conversation is typical of the theories put forward by sexologists at the time, the theories that *Ladies Almanack* sought to dispel. The threat that homosexuality was thought to present is clear. However, the findings presented by Krafft-Ebing, Ford, Ellis and Symonds, and perpetuated by those such as Hemingway, were the consequence of focusing on extremes. Foucault states that because science, like all areas of society could not deal with sex itself, it focused on the ‘aberrations, perversions, exceptional oddities, pathological abatements, and morbid aggravations.’<sup>34</sup> This is applicable in that sexological theory classed homosexuality as an abnormality and aligned it with an extensive list of other sexual perversions and general pathological issues, such as abuse, harmful fetishes and murder.

Returning to Ford’s writing on Sapphic activities between women in institutions, one should note that he uses the lack of homosexual interest upon leaving the institution to undermine homosexuality, attempting to convey the fleeting nature of homosexual feeling between women: ‘that these girls are not truly inverted is evidenced by the lack of fidelity... the fact

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<sup>31</sup> Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (London: Arrow Books, 2004), p. 12

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> Foucault, *Op Cit.*, p. 53.

that they do not persist in homosexuality after their release from the institution.<sup>35</sup> Much like Krafft-Ebing, Ford argues that being true to one's sexual orientation will naturally result in fidelity and a monogamous relationship. This proposition is entirely out of line with questions surrounding the New Woman, birth control, women's sexual freedom and casual romances, widely debated in 1920s Europe and America, preceding the publication of Ford's paper. Such subjects were regular features of literary salon deliberations around Paris's Left Bank in the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century. However outside of the reportedly sophisticated soirées held by those such as Barney and *Ladies Almanack*'s Dame Musset, psychologists, neurologists, sociologists and seemingly all who considered themselves an authority on the subject of homosexuality maintained the firm view that the only aspect of homosexuality and sexual freedom requiring discussion, was how to prevent or cure those afflicted by either or both. As a reaction to this outdated view, *Ladies Almanack* presents a world centred on various kinds of Sapphic relationships. The reader encounters the homosexual activities of women in conventional relationships that resemble a traditional heterosexual marriage (Lady Buck-and-Balk and Tilly Tweed-in-Blood), extremely polyamorous relationships (Dame Musset and her many lovers), and entirely casual love affairs (Musset's 'conquests').

The sexological theories to which *Ladies Almanack* responds reveal a general lack of cohesiveness. Discrepancies appear in accounts of the perceived danger a homosexual person presents (this ranges from extremely dangerous to pathetic and deserving of the pity of heterosexual people), how easily homosexuality could be detected in women, whether the homosexual sufferer should be imprisoned or helped, whether homosexuality could be cured and at what stage, the degree to which homosexual people display 'odd' fantasies, and whether or not they are defiant or ashamed of themselves and of their attraction to the same sex.

*Ladies Almanack* directly challenges homophobia's emphasis on difference by showing its (the text's) homosexual characters as experiencing the same existential worries as those in heterosexual partnerships. Doing so suggests that homosexuality should be assessed equally alongside heterosexuality. Existential worries in *Ladies Almanack* predominantly take the form of Dame Musset's angst about love, which persist until she reaches old age. At this stage, she realises the futility of her previous anxiety and, having become wise, tries to pass her new-found knowledge on to younger generations, calling out, 'Hold Wench, there is much you must learn ere you cram that Fodder down the Gorge of your Gut, and it is of Love and its Sorrow' (LA 288-289). This moment in the text manipulates the presentation of Musset as a mother

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<sup>35</sup> Ford, *Op Cit.*, p. 448.

figure. In youth Musset deliberately positions herself as a maternal figure in order to lure in women whereas in old age, this previously artificial role becomes her reality. A similar technique is used by *Ryder's* Sophia, who presents herself to vulnerable young women as a wise, maternal figure in order to win their trust and affection.<sup>36</sup>

Barnes carries the topic of existential angst in love through to *Nightwood*, in which Nora is torn between pursuing her partner, Robin, and trying to forget her. Through characters such as Musset and Nora, who have been entirely absorbed by their individual problems, Barnes signals to the reader, to the public and to contemporary sexologists that homosexuality should not be the focus of any discussion, rather it is the very human concerns of these characters around ageing, grief and identity that should hold one's attention. This attitude is in complete contrast to Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), which bemoans the inequality between heterosexual and homosexual relationships.

Crucially, the noteworthy events highlighted in Musset's life are primarily bodily and/or sexual: in January, 'When new whelped, she was found to have missed by an Inch.' In March, 'When nine she learned how the Knee termed Houses-maid's is come by, when the Slavy was bedridden... and needed a kneeling-to.' In June, 'When well thirty, she, like all Men before her, made a Harlot a good Woman by making her Mistress.' (LA 227-229) It is also significant that throughout *Ladies Almanack* Musset's body and sexual activities are discussed in relation to the body and sexual activities of men. Denying Musset the right to homosexuality and sexuality without comparison to men highlights that there was little room at this time for women to display active sexual passions. The connection between Musset and men continues throughout the text, in May she exclaims 'Upon my sword there is no Rust' (LA 247), suggesting phallic promiscuity. The accompanying illustration for the month of February and the saints days column shows the huge figure of Dame Musset in the centre of the page, towering over ardent female worshippers (likely those whom Musset graciously rescued) who kneel at her feet (Fig. 8).

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<sup>36</sup> In Chapter 4 I discuss Barnes's presentation of *Nightwood's* Nora in a mothering role and Robin as child.



Fig. 8  
Djuna Barnes, 'For these  
twelve reasons sainted', c.  
1928.

Above her head hover twelve angels, also female, except for the central angel directly above Musset's head, who looks like a man. As the angel is positioned centrally, it seems to imply that the principal, or dominant trait of Musset's personality, is also inherently masculine. The binary between masculine and feminine energy is carried through the image as a whole. Upright, in the context of *Ladies Almanack*, the typically conventional scroll frame underneath the image, in addition to the semicircle over Musset's head create the impression that she is emerging from a vagina.<sup>37</sup> This suggestion and connection to female genitalia is strengthened through the rose that Musset holds at the level of her own genitalia. However, turned upside down, the overall effect of the image is that of male genitalia. These masculine elements seem to undermine the awesome and imposing figure of Musset and the life she has lived without the aid of men. In this way, Musset's empowerment in later chapters and her apparent obliviousness to, or disinterest in, societal judgement is undermined because she is introduced to the reader as one who has the brain of a man in the body of a woman.

The suggestion that Dame Musset should have been born a boy also seems to support the view of sexologists such as Kiernan, who wrote that 'it becomes necessary in the course of enquiry to ascertain whether the brain which determines the action of the mind can be so

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<sup>37</sup> Caselli also sees a 'hearth-shaped vaginal blazon on the title page' of *Ladies Almanack*. See: Caselli, *Op Cit.*, p. 39.

transposed that the feminine brain shall occupy the body of a male and *vice versa*.<sup>38</sup> The result of the Victorian sensibility around homosexuality resulted in desperate attempts by medical professionals to understand homosexual feelings as everything other than simple desire. Foucault remarks on the need of nineteenth-century sexologists not only to understand sexuality, but also to control it, stating that, ‘Kaan, Krafft-Ebing, Tardieu, Molle, and Havelock Ellis carefully assembled this whole pitiful, lyrical outpouring from the sexual mosaic.’<sup>39</sup> The lyrical outpouring to which Foucault refers is the encouragement of the individual to confess their sexual desires, a phenomenon that he believes became popular during the peak of sexological investigation in the nineteenth century, and which bears resemblance to the power struggle in Hegel’s Master/ Slave dialectic. This notion of sexual confession is entirely relevant to *Ladies Almanack*. Foucault wrote:

The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile; a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated; and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation.<sup>40</sup>

I have quoted at length because the implications that this statement has on a reading of *Ladies Almanack* are significant. The power relationship described here by Foucault, innate to the act of telling, or ‘confessing’, and receiving make the reader complicit in the Sapphic interactions recounted by the characters. In this way, Barnes undermines the political authority that denies non-heterosexual romantic bonds by bringing Sapphism to every reader of *Ladies Almanack* through the inherent relationship (bond) between text and reader. In a sense, this technique works similarly to Barnes’s rewriting of history through the incorporation of archaic language with modern issues, as discussed in the previous chapter. Foucault uses the term ‘ritual’ to describe the act of confessing, which, through primitivism’s focus on ritual, aligns confession to the primitive and to the most basic of human needs. In this way, *Ladies Almanack* can be read as a text that is propelled by the ritualistic need to simultaneously confess and judge. The acts of informing and confessing operate on several levels within the text. In disclosing

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<sup>38</sup> James Kiernan, ‘Insanity: Sexual Perversion’, p. 481.

<sup>39</sup> Foucault, *Op Cit.*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

information about her sexual escapades to fellow characters, Musset confesses and seeks an audience from whom she will either gain judgement or exoneration. An example of this exchange is during the month of May, in which Musset engages in oral sex with Doll Furious in the presence of Patience Scalpel, thereby removing the part in which she is supposed to feel guilt and angst for her actions. Instead, Musset seeks approval and redemption through confession during and immediately after the sexual act: ‘Patience Scalpel held forth in that divine and ethereal Voice for which she was noted... while amid the Rugs Dame Musset brought Doll Furious to a certainty.’ (LA 244) This moment is a very literal display of anti-Sapphic sentiment in action. Scalpel, the representative of social and political resistance, witnesses this act by saying “‘What... can you women see in each other? Where is the Parting of the Ways and the Horseman that hunts? Where”, she reflected, “there is Prostitution and Drunkenness, there is bound to be Immorality””. (LA 243) The fascination/repulsion impulse that dominates *Repulsive Women* is also at play in this moment, as Scalpel (society) could leave and yet chooses to stay and bear witness to the homosexual act, thus displaying the same kind of attraction towards confession (the ritual of power) that Foucault describes and the attraction towards repulsion that *Repulsive Women* implies.

The same confession-power dynamic that exists between Musset and the characters of *Ladies Almanack* is present between the characters and the omniscient narrator, who relays the anecdotes of Sapphic activity to the reader. Ironically, by acting as the intermediary between the characters and the reader, the omniscient narrator does in fact assume a degree of responsibility by becoming the confessor and placing the reader in the position of power, as the one to whom all is confessed. In this way, we (the readers) have unwillingly, and unknowingly adopted a side in the power ritual surrounding *Ladies Almanack*’s sexual confessions. The repetitive act of confession and reception in *Ladies Almanack* suggests that forgiveness is continually sought, which seems misaligned with *Ladies Almanack*’s overriding pro-Sapphism stance.

## **Queer Almanacs**

Katherine Walker suggests that almanacs from the early modern period ‘articulate a narrative of human experience... of the body and environment’ due to the information and advice

contained within them on medical issues, farming, parenthood, and so on.<sup>41</sup> This assertion is applicable to *Ladies Almanack* and in particular, Dame Musset, described as follows:

Evangeline Musset... was one Grand Red Cross for the Pursuance, the Relief and the Distraction, of such Girls as in their Hinder Parts, and their Fore Parts, and in whatsoever Parts did suffer them the most, lament Cruelly, be it Itch of Palm, or Quarters most horribly burning, which do oft occur in the Spring of the Year, or at those Times when they do sit upon warm and cozy Material, such as Fur, or thick and Oriental Rugs... (LA p. 218)

This rather long and winding opening sentence, which continues for some lines beyond the extract above, is indicative of the sharp satire, exaggeration and animalism which continue throughout the text. At this early stage, the narrator also informs the reader that the central focus of this text will be Musset and her appreciation of and interactions with other women. This personal insight into aspects of the most intimate bodily experiences of the characters is presented through the presence of both the omniscient narrator and the anecdotes that Musset herself tells within the text.

After the introduction, the first month of the almanac is January. Barnes immediately subverts the reader's expectations by introducing Musset in middle-age during January, rather than youth, as one might anticipate with the first month of the calendar. Beginning the almanac and account of Musset's life with Musset in middle age reinforces the notion of Musset as separate from the other characters in the text, as a unique example of the first lesbian and mother of all. In being presented to the reader as a middle-aged woman, it is as though Musset entered the world in this state, as an all-knowing adult, a notion reinforced in the second of two accounts of Musset's birth, in the month of March. The suggestion that Musset has always been an adult, or at least had the consciousness of an adult, removes much of her fallibility.

A small column during the month of February, titled 'SAINTS DAYS' (LA 226-229) outlines Musset's life from birth.<sup>42</sup> In this additional column one learns of the days on which 'Dame Musset was sainted, and for...[which] things' (LA 226). In this way, *Ladies Almanack* works as a form of biography, reminding one that the almanac was one of the earliest forms of biography. Adam Smyth notes that diaries in the contemporary sense only appeared towards

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<sup>41</sup> Katherine Walker, 'Early Modern Almanacs and *The Witch of Edmonton*', *Early Modern Literary Studies* 18:1&2 (2015), p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> This is the first account of Musset's birth. The second is entirely different, explaining, in the month of March, that angels created Musset.

the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>43</sup> In the early modern period, through to the nineteenth century, almanacs proved to be a popular format in which readers recorded the events of their lives in a coherent and structured way. Readers would write notes alongside the dates and information provided in the almanac, recording the past and future events of their own lives. This practice was so common that almanacs began being published in two forms: ‘blanks’ and ‘sorts’. The production of blanks began in the early sixteenth century and were almanacs that provided specific blank pages for the reader to add his or her own notes, while sorts were regular almanacs without added blanks space. A fitting example of a ‘blank’ is *The Boston Almanac*. Although this almanac came into being a long time after the early modern period (in the nineteenth century), it serves to show how blanks worked, and also highlights the lasting popularity of the continued trend. For each month of the year *The Boston Almanac* contains a list of important dates and events on the left page and on the right, provides an empty space that resembles the format of a diary, entitled ‘Memoranda for’ followed by the month. In this section, there is enough space for the reader to write a line of notes/tasks/memories for each day.<sup>44</sup> If a reader’s preference was for an almanac that was only printed as a sort, it was possible to pay binders to add additional blank pages to turn the almanac into a blank.

Much of the information presented within almanacs was and is designed to be applied practically to life and relayed as useful, factual knowledge. As the anecdotes of *Ladies Almanack* are communicated in an almanac format, the act of confession is also transformative for the reader, who will venture into the world and pass on that which has been confessed to them. In this way, *Ladies Almanack* worked covertly to challenge and change lingering Victorian notions around female homosexuality.

In addition to useful, factual information, almanacs were also popular sources of instruction and amusement. To take an example, the 1713 edition of *The Ladies Diary*, mentioned previously, included such varied items as zodiac signs and explanations; holy dates and the queen’s birthday; enigmas and readers’ responses to these; advertisements for items such as Squire’s Grand Elixir and an artificial set of teeth; around fifty pages on ‘GREAT News from the Stars’; information on the weather and an interpretation of hieroglyphics.<sup>45</sup> The manner in

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<sup>43</sup> Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 2-3.

<sup>44</sup> For an example, see: S. N. Dickinson, *The Boston Almanac for the year 1842* (Boston: Thomas Groom & Co, 1842).  
[archive.org/stream/1842bostonalmana00ameruoft#page/n7/mode/2up](https://archive.org/stream/1842bostonalmana00ameruoft#page/n7/mode/2up) Accessed 30/06/2017.

<sup>45</sup> Squire’s Grand Elixir was a bottle of liquid that was sold as a treatment for everything from colds to decay of the spirit.

which almanacs such as *The Ladies Diary* combined the serious and slightly more frivolous provided an ideal base for Barnes's work as it already existed in a queer, hybrid format.

The popularity of almanacs drew a great deal of attention from satirists long before Barnes satirised the form in *Ladies Almanack*. Smyth explains that

In early modern England the almanac reader and annotator was a resonant (if ridiculous) figure: he or she was, in fact, ceaselessly ridiculed as provincial, uneducated, and hopelessly aspirational. And mock almanacs – that is printed texts that parodied the almanac form – took particular delight in lampooning gullible annotating readers. Poor Robin includes mock reader notes printed in the margins: 'Lost my best Shirt off the hedge'; 'Nell laught [sic] at the story of Fryer & Boy till she pist [sic]'.<sup>46</sup>

In Smyth's view, the satire of almanacs focused heavily, and most obviously, on the ridicule of its readers, though one could argue that satire of reader's annotations is actually satire of the almanac itself, which as a form, encouraged readerly contributions, whether in the form of published responses, or private annotations that no one but the almanac owner would see. Almanacs themselves encouraged a sort of audience participation.

If one views the almanac as one of the earliest forms of autobiography, by extension it can be said that autobiography began as an intertextual practice, which combined both public and private. This interplay between the group and the individual is at work in *Ladies Almanack* in the form of the pre-existing almanac dates (clock time), which concern the general public, positioned alongside the individual and private experience (lived time) in the form of personal annotations added after purchase. *Ladies Almanack* was received by Barnes's intimate circle much as regular almanacs were by the public. Barney annotated her copy of the text, attempting to match the characters to their real-life counterparts. Barnes expands this notion of the hybrid private and public text to develop a hybrid private and public character in *Nightwood*. *Nightwood*'s Felix Volkbein embodies both the individual and the group. Volkbein is described in the following way: 'out of a diversity of bloods, from the crux of a thousand impossible situations, Felix had become the accumulated and single – the embarrassed.' (N 8) The combination of disparate situations and the influence of the public and private that created Felix leave him mentally and emotionally homeless. He is temporally and geographically displaced, and thereby relegated to the space of the Other.

A common feature across almanacs of the early modern period was the medical discussion of the four humours (Fig. 9) and the Man of Signs (Fig. 10).

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<sup>46</sup> Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England*, p. 21.

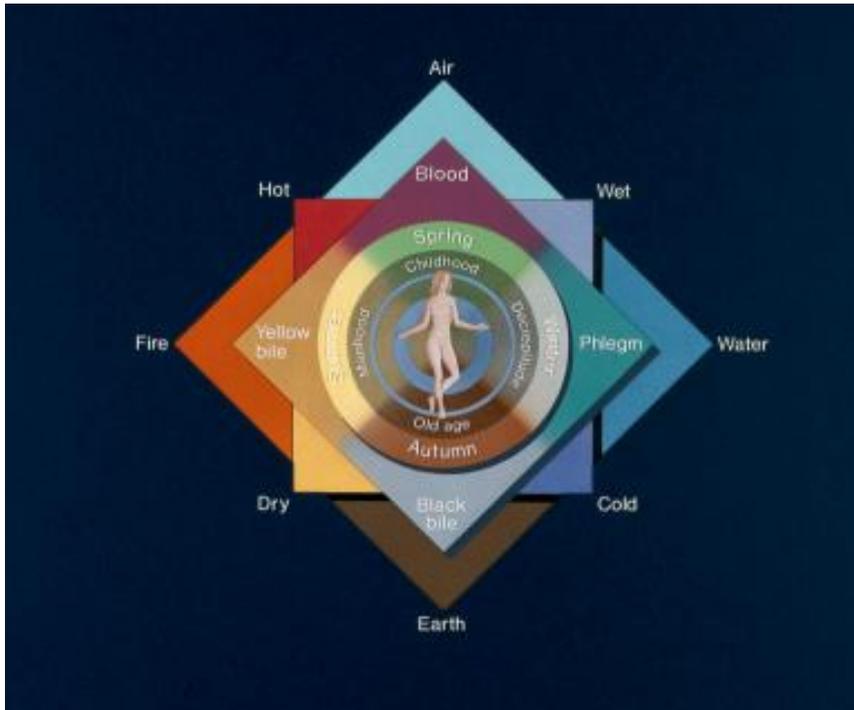


Fig. 9. 'Humours'.

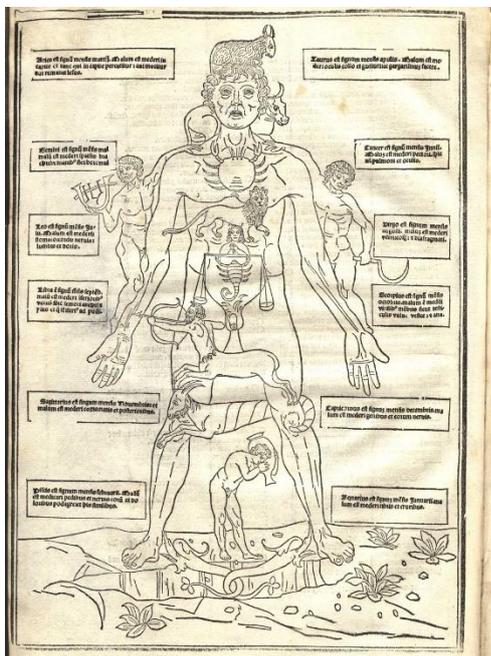


Fig. 10. 'The Man of Signs'.

The four humours are blood, black bile, yellow bile and phlegm. Each of these humours relates to distinct seasons, life stages, weather elements/conditions and temperatures.<sup>47</sup> Healthy women were linked to coldness and moistness, while healthy men were hot and dry. The balance between the humours was ever shifting and changed from childhood to old age, with

<sup>47</sup> See Fig. 9 for correlations.

youth attached to heat and moistness, and old age corresponding to coldness and dryness.<sup>48</sup> While the four humours are never explicitly mentioned in *Ladies Almanack*, it is interesting to note that Barnes subverts the humour expectations. Spring is the season in *Ladies Almanack* during which the characters are highly sexual and sexually active, whereas according to the humours, spring is linked to childhood, and thus to virginity. The connection between childhood and sexuality recalls Musset's abuse and the many sexological theories that positioned homosexuality as a sexual perversion and a disorder to ideally be cured in childhood.

The Man of Signs makes a prominent appearance in *Ladies Almanack*. Traditionally, the Man of Signs is a drawing of a man with arrows attaching the different zodiac signs to parts of his body, for example Sagittarius to the thighs and Leo to the chest. Medical astrology (iatromathematics) postulated that the sun, moon and planets had a direct influence on patients' ailments. Various body parts were also thought to be more or less powerful throughout the year. In *Ladies Almanack* Barnes engages in a queering of the Man of Signs in two ways. She has drawn the man of signs as the Woman of Signs, and added jovial quips (Fig. 11), for example Gemini is linked to 'the back, backward leaning' (LA 264) and Cancer is linked to 'the hungry heart' (LA 264).



Fig. 11  
Djuna Barnes, 'Depiction of  
zodiac' c. 1928.

The Man of Signs was popular in the early modern period and depicted connections between the parts of the body, and astrological signs and temperaments. Barnes's Woman of Signs

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<sup>48</sup> For discussion of this, see: Katherine Crawford, 'The Good, The Bad, and the Textual: Approaches to the study of the body and sexuality, 1500-1750, *The Routledge History of Sex and the Body: 1500 to the Present* ed. Sarah Toulalan and Kate Fisher (London & New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 26.

adapts the traditional Man of Signs to incorporate the standard use and meaning to an *assessment* of the physical body. For example, an image of a scorpion, representing the zodiac sign Scorpio, is linked to the genitalia in Barnes's illustration. The connection between the sign Scorpio, the genitals and the scorpion is standard within astrology, however Barnes adds the witticism, 'the love of life' to the line that points to the Woman of Signs' vagina. In this way, Barnes's nude Woman of Signs alludes to the medical examinations carried out on homosexual people in the late nineteenth century and, again, rejects the presentation of Sapphism, or female sexuality in general, as shameful, repulsive or unnatural. Barnes's Woman of Signs also pre-emptly Foucault's later statement that, 'since sexuality was a medical and medicalizable object, one had to try and detect it—as a lesion, a dysfunction, or a symptom—in the depths of the organism, or on the surface of the skin, or among all the signs of behaviour', through the complete dissection of the visual and hidden aspects of the Woman of Signs.<sup>49</sup>

The Woman of Signs is nude with the exception of a large hat and a necktie. The juxtaposition between the excessive respectability of the hat and necktie, and her otherwise nakedness presents her as a ridiculous figure and undermines the claim the traditional Man of Signs makes to superior wisdom about the inner workings of the individual. The combination of the outdoor clothing and nudity also represent the dichotomy between the public and private body, first raised as a motif in *Repulsive Women*.

As previously mentioned, the style of illustration in *Ladies Almanack* clearly takes inspiration from woodcuts, which, much like the almanac format, has a long history and a rich tradition. Invented in China in the ninth century, woodcuts spread throughout the world primarily because of the low cost and simplicity with which they could be produced. Woodcuts were particularly popular in Germany during the sixteenth-century Reformation, where they were used as an effective method of propaganda. The connection between woodcuts, religion and mass-produced propaganda was preserved in the early-modern almanac tradition, which frequently included woodcuts depicting religious scenes. In *Emblems and Hieroglyphicks of the Life of Man* (1812) Francis Quarles discusses a series of 'emblems', which are very similar in design and theme to the woodcuts included in early modern almanacs. Scenes depicted in these emblems portray the human, divine (for example, angels), plants and the weather, and often also carry a religious or moral message. Through her incorporation of Sapphism and satire into *Ladies Almanack's* images, Barnes queers the form of traditional woodcuts and emblems.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Foucault, *Op Cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>50</sup> For an example, see Fig. 12.

Working in the style of woodcuts also allowed Barnes greater freedom regarding censoring, as the overall effect of this style is unthreatening, much less so than the lurid images of *Repulsive Women*. Instead, the woodcut images of *Ladies Almanack* add to the bawdy humour present throughout the text, depicting the characters and their activities (sexual and otherwise) in a facetious manner.

Additionally, much like the almanac format, the long-established tradition of woodcuts adds to the degree of authenticity wielded by *Ladies Almanack*. Further, woodcuts were the original mass-produced pictorial method of the people, engaging with and influencing a wide public platform. In the introduction to *Emblems and Hieroglyphicks*, H. Smith wrote ‘Altho’ there have been many excellent Pieces wrote, and many curious Devices invented for the Instruction and Amusement of young People; yet I don’t know of any so well calculated to serve the Purpose both of Religion and Recreation at the same Time, as this of *Emblems*.’ Barnes pushes the combination of amusement and instruction further in *Ladies Almanack* than typically seen in the almanac tradition, as almanacs have not typically been used as a modality to incite mass social transformation.

*Ladies Almanack* initiated the start of Barnes’s relationship with the almanac format and woodcut-like illustrations. Throughout the period of 1930 to 1931, Barnes continued to work with the almanac format. She illustrated ‘Knickerbocker Almanac’ in *New York World Magazine* and both illustrated and wrote for ‘Playgoers Almanac’ in *Theatre Guild Magazine*. Illustrations from across the year during which Barnes worked on the ‘Playgoers Almanac’ show the same use of the woodcut style found in *Ladies Almanack*. A double page spread written and illustrated by Barnes from February 1931 shows this use of the woodcut style of illustration, as well as a very similar type of ornamental decoration bordering the page as those outlining the main monthly images in *Ladies Almanack*.<sup>51</sup> Although the overall effect of the ‘Playgoers Almanac’ is a facetious one, the style of writing is contemporary and subject matter includes genuine reviews of contemporary entertainment (stage and screen), along with local news and an ‘Aspects of the Heavens’ section, also reminiscent of *Ladies Almanack*. This section reads, ‘The SUN enters Pisces For No Good. It is *Predicted* that a Wave of crime & corruption—the same OLD WAVE—will sweep the middle Northern STATES, & actors of all *kinds* would better say their beads.’<sup>52</sup> The satire within this statement is extremely similar

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<sup>51</sup> Djuna Barnes, ‘Pasteup of double page spread from ‘Playgoers Almanac’’, c. February 1931, Djuna Barnes papers, Special collections, University of Maryland Libraries, [digital.lib.umd.edu/image?pid=umd:111311](http://digital.lib.umd.edu/image?pid=umd:111311) Accessed 13/3/2017

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

to that of *Ladies Almanack*, but seems somewhat more misplaced in the ‘Playgoers Almanack’ due to the lack of obvious humour elsewhere on the page.

### Angelic and Primal Sapphism

Musset’s defiance in response to others’ expectations recalls the similar rebelliousness of Lady Cornflower’s daughter in Mina Loy’s unpublished manuscript, ‘Goy Israels’ (written c. 1920s-1930s).<sup>53</sup> Aimee Pozorski describes ‘Goy Israels’ as an ‘autobiographical narrative about growing up the daughter of a gentile mother and a Jewish father’ and the impossibility of determining one’s identity in the midst of opposing familial and racial forces.<sup>54</sup> The dislocated and hopeless Otherness that *Nightwood*’s wandering Jew, Felix Volkbein, experiences permeates Loy’s ‘Goy Israels’. In this manuscript, Loy responds to both *Ladies Almanack* and Marianne Moore’s poem, ‘Those Various Scalpels’ (1917). *Ladies Almanack* presents Loy (in the guise of Patience Scalpel) as a symbol of old-fashioned Victorian repression, while Moore’s poem depicts Loy as an emotionless figure turned cold through obsessive and fruitless waiting for her missing husband, Arthur Cravan, who disappeared without warning in 1918. The speaker says of Loy:

your dress, a magnificent square  
cathedral tower of uniform  
and at the same time diverse appearance—a  
species of vertical vineyard, rustling in the storm  
of conventional opinion—are they weapons or scalpels?<sup>55</sup>

Loy is depicted as the essence of authority, structure and stability. Her dress resembles a ‘cathedral’, a ‘tower’ of ‘uniform’. Although, the speaker suggests that there is something about Loy that defies ‘conventional opinion’, which is an aspect absent from Barnes’s Patience Scalpel. As Barnes deliberately acknowledges Moore’s presentation of Loy through the name Patience *Scalpel*, one must infer that Barnes also chose to capitalise upon Moore’s presentation of Loy as conventional and unmoveable in her rigidity, in order to position Loy/Scalpel as

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<sup>53</sup> Mina Loy, ‘Goy Israels’, undated, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, [discover.odai.yale.edu/ydc/Record/3549078](http://discover.odai.yale.edu/ydc/Record/3549078) Accessed 07/12/2018.

<sup>54</sup> Aimee L. Pozorski, ‘Eugenicist Mistress & Ethnic Mother: Mina Loy and Futurism, 1913-1917’, *MELUS* 30:3 (Fall 2005), p. 44.

<sup>55</sup> Marianne Moore, ‘Those Various Scalpels’ Poetry Foundation, accessed 30/10/2018. [poetryfoundation.org/poems/51864/those-various-scalpels](http://poetryfoundation.org/poems/51864/those-various-scalpels)

representative of the resistance faced by women in Sapphic relationships. Both Moore's and Barnes's use of the word scalpel connotes surgical precision, threat and a lack of warmth. Situated within 'Those Various Scalpels' this lack of warmth translates as an absence of human feeling, and in *Ladies Almanack*, as a lack of empathy for those engaged in relationships outside of heterosexual convention.

In Loy's discussion of Sapphism in 'Goy Israels', Lady Cornflower tells Mrs Israels that regarding her heterosexual marriage, she 'lived in an exstasy [sic]... It has been a very beautiful mystery to me – why I should have been singled out for such happiness... We were often considered the handsomest couple in London.'<sup>56</sup> Lady Cornflower then takes delight in relaying to Mrs Israels the abnormalities in the marriages of others. The narrator informs the reader that 'Fifteen years later Lady Cornflower's "angel" [her child] wearing a pink silk shirt and a monocle flagged with a black ribbon, broad as a Victorian bell-pull, advocates marriage among women ----'.<sup>57</sup> Of course, the position of Lady Cornflower's daughter as a prominent, political lesbian and activist in relation to Lady Cornflower is ironic and can also be read as a punishment for the heteronormative Lady Cornflower who proudly eschews the marginal and Other. In this way, one might read the Sapphic position of Lady Cornflower's daughter as Loy's reaction against Barnes's and Moore's presentation of her as a stalwart supporter of conservative heterosexual marriages and traditional nineteenth-century values.

The descriptions of both Dame Musset and Lady Cornflower's daughter set forth a binary present throughout *Ladies Almanack*. On the one hand, this text suggests that its characters are empowered in their sexuality and on the other, that they are completely disempowered, either longing to be men, or to share the same rights as men, continually seeking to repent and be forgiven. *Ladies Almanack* begins with the declaration that Dame Musset should have been born a boy: 'Evangeline Musset... had been developed in the Womb of her most gentle Mother to be a Boy, when therefore, she came forth an Inch or so less than this, she paid no Heed to the Error' (LA 219). Rather than presenting a way of life or set of social guidelines to support the characters of *Ladies Almanack*, and more broadly, homosexual women in the early-to-mid twentieth century, the text presents these figures as women who yearn for the rights already attributed to men and who long to 'fit in'. One recognises this desire for acceptance during the moment in which Lady Buck-and-Balk and Tilly Tweed-in-Blood express to Dame Musset their desire to marry, exclaiming 'Just because woman falls, in this Age, to Woman, does that mean that we are not to recognize Morals?... have it set before the House of Lords. For when a

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<sup>56</sup> Loy, 'Goy Israels'.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

Girl falls in love, with no matter what, should she not be protected in some way' (LA 231). These lines suggest that it was not enough for women to fall in love, their love and relationship must also be approved by society. This section of *Ladies Almanack* satirises *The Well of Loneliness*, in which the (female) protagonist Stephen spends all but a few pages of the novel in angst due to her belief that she cannot protect her partner, Mary, through the recognition of legal marriage, or prevent them both from living in sin. Gilbert Highet's *The Anatomy of Satire* is particularly relevant here. Highet wrote:

when he [the writer or artist] exaggerates the faults and underscores the foibles of his victim, so that the audience sees something new and ridiculous, or contemptible, or hateful, in the character of the person mimicked, and laugh with a certain malicious delight, and thereafter admires the original a little less than it did before... then the act is parody, and the effect it produces is the effect of satire.<sup>58</sup>

When this theory is applied to *Ladies Almanack*, it is clear that through the perspective of a positionless and unaccountable narrator Barnes criticizes the real-life counterparts of *Ladies Almanack*'s characters and Hall for their indulgent self-pity.

It might be argued that *Ladies Almanack* is a light-hearted satire. Indeed, few have recognised this text as a covert, spiteful gibe at Barnes's inner circle, disregarding the biting satire as the logical reason Barnes chose to simply sign the labyrinthian work, 'A LADY OF FASHION'.<sup>59</sup> However, one critic who has argued that *Ladies Almanack* is thinly veiled attack is Karla Jay, who claims the following:

To make her way among the literary denizens, Barnes had to ingratiate herself with a group she might be expected to shun under other circumstances. She was torn, therefore, between two sets of mores... she managed to accommodate both by joining the group on one hand and mocking and denouncing it on the other.<sup>60</sup>

While it is conceivable, given the numerous accounts of a cantankerous Barnes, that she may have believed herself to be suffering through the company of fellow literati, I would suggest that Barnes's work presents her as someone who suffered, or believed she suffered, through the company of all, save a select few. Nearly every interviewee with whom Barnes met, and on whom she published was made to resemble something of a caricature in her work, and the

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<sup>58</sup> Gilbert Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 68-69.

<sup>59</sup> I suggest in my examination of *Ladies Almanack* that there is no such thing as entirely friendly satire. Thus, whichever way one reads *Ladies Almanack*, one finds a significant degree of spite in Barnes's portrayal of the characters.

<sup>60</sup> Karla Jay, 'The Outsider among the Expatriates: Djuna Barnes' Satire on the Ladies of the Almanack', *Silence and Power: A Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes* ed. Mary Lynn Broe (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), p. 193.

majority of Barnes's texts from *The Book of Repulsive Women* through to *Nightwood*, depict members of Barnes's family and those with whom she was close as unflattering, exaggerated versions of themselves.

During the same month in which Tilly Tweed-in-Blood and Lady Buck-and-Balk bemoan their inability to marry, the reader re-learns of the birth of the 'first' lesbian: Dame Musset. This account of Musset's birth informs the reader that she was created in heaven and is a product of the angels of each zodiac sign:

all the Angels, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricornus, Aquarius, Pisces, all, all gathered together, so close that they were not recognizable, one from the other. And not nine months later, there was heard under the Dome of Heaven a great Crowing, and from the Midst, an Egg, as incredible as a thing forgotten, fell to the Earth, and striking, split and hatched, and from out of it stepped one saying "Pardon me, I must be going!" And this was the first Woman born with a Difference. (*LA* 238)

Musset's angelic birth takes place just after the fall of Satan, thereby writing Musset and homosexuality into the earliest events of the Christian calendar. The dichotomy between reverence and debasement placed on homosexuality seen in early sexological theories, as well as throughout *Ladies Almanack*, is again present in this instance. Through her creation and birth by angels, Musset is sacred and holy, however the fact that she emerges from an egg, amongst bird-like crowing, and then falls from heaven, reduces the birth of the first lesbian to a primal, animalistic, earthly event. As with Satan, Musset has fallen from her original place of reverence. The angelic creation of Musset resembles a Sapphic orgy, showing, again, how *Ladies Almanack* undermines the prominence of religion in the almanac from which she drew inspiration.

The zodiac signs relate to the four elements: earth, wind, air and fire, as well as a range of temperaments (recalling the Man of Signs). That the angels of each of the signs have come together to create Dame Musset suggests that she is a complete being, embodying every aspect necessary to keep life, and the earth, alive and continually replenishing itself. She also contains every human trait available. The presentation of Musset as entirely self-sufficient and all-encompassing seems to draw on Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), in which a utopian society comprising solely women procreate via parthenogenesis, which conveniently circumvents the procreation issue and, at the same time, alludes to Sapphism through the lack of involvement of men and male reproductive organs in the reproductive process. In *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in*

*Social Evolution* (1898), Gilman expresses an interest in the socially created position of women in society, arguing that:

From the time our children are born, we use every means known to accentuate sex-distinction in both boy and girl; and the reason that the boy is not so hopelessly marked by it as the girl is that he has the whole field of human expression open to him besides. In our steady insistence on proclaiming sex-distinction we have grown to consider most human attributes as masculine attributes, for the simple reason that they were allowed to men and forbidden to women.<sup>61</sup>

Gilman emphasises both the prevalence of the inequality between men and women because of social definitions and expectations, and the limited space occupiable by women. The highlighted artificial nature of the man/woman divide is only overcome in *Herland* and *Ladies Almanack* by reclaiming the so-called 'masculine attributes' of which Gilman wrote through either the elimination of men, or through the blessing of the divine in the case of Musset. In this way, the unreality of finding an equal balance between the sexes, both practically and socially, is emphasised. The women of *Herland* are free to create children alone or together, and once the child is born it is raised in an all-female community, where if sexual desires arise, they will necessarily be directed towards other women, thus, Sapphism is alluded to indirectly.

In addition to combining both religion and astrology in the second account of Musset's birth and the birth of homosexuality in order to undermine external revered sources, Barnes uses Musset's birth to engage with the notion of the third sex. This is done more covertly than in *Women Lovers*. As a product of divine creation, Musset is (and by extension all homosexual women are) separate from heterosexual people, actually reinforcing the notion that homosexual people form a distinct, third group. In the case of *Ladies Almanack* they are neither male nor female, but part human and part divine being, clearly implying that this third group form the most advanced, moral section of society. Again, Barnes takes that which is pre-established – in this case the theory of Urnings – and reverses it, making the 'third group' superior rather than defective.

The implication that homosexuality can be traced back to the start of Western civilisation is reinforced through the image accompanying the month of May (Fig. 12).

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<sup>61</sup> Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution*, ed. Michael Kimmel & Amy Aronson (Berkeley, LA, London: University of California Press, 1998), p. 51.

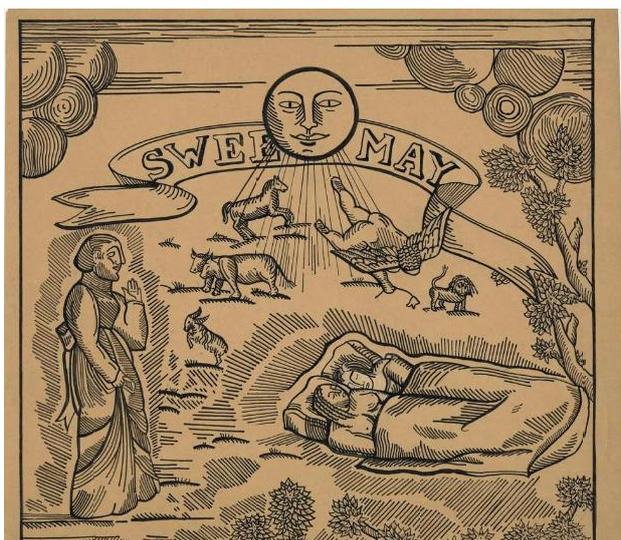


Fig. 12.  
Djuna Barnes, 'Sweet May  
illustration', c. 1928.

This illustration depicts a Garden of Eden-like scene, including plants and flowers, weather elements (most centrally the sun), animals and an angel. At the front of this image are two women asleep on a mattress, one is topless, and a clothed woman standing over them in apparent shock, this is Patience Scalpel. Scalpel is positioned far into the left-hand side of the image, gathering up her skirt in one hand as if to prevent it from encountering anything unclean, while her other hand is raised to shoulder height, palm turned out, as though refusing something. Exactly the same figure of Scalpel is first seen in the image accompanying the month of January, suggesting that Scalpel's resistance towards *Ladies Almanack's* homosexual women, and society's resistance, is a constant factor. Scalpel says to Musset:

In my time... Women came to enough trouble by lying abed with the Father of their Children. What then in this good Year of our Lord has paired them like to like, with never a Beard between them... they love the striking Hour, nor would breed the Moments that go to it. Sluts!... Are good Mothers to supply them with Luxuries in the next Generation (LA 224-225)

Scalpel's rebuke of Musset centres predominantly on her inability to understand a woman's desire for other women, and the question of procreation, specifically the suggestion that homosexual women forego their responsibility to procreate by entering into relationships in which they will not become pregnant. This is a viewpoint that was widely propagated outside of *Ladies Almanack*. Ellis wrote 'I should say that every healthy woman ought once in her life to go through the experiences not only of sexual intercourse [with a man] but of child-bearing and maternity.'<sup>62</sup> Again, the suggestion resurfaces that a woman must necessarily be mentally

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<sup>62</sup> British Library Department of Manuscripts, No. ADD70524, Havelock Ellis Papers, letter from Ellis to Symonds, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1887.

or physically deficient if she does not desire these particular experiences. Barnes refutes such implications by suggesting that there can be fruitfulness within Sapphic relationships, as in the picture paired with the month of May, which suggests extreme opulence, fertility and abundance. Positioning the two women lying together amid an array of natural imagery, and directly on the ground, ties them inextricably with Mother Earth and all that is natural and ultimately unstoppable: suggesting that when nature is left to its own devices without human intervention, it resumes control with renewed force.

Almost ten years after the publication of *Ladies Almanack*, Barnes re-addressed the idea of procreation in Sapphic relationships in *Nightwood*. Robin smashes a doll given to her by Nora, which is symbolic of their coming together and shared creation. Barnes suggests that in lesbian relationships, one woman naturally fulfils the role of the mother within the partnership while the other slips into the role of the child. In *Nightwood* it is Nora who takes on the role of Mother and in *Ladies Almanack* it is Dame Musset. This dynamic is also present in Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, in which Stephen acts as a mother figure to Mary. In these ways, through the sharing of responsibility for a symbolic, mutual possession such as a doll, and/or the unspoken fulfilment of the roles of mother and child by the two women in the relationship, Barnes addresses the ways in which the 'issue' of procreation in lesbian relationships has been dealt with by women involved in same-sex partnerships.

A further example of Barnes's direct engagement with sexology centres on the nineteenth- to twentieth-century medical trend of carrying out physical examinations on homosexual men and women to try and discover the 'cause' of their sexuality, mentioned earlier. Using light humour, Barnes addresses and challenges such objectification and the act of reducing people and their emotions to body parts. Musset behaves in the same way as the sexologists to which *Ladies Almanack* responds. She says to Daisy Downpour:

If... I could mould the Pot nearer to the Heart's desire, I would have my Scullion's Eye lie in the Head of Billings-On-Coo, with the Breasts of Haughty on the Hips of Doll, on the Leg of Moll, with the Shins of Maize, under the Scullion's Eye which lies in the Head of Billings-On-Coo. The buttocks of a Girl I saw take a slip and slither one peelish day in Fall, when on her way to Devotion in the side Aisles of the Church of the *St Germain des Prés*, to lie on the back of the Hips of Doll, on the Leg of Moll, whose Shins are Maize's, all under the Eye of the Scullion, Etc. (LA 277)

Piecing together women in the manner of Victor Frankenstein creating his monster allows Musset to reclaim her sexuality and the sexual attraction of women from the sexological

theorists. In their case studies, sexologists de-sexualised the female form and reduced it to a series of abnormalities, as with case XL. *Sexual Inversion* states:

They [homosexual women] are not usually attractive to the average man... Their faces may be plain or ill-made... On the whole, they are women who are not very robust and well-developed, physically or nervously, and who are not well adapted for child-bearing... One may perhaps say that they are the pick of the women whom the average man would pass by. No doubt this is often the reason why they are open to homosexual advances'.<sup>63</sup>

*Ladies Almanack* responds to the suggestion that women may become lesbians because they are unattractive to men by showing Musset positively observing the same body parts that Ellis, Symonds, Krafft-Ebing, and others have assessed negatively. Musset uses these parts to build and create, rather than reduce and undermine the women in whom she observes them. Each body part has been selected because of its especial appeal, rather than its perceived irregularity, thereby reversing the intention of physical examinations to find and highlight abnormalities in both the women desired and the women desiring.

Musset's corporal account of attraction and lust also repossess homosexual desire. This is shown through passages in which the reader learns of Musset's sexual exploits. These moments in the text are significant because of the lack of bashfulness and repentance that Musset shows:

in my day I was a pioneer and a menace.... I recall one old dear Countess who was not to be convinced until I, fervid with Truth, had finally so floored her in every capacious Room of the dear ancestral Home, that I knew to a button, how every Ticking was made! (*LA* 246-247)

In addition to painting a very vivid image of Musset's adventures, the above extract also rejects the suggestion that homosexual women find one another attractive because heterosexual men do not want them, instead showing that Musset was so much of a 'pioneer and a menace' that she lured heterosexual women away from men. That being said, Musset's conquering exploits are presented as violent. Extremely so in the image accompanying the month of November (Fig. 13).

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<sup>63</sup> Ellis and Symonds, *Op Cit.*, p. 167.

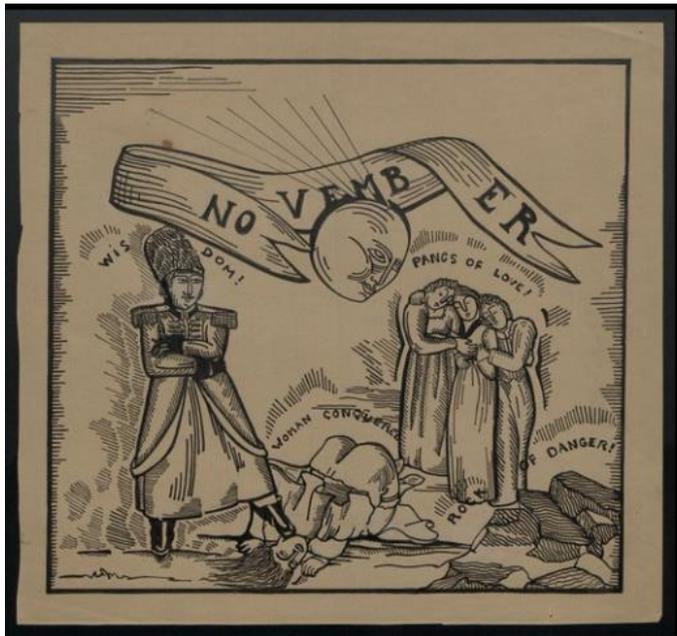


Fig. 13.  
Djuna Barnes,  
'November', c. 1928.

In this image Musset, encircled by the word 'wisdom', stands, arms folded, with one foot on the neck of a woman forced to kneel on the floor, with her exposed rear in the air. In contrast to the image accompanying the month of May, which implies warmth and tenderness, November's image is cold and stark, showing Musset, the kneeling woman and three women in background huddled together for comfort and surrounded by a barren landscape, rocks and the moon. Here, Musset is presented as purely self-interested and quite sadistic. If Musset acts as a representative for homosexual women, by extension they too are now depicted as sadistic and primal in their behaviour. The suggestion that Musset, her circle of acquaintances and homosexual women broadly, are incapable of forming respectful, lasting relationships resurfaces in the final month of *Ladies Almanack*.

In the account of Musset's death and the many burials she receives in December, the women of *Ladies Almanack* are portrayed as both eccentric and uncivilised. Musset receives various burials, because the characters cannot agree amongst themselves on just one kind. Even surrounded by death, Musset's friends are preoccupied with sex:

when they came to the ash that was left of her, all had burned but the Tongue, and this flamed, and would not suffer Ash, and it played about upon the handful that had been she indeed. And seeing this, there was a great Commotion, and the sound of Skirts swirled in haste, and the Patter of much running in feet, but Señorita Fly-About came down upon that Urn first, and beatitude played and flickered upon her Face, and from under her Skirts a slow Smoke issued, though no thing burned, and the Mourners barked about her covetously, and all Night through, it was bruited abroad that the barking continued, like the mournful baying of Hounds in the Hills, though by Dawn there was no sound, And as the day came some hundred Women were seen bent in Prayer. (LA 296)

In this extract, Señorita Fly-About receives oral sex from the disembodied tongue of Dame Musset, while the other characters of *Ladies Almanack* wait in anticipation for their turn upon the urn. One might argue that this extract opens with the suggestion that homosexual desire and passion cannot be suppressed and will not die as a passing concept as each homosexual person dies, however the extract moves into a less empowering place. Initially, it is the haste with which the women race to the urn to receive cunnilingus that suggests the main preoccupation of these women is sex, even though their mother figure has just died. Superficially, this image seems to support the hypothesis of Kiernan, who wrote that ‘It should be remembered that the lowest animals are bisexual.’<sup>64</sup> Not that the characters of *Ladies Almanack* are bisexual, but Kiernan’s sentiment is applicable to homosexual women as well as bisexual, in light of the fact that he considered any sexuality that was not heterosexuality to be the result of deficiencies and abnormalities.

Following Musset’s funeral, the characters of *Ladies Almanack* act in a manner that can hardly be called civilised. That Barnes did not intend these women, anticipating their turn upon the urn, to appear civilised in this moment is implied through comparisons of the group to a pack of wild dogs, highlighted through these terms: ‘barked’, ‘barking’, ‘baying’ and ‘Hounds’. Of course, one could argue that by showing these figures to be extremely proficient in sex (‘from under her Skirts a slow Smoke issued, though no thing burned’), and as thoroughly enjoying sex, Barnes makes one final attempt to reclaim homosexuality from theorists and scientists who attempted to reduce it to a medical disorder.

The euphoria that accompanies Musset’s funeral could also be viewed as harkening to the Pentecostal movement. In this light, Barnes plays with the term ‘speaking in tongues’, mocking religion as she has throughout the text. As the Pentecostal influence is closely linked to the promise of prophecy and healing, in this context, Sapphism is shown to be the future of sexuality and a great healer, protecting Musset’s friends from their grief.

Tradition and religion are conquered in the final image of *Ladies Almanack*. Inscribed upon Musset’s ‘Alter in the Temple of Love’<sup>65</sup> are the words:

WHERE FLOUNT I  
BE NO STAIR  
BE NO ROPE  
BE NO RUNG

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<sup>64</sup> Kiernan, ‘Insanity: Sexual Perversion’, p. 481.

<sup>65</sup> ‘The Temple of Love’ is surely a clear play on Natalie Barney’s *Temple à l’Amitié* (Temple of Friendship), which is the name she gave to the site of her salons at 20 rue Jacob, Paris.

MY WAY HUNG (LA 297)

The final line makes a pun of the word ‘hung’, in keeping with earlier references to Musset’s ‘sword’, and so the very last word assigned to Musset is sexual.

Even though in this concluding section of the text sexual acts and homosexuality have overpowered all and everything that sought to reject it, the inappropriateness of the moment and the primitive and animalistic manner in which the characters relish their turn upon the urn, tarnishes any sense of empowerment. The success of these figures is simply due to their uncontrolled lust and brutishness.

The moment with the urn is the final instance in which the activities of *Ladies Almanack*’s figures are described in comparison to, or with reference to animals. On thirty-four separate pages of *Ladies Almanack* Barnes writes in animalistic description. Each of these pages makes more than one reference to such animals as birds, horses, worms, cattle and fish. In this way, the characters of *Ladies Almanack* are linked to animality and primal urges throughout the text. This connection can be understood in two ways: that Musset and her circle are animalistic, or that their lesbianism (and homosexuality in general) is instinctive and innate, thus natural.

Barnes’s engagement with primal desires is prominent in *Ryder*, which I address in the next chapter, looking specifically at the text’s presentation of animality. I argue that through *Ryder*, Barnes suggests that the modernist interest in the primitive was misguided and unnecessary, instead suggesting that primitivism is innate to humanity. Although primitivism and animality are distinct categories, I outline a potential connection between the two and argue that *Ryder* can be read as a subtle criticism of modernism’s glamorization of, and fascination with, the primitive.

## Chapter 3

### ***Ryder*: The Primitive, the Primal and the Animal**

*Ryder* was published in 1928 in New York, the same year that *Ladies Almanack* was published across the Atlantic in Paris. However, unlike the focus on Sapphism in *Ladies Almanack*, *Ryder* displays a preoccupation with what it means to behave in a civilised or primitive way following the breakdown of traditional structures and values in post-World War I Britain and America. The text engages with these topics by challenging pre-established and accepted ideas around race, primitivism and animality, whilst also highlighting the detrimental effects of humans succumbing to their animalistic urges.

The polygamous Wendell Ryder is rejected by society and in turn, so is his family. *Ryder* warns of the consequences of failing to contribute to established social structure through the communal rejection of the Ryders, who are separated from, and marginalised by, society. Although the primal and primitive are distinct theoretical categories, one can find a degree of overlap between the two within the novel.<sup>1</sup> The family unit centred on Wendell and his numerous partners, the family's focus on art and music, and their repetitive, ritualistic behaviour all resemble accounts of tribal culture published by figures such as Harrison, Freud and J. G. Frazer. As such, I suggest that Barnes's negative reaction to the modernist reverence of primitive culture can also be found in *Ryder*. In addition, in *Ryder*, Barnes engages with the political and anthropological debates around race by subverting expectations of the primitive demographic.

In my introduction, I discussed the distinction between animality, which I see as being used to denote primal feeling, and the primitive, which I argued is more closely linked to ritual and superstition, as expressed by Harrison and the Cambridge Ritualists.<sup>2</sup> To illuminate Barnes's distinct approach to animality this chapter looks comparatively at the work of Lawrence and surrealist artist, Joan Miró, who similarly connect the animal and human to the grotesque.

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<sup>1</sup> In his afterword to *Ryder*, Paul West refers to the text as a novel. Although this term can only be used loosely with regard to *Ryder*, which includes poetry and a four-page play, as well as prose, I have not been able to come up with a more suitable category in which to place the text. For this reason, I will borrow from West and also refer to the text as a novel. For West's afterword, see: Djuna Barnes, *Ryder* (Champaign and London: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990), pp. 243-250. All further references to *Ryder* and quotations from the text are taken from this edition.

<sup>2</sup> For pivotal discussion on ritual, superstition and myth, see: Harrison, *Op Cit.*, and J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, vol. 3 (London: Macmillan, 1911).

*Ryder* was censored before publication, with sections of the text being omitted. In response to this censorship Barnes wrote a forward to the text explaining that, ‘This book, owing to censorship, which has a vogue in America as indiscriminate as all such enforcements of law must be, has been expurgated’ (*R* vii). Throughout the text, in place of censored words, phrases and sentences Barnes places asterisks to highlight ‘the havoc of this nicety [censorship], and what its effects are on the work of imagination’ (*R* vii). The asterisks are intended to signify the missing text and the interruption such expurgation has caused to the text. The irony is that the asterisks create narrative interruption themselves, creating grotesque anomalies throughout. Narrative interruption is a technique Barnes uses across her oeuvre, which I discuss in Chapter 1 in relation to *Repulsive Women*, and again with regard to *Nightwood* in Chapter 4. *Ryder*’s malformed narrative can be aligned with the open and unfinished female bodies crucial to Rabelaisian grotesque theory, in addition to Barnes’s own grotesque women in *Repulsive Women*. The omitted sections of *Ryder*, deemed as grotesque, obscene or inappropriate by the censor, are valued highly by Barnes, who wrote that the expurgation has left ‘sense, continuity, and beauty [within the text]... damaged’ (*R* vii). The implication of this statement is that the censored sections are of equal value and beauty as the text that remains. In this way, one might see the omitted sections of *Ryder* as the Othered people whom Barnes supports through her writing, and the remainder of the text as the non-marginalised majority.

*Ryder* presents a snapshot of the lives of a marginalised (initially self-marginalised), unconventional family living on a farm. The family are the Ryders and consist of grandmother Sophia, her polygamous son, Wendell, his English wife, Amelia, and his American mistress, Kate, along with Amelia, Wendell and Kate’s children. Barnes’s biographer, Phillip Herring, suggests that the Ryder family is not dissimilar to Barnes’s own, drawing connections between the events that take place in the text and those that took place in Barnes’s life. The synopsis of *Ryder* from the 1990 Dalkey Archive publication of the text also suggests a biographical link, calling *Ryder*, ‘a bawdy mock-Elizabethan chronicle of a family very much like her [Barnes’s] own’. While it might be acknowledged that there are similarities between Barnes’s life and the events within *Ryder* I would prefer not to put emphasis on such biographical readings. Reading *Ryder* through a biographical lens is to fail to appreciate it as a multifaceted text, and simultaneously to group several of Barnes’s works together, reducing them to autobiographical re-workings of the same events. *Ryder* is depersonalised through its connection to established and widely acknowledged literary figures such as ‘the divine Dante’ (*R* 14), Shakespeare and Oscar Wilde. In addition to removing *Ryder* from Barnes’s personal sphere, the collection of vastly ranging influences, sources and references which span centuries and contribute to the

construction of *Ryder*, result in classic Barnesean density and create a hybrid text that refuses categorisation. Further, the heterogeneity of the text works with its focus on animality to refute the suggested purity of primitive categories and hierarchies proposed in theories postulated by the nineteenth-century Eugenics movement, for example.

Barnes situates her novel in the United States and the United Kingdom; the importance of both locations is conveyed through the physical journeys made by Sophia, Wendell and Amelia across the Atlantic as well as via letters sent back and forth between the two countries. The early inclusion within the text of institutionalised figures such as John Bull and Lotta Crabtree are indicative of the recurring suggestion throughout the text of the UK as civilised and restrained and the US as primitive and overindulgent. John Arbuthnot's originally satiric John Bull – a middle-class, sensible, plain character – became an accepted personification of the UK and was used widely in World War I propaganda,<sup>3</sup> while Lotta Crabtree – a fabulous and wealthy performer and comedian, was accepted as 'The Nation's Darling' from the late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> Barnes chose Bull and Crabtree from a plethora of popular UK and US figures, making their contrasting associations and placement within the text noteworthy.

There is a self-destructive stubbornness to the English Amelia and a recklessness to the American Ryders, both attitudes are shown to be individually and socially destructive, suggesting the need for balance between the two. Barnes satirises excessive British respectability early on in the text, when she writes:

Early in 1887, two young lady pianists (sisters)... were sitting over their duet in a room with double windows at which hung two lengths of sufficient lace, their backs to a goodly collection of Fielding and Smollett, Daudet and Mallarmé (*R* 39)

The two 'young lady pianists' and their surroundings are fitting representations of Victorian propriety. Almost everything about them is respectable and appropriate: the piano they play, the 'two lengths of *sufficient* lace', except for the rebellious literature that lines their shelves. The ladies do, however, turn their backs to the books, rejecting the threat of difference, of that which is Other. These restrained figures and their surrounding exists in stark contrast to the freedom and sexual and moral difference of the Ryders, Wendell Ryder in particular.

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<sup>3</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, et al, *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopaedia, 1500 to the Present* (California: ABC-CLIO, 2003), p. 204.

<sup>4</sup> Meredith Eliassen, 'The Meat in a Humbug Sandwich: The Irony of Want in California Gold Rush Music', *This is the Sound of Irony: Music, Politics and Popular Culture*, ed. Katherine L. Turner (London & New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 29. Originally pub. 2015.

In 1859 Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* undermined humanity's assumed difference to the animal species and the claim to civilisation that is typified by Barnes's two pianists. In addition to challenging and changing the way society understood the history of its species, *On the Origin of the Species* contributed to a wider anthropological discussion and undermined the Eugenics movement before it was fully established.<sup>5</sup> Darwin was aware of the difficulty with which his theory of the evolution of humanity would be integrated into society, writing, 'nothing at first can appear more difficult to believe than that the more complex organs and instincts have been perfected, not by means superior to, though analogous with, human reason, but by the accumulation of innumerable slight variations, each good for the individual possessor.'<sup>6</sup> Indeed, a gentle and encouraging tone prevails throughout *On the Origin of the Species*, while *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871) (the subsequent publication by Darwin to deal with humans in relation to animals)<sup>7</sup> makes somewhat more brutal statements such as: 'it is notorious that man is constructed on the same general type of model as other mammals.'<sup>8</sup> This shift in tone in the delivery of anthropological enquiry between Darwin's 1859 text and 1871 text would seem to suggest that societal resistance to information that highlighted the animal-human connection had eased in the later years of the nineteenth century.

The notion that humankind is descended from animals and continues to share similar attributes and behavioural traits with certain species subverts the idea of a 'pure race', a concept that reached its peak during World War II through Hitler's desire for an Aryan ideal. Len Platt suggests that 'prominence, empire and the unstoppable dispersal of the Anglo-Saxon race... [kept] 'Aryanist ideologies'' afloat post-World War I but failed to prevent such ideologies being overthrown post-World War II.<sup>9</sup> I argue that modernism's shift in focus onto 'primitive' races in the search for 'uncultured' newness contributed to anthropological discussions that undermined notions of an Aryan ideal by showing that the West could learn from tribal culture. Patricia Chu discusses the negative consequence of modernism's idealisation of primitivism:

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<sup>5</sup> For more on this argument, see: Carrie Rohman, *Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of the Species: By Means of Natural Selection*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition (New Zealand: The Floating Press, 2009), p. 815.

<sup>7</sup> In between the publication of *On the Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man* Darwin published three texts, which cover the topics of plants insects and animals (excluding humans): *On the various contrivances by which British and foreign orchids are fertilised by insects* (1862), *The Movements and Habits of Climbing Plants* (1865) and *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication* (1868).

<sup>8</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (New York and London: Merrill and Baker, 1874), p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Len Platt, 'Germanism, the modern and 'England' – 1880—1930: a literary overview', *Modernism and Race* ed. Len Platt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 21.

Critics traditionally define the “primitivism” of the 1920s and 1930s as a psychoanalytically influenced Western elite practice in which artists treated “natives” and native cultures as sources of rejuvenation in a rapidly modernizing world. Primitivists assumed that modernization and its accompanying social norms separated modern Western people from their authentic impulses: sexuality, physicality, violence and play. Rather than considering natives as simply deficient in “civilization,” primitivists saw them as conduits to the unconscious or as alternatives to Western civilization’s rationality, bureaucracy and mechanization.<sup>10</sup>

Chu establishes the argument that native/primitive people were fetishised for their Otherness, or rather, for the Othered status attributed to them. One of the most striking aspects of Barnes’s engagement with the primitive and animality in *Ryder* is her refusal to adhere to notions of primitive cultures as uneducated or uncultured, and her rejection of the notion that primal connections to ‘authentic impulses’ are glamorous, or point to salvation in a fractured, modernised society. Barnes resists the unknown attraction of Africa that Michael North writes of: ‘Not long after the publication of *The Nigger of the “Narcissus”* European artists were attracted en masse to an African art they knew virtually nothing about and were mesmerized by the way that African masks and statues dislocated all conventional artistic strategies.’<sup>11</sup> Barnes had first-hand experience of Morocco, having travelled to Africa in April 1932 to visit Charles Henri Ford, with whom she had recently become a friend. Barnes remained in Morocco for three months and as such, saw for herself the reality of the country’s inhabitants, rather than an imagined or inferred idealised or flawed reality. Barnes’s discussion of the primitive and of the primal is not external and does not look outwardly for inspiration. Rather, it exposes and acknowledges the primitive and primal present within everyone and cautions against the glamorisation of, and indulgence in, the primal aspects of ourselves.

### **Angels, Bats and Cannibalism**

The opposition between mainstream society and the marginalised Other is a recurrent concept throughout Barnes’s corpus. *Repulsive Women* places the reader in the uncomfortable position of voyeur alongside the omniscient narrator, who acts as a guide on a tour of New York’s unseemly women. *Ladies Almanack* follows a group of women who have consciously created a space for themselves on society’s periphery – a space in which they engage in Sapphism

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<sup>10</sup> Patricia E. Chu, *Race, Nationalism and the State in British and American Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 145.

<sup>11</sup> Michael North *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 67.

without facing external judgement. In *Nightwood*, Frau Mann acts as a porter, guiding the reader into the subculture of the circus, which takes ‘its immense disqualification of the public... dramatic and as monstrous’ (N 11) and allows characters such as Felix and Robin to explore the primitive and animalistic aspects of themselves. *Ryder* draws the reader into the discussion on animality, civilisation and the Other through storytelling. Wendell tells Julie and her brother, Timothy, a story about ‘the Beast Thingumbob’, an anecdote which is representative of the amalgamation of the human and animal, specifically in a sexual context. The Beast Thingumbob ‘falls in love with a strange creature’ (R 119), who

was... of large limbs and a beauty outside of the imagination and quite beside what men would call the point. She was terrible in her ways, which simply means that her ways were not our ways,— and she was fettered to the earth for a season of harvesting, after which she was to return to the gods. Her feet were thinly hoofed, and her hair was many coils, and her face was not yet, and her breasts were ten. (R 119)

Both Thingumbob and the beast-woman can be associated with the Greek myth of the chimera, an animal comprising the parts of several animals. However, instead of acting as a warning of forthcoming disaster as the chimera typically does in mythology, both of Barnes’s chimeras are tragic figures displaying innately human qualities, whose ultimate respective fates are loneliness and death. The beast-woman is quite literally a faceless sex/reproduction machine, whose primal nature is displayed clearly through her hooves. In Wendell’s anecdote, this woman-creature dies and Thingumbob ‘plucked’ his children from her stomach (R 121). Wendell’s story is prefaced with the statement that ‘She was terrible in her ways, which simply means that her ways were not our ways’, suggesting again the binary within the novel between convention and the re-incorporation of the primal, which opposes the restraint of convention. Despite having the power of speech that Wendell wishes to grant to animals and which he believes will bring them equality, as evidenced by his poem about Pennyfinder the Bull, the beast-woman’s body is still exploited. She is ‘fettered’ like an animal and used like soil for harvesting and reproducing, with her ten breasts that allude to the close link between animality and polygamy within the novel. However, the primal sexuality attributed to Thingumbob’s creature-partner extends into the more sinister realm of violence and sexual abuse. Their children are plucked from her belly – she has died, and her body is opened for this act to take place. Significantly, Wendell’s story of the Beast Thingumbob takes place during a fishing trip, following a moment in which he disembowels a fish in front of Julie and Timothy, ‘unhooking my-ladies’-chamber from their insides’ (R 117) in much the same way that the beast-woman’s

children are violently removed from her body. Julie is excluded from the primal act of gutting the captured fish because her role, as the woman, is to be captured. The connection between the fish and Julie is reinforced immediately as the narrator states that she ‘sat on the bank, smelling strongly of fish.’ (R 119)

The connection between the primal animality and the violent, sexual possession of women is made explicit in the chapter ‘Rape and Repining!’, in which society blames a girl for her own rape, asking, ‘Who told you, Hussy, to go ramping at the Bit, and laying about you for Trouble?’ (R 23) The phrasing, ‘Ramping at the bit’ is reminiscent of the phrase ‘champing at the bit’, which one might use to describe a horse, further reducing the unnamed female rape victim to the position of a voiceless animal. In this way, it is easier to accept and dismiss the rape of the girl, foreshadowing Wendell’s statement that people would treat animals kindly if they had the power of speech. The narrator criticises society for the hypocrisy of its denial of humanity’s inherent animality and capability for degenerate actions but simultaneous acceptance when primal, animalistic actions take place, such as rape.

Barnes’s tragic and dead chimera evokes empathy for the body of the animal and is reminiscent of Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*. Kafka’s novella charts the journey from civilization back to a primitive state through Gregor Samsa, who wakes one morning to find that he is transforming into an insect. The animal/human figure into which Samsa transforms is tragic, much in the same manner as the Beast Thingumbob’s ‘thinly hoofed’ creature. Both are trapped within their physical animality and struggle between their desire to express their inner humanity and to suppress it, which undermines the suggestion that one evolves from the primitive towards the civilised. The reader witnesses Gregor’s decline into depression and eventual death throughout the text, both of which are primarily the result of the compassionless treatment of his family, who are representative of the society that would reject his new animalistic form. As such, *The Metamorphosis* directly questions contemporary notions of the primitive and the civilised, asking if a society that has apparently moved away from its primal nature is truly more civilised. Kafka extends this line of inquiry by challenging his characters to confront their own repressed animality, which ultimately they fail to do through their rejection of Gregor. The reader is told that Gregor ‘realized that his appearance was still constantly intolerable to her [his sister] and must remain intolerable in future, and that she really had to exert a lot of self-control not to run away from a glimpse of only the part of his body which stuck out from under the couch.’<sup>12</sup> The rejection by Gregor’s sister of his

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<sup>12</sup> Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, trans. Ian Johnston, (Connecticut: Martino Publishing, 2009), p. 38.

physicality, mirrors her own rejection of the animality within herself. The theory that Gregor's family's horror at his transformation is a horror at witnessing the manifestation of their inner primal and animalistic selves is reinforced at the end of the text following Gregor's death:

Then all three left the apartment together... Leaning back comfortably in their seats, they talked to each other about future prospects, and they discovered that on closer observation these were not all bad, for the three of them had employment, about which they had not really questioned each other at all, which was extremely favourable<sup>13</sup>

The text makes a full circle and returns to Gregor's primary concern, that of his job. The characters have managed to recapture the animalistic and can re-engage with society as civilised people, signified through their employment. The ambiguous phrasing, 'about which they had not really questioned' can be interpreted in two ways. Either the family have not questioned their work, having accepted that work is what civilised people do. Or, the family have not questioned one another about their specific forms of employment, which again, shows a blind acceptance of that which is superficially civilised and socially acceptable.

The disparity in societal views surrounding animality is also conveyed by Barnes through the figure of an insect, perhaps because it is a creature that humans are least able to recognise in themselves or with which they can empathise. First, Wendell is described as 'an enormous and beloved insect' (R 42) and just several pages on, Amelia exclaims with outrage, 'my unborn child no more than in insect!' (R 48). The structural closeness of the insect references within the text and the positive association with Wendell and the negative association with his counterpart, Amelia, can be seen as a commentary on the societal divide between those who accept the theory of evolution and those who reject it, as Wendell embraces his animality above all else and Amelia denies it. As mentioned, Amelia can be read as an exaggerated version of the ideal and traditionalist Victorian, presented in *Ryder* as the antithesis of all progress, while Wendell is too keen to revert to a dependence on his primal urges and parodies those who looked to primitive culture for salvation post World War I. One might also infer that the embracing or display of animality in man is more acceptable than in woman.

In 1923 Ellis, who was known personally by Nancy Cunard and Mina Loy, and very much present in Barnes's circles, published *The Dance of Life*. This text, much like his contributions to the field of sexology, shows Ellis to have been reasonably progressive in comparison to his contemporaries. In *The Dance of Life*, Ellis writes about an African tribe called the Lifuans. He explains that they 'have sweet and musical voices and they cultivate them. They are good at

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

learning languages and they are great orators.... The Lifuans' eating habits are probably superior to those of people in the 'civilised' world. Although, in the past they did sometimes eat their children for pleasure.'<sup>14</sup> Ellis describes the unbiased selection process in choosing which child to eat, and how the child was prepared for cooking and consumption. This description of the Lifu tribe is astounding because it begins by establishing the tribe as highly evolved and civilised, with a society well-established enough to value and have time for artistic and intellectual development and then announces that they are cannibals. Ellis goes on to place the tribe above the Western world socially, suggesting that their eating habits may be superior. His account challenges the modernist preoccupation with the primitive as a way to reinvigorate and inspire society because on the one hand, the primitive tribe is shown to be educated and to value art and culture, and on the other, they eat their children, thus their primitivism is presumably extreme and undesirable.

Darwin's evolutionary theory and Frazer's discussion of tribal life in *The Golden Bough* (1911) suggests that primitive culture is something to develop upon, not something from which to take instruction. Frazer wrote, 'we stand upon the foundation reared by the generation that have gone before... our gratitude is to the nameless and forgotten'.<sup>15</sup> 'Foundation' and 'gratitude' are noteworthy terms, from which one can infer that society should be thankful for that which came before, but it should not seek to return to it. Ellis's discussion of the Lifuans contributes to the discussion on the innate animality of humans in a similar way to Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and later, Barnes's *Ryder. The Dance of Life* illustrates that clear and strict distinctions cannot be made between that which is primitive or animalistic, and that which is civilised. Further, the text suggests that it is unnecessary to look externally to the Other to seek animality or a connection to that which is primal, and it is equally as useless to try and deny the evolutionary link between the animal and the human, because both exist within the human. That Ellis casts relatively little judgement on those who are said to have eaten their own children, and still praises the 'positive' aspects of the tribe, suggests the same acceptance and reclaiming of the animal present throughout *Ryder*. This text, as mentioned, neither seeks to approve nor deny the theory of evolution and humanity's connection to animality, but presents the connection as fact, instead displaying interest in the consequences of this notion.

The inclusion of the animal, human and divine within the tale of *The Beast Thingumbob* recalls the interplay between the animal, human and divine within Lawrence's collection, *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923) which subverts and remodels the standard hierarchical

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<sup>14</sup> Ellis, *The Dance of Life*, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> Frazer, *Op Cit.*, p. 421.

positioning of animals, humans and the divine. Within this work several poems place humans below animals, for example, ‘Sicilian Cyclamens’, which describes the people as ‘Mediterranean savages’.<sup>16</sup> Other poems position humans far above animals, for instance ‘Man and Bat’, in which the speaker is disgusted at the sight of a bat in his room and throws it from the window (in an act that is similar to *Ryder*’s Kate throwing the pigeons’ eggs from the window). The bat in ‘Man and Bat’ is profoundly out of place within the speaker’s room and part of its lack of appeal is for this reason. The contrast between the orderliness of the room and the chaotic irrationality of the frantic animal is repeatedly highlighted throughout the piece. The speaker throws ‘the venetian shutters... wide/ To the free, calm upper air’<sup>17</sup> but the bat continues its senseless circling ‘In an impure haste,/ Fumbling, a beast in air’.<sup>18</sup> The venetian shutters are symbolic of that which humankind has created for luxury and privacy – things that the animal does not consider and which further separate us from our own animality. The circling bat is a threat to this illusion of progress and civilisation. Progress and civilisation are shown to be illusions because the bat’s presence alone is enough to induce a state of fear in the speaker. Comically, the speaker describes himself as ‘the hideous terror of me with my handkerchief’, although the only terror created is that which is generated by the presence of the bat. The respectability of the man with a handkerchief is not enough to repel the bestial bat.<sup>19</sup> Instead, the bat ‘squatted... like something unclean’, trying to reconnect with the modern man who suffers from the disconnection created by his own modernity.<sup>20</sup>

*Birds, Beasts and Flowers* also reassess the notion of the divine in relation to humans and animals by subverting expectations and tradition, and placing Jesus below mankind: ‘Jesus was not quite a man. /He was the Son of Man’ and at other times, pairing the divine with animals, and positioning mankind below both.<sup>21</sup> In this way, Lawrence’s engagement with the question of animality seems to differ from Barnes’s. Through this collection of poetry, Lawrence shows an uncertainty about the relationship of the animal to the human, questioning how and where the divine, humanity and animality meet. This is also dissimilar to Kafka, who, like Barnes, implies that there is no divine and that animality is an inherent feature of humankind. *Ryder* suggests that the animal is present within everyone, regardless of evolutionary development or race. The text’s focus on the animal is not inherently connected to, or centred around, ideas of

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<sup>16</sup> D.H. Lawrence, *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (London: Martin Secker, 1923), p. 60.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

race. The ethnicity of the characters in the text is neither discussed nor mentioned beyond their birthplace (either America or England), but it is implied that they are Caucasian through the *omission* of such detail: when Wendell believes his new born baby to be black, it is something worth mentioning: ‘Wendell, regarding it—“The babe is black!” “Bile alone is father of its colour,” said Matthew O’Connor.’ (R 97) Wendell’s exclamation lets the reader know that neither he nor Amelia are ‘black’, while O’Connor’s response generates an uncomfortable connection between bile and darker skin tones. The horror that Wendell expresses at the baby potentially being black, presumably from the fear that he may not be the father, brings race into focus. The allusion to racial prejudice in relation to a baby suggests the ludicrousness of such discrimination through alignment with the baby’s innocence.

In *Animal Subjects: Literature, Zoology, and British Empire* (2018) Caroline Hovanec suggests that Lawrence circumvents acknowledgement of humanity’s direct connection to the animal by making animality symbolic of something else: ‘a symbol for humans’ primitive essence’.<sup>22</sup> If one considers Frazer’s hypothesis, the primitive can be viewed as something upon which civilization has developed and from which it has moved away, suggesting a present disconnect that is in opposition to animality, which is inherent and permanent. Aldous Huxley, however, wrote of Lawrence, ‘I remember in particular one long and violent argument on evolution, in the reality of which Lawrence always passionately disbelieved.’<sup>23</sup> I read this comment as in specific relation to the evolution of humans from animals, rather than the move from primitivism to civilisation and in contrast to Huxley’s statement, *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* suggests that Lawrence did believe in the reality of evolution, but found the notion distasteful. It seems to me that unlike Barnes, whose work presents ever-present innate animality as a fact, Lawrence’s work displays a tension between the refusal to accept or deny this primal innateness.

As mentioned, one can trace the animal through Barnes’s oeuvre from *Repulsive Women*, with its corporeal woman and their leaking bodily fluids, through to *Nightwood*, which culminates in Robin’s primal altercation with Nora’s dog. However, the infrequently mentioned *Creatures in an Alphabet* is also relevant to Barnes’s discussion of animality. *Creatures*, which was written throughout the period of 1971-78, is described by Herring and Stutman as ‘a bestiary in the medieval tradition’.<sup>24</sup> This work consists of twenty-six rhymed

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<sup>22</sup> Caroline Hovanec, *Animal Subjects: Literature, Zoology, and British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 120.

<sup>23</sup> Aldous Huxley, *The Olive Tree* (New York & London: Harper & Brothers, 1937), p. 212.

<sup>24</sup> Barnes, *Collected Poems*, p. 144.

quatrains that each form a separate, unnamed poem, which addresses and/or discusses different animals. Hank O'Neal suggests that *Creatures* was written 'originally for children' because of the poems' simplicity.<sup>25</sup> Caselli has disagreed with this statement, citing the complex interplay between the animal and language within the text as the reason that *Creatures* was never intended as a children's work.<sup>26</sup> I would add to Caselli's argument that the interrogation of the position of the animal in relation to the human in *Creatures* further suggests that the work is more complex than a collection of children's poems. One can identify *Creatures*' interest in animality through the shifting focus within the poems from the human onto the animal and back again, combining the two perspectives and suggesting an equality between the two. For example, the quatrain that discusses the tiger addresses either the tiger, the reader, or both:

"Tyger! Tyger!"—Who wrote that?  
You won't take it with your hat,  
Nor lure it with a golden cage;  
It won't leap its master's page.

Also of relevance is the camel poem, which reads:

With cloven lip, with baleful eye,  
The Camel wears the caliph high.  
But though he do the master's will,  
He himself's his habit still.<sup>27</sup>

The camel carries a caliph – a spiritual leader within Islamic tradition – thereby supposedly raising his status (the camel's) through association. Yet the camel remains disinterested in the importance of the person he carries, choosing instead to keep his animalistic identity separate from that of the spiritual leader. The physical separation of the final line, which states that 'He himself's his habit still', gives the statement a sense of finality and the camel and caliph equal reverence. In contrast, the 'you' in the extract from the tiger poem links the human and the animal through ambiguity, potentially referring to either the human or animal, or both. This collection challenges the notion that humans have a better understanding of the 'creatures' than the creatures do themselves. Further, it implies that humans are not higher up on an imaginary hierarchical scale of knowledge and understanding than animals, or creatures, who are shown

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<sup>25</sup> O'Neal, *Op Cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>26</sup> For more on this argument, see Daniela Caselli, 'Elementary, my dear Djuna': Unreadable Simplicity in Barnes's *Creatures in an Alphabet* in *Critical Survey* 13.3 (2001), pp. 89-122.

<sup>27</sup> Barnes, *Collected Poems*, p. 140.

in *Creatures* to be equally as enlightened as their human counterparts. As Caselli notes, ‘the text resists from its very first lines... the opposition between the animal and the cultural.’<sup>28</sup>

The fact that Barnes still tackled the issue of the animal in relation to the human in 1971 enforces the notion that the topic remained as fascinating to her as it had been in 1915 with her animalistic portrayal of grotesque women. In fact, it is possible to trace Barnes’s interest in the primitive back to her early journalism. In 1913 the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* published an article written by Barnes entitled, ‘Who’s the Last Squatter?’<sup>29</sup> in which she travels to Consumers Park in Coney Island to speak with the last known squatter in ‘Pigtown’, where ‘the squatters whose existence is deplored by society’ live.<sup>30</sup> The same ideas of separateness, isolation and a return to a primitive that permeate this article penetrate *Ryder*, as do the hostile reactions of the rent-paying population of Coney Island towards the squatters. The squatters are segregated due to their way of life, which is primarily dictated by instinctual needs and desires, rather than a commitment or responsibility to society. Speaking on behalf of the public, Barnes wrote, ‘it was quite out of the question to sympathize with them, for they got what we did not: something for nothing.’<sup>31</sup> The primitiveness of the squatters is highlighted through their closeness to animality, while ‘Who’s the Last Squatter?’ suggests that Barnes’s connection to the civilised world is threatened through the symbolic entanglement of her Oxford ‘on a goat rope [as] the pigs went gruntling into the parlour, while hens and hares scuttled behind the grapevine and a buxom woman came out upon the scene’.<sup>32</sup> The squatter’s buxomness is suggestive of a primal sexuality, which is entwined with the bestiality of the pigs, hens and hares. In this article Barnes provides a voice for the voiceless and nameless through the lens of the civilised peering into a different, primitive world. The pronoun ‘I’ is entirely absent from the article as Barnes refuses to align herself with the judgement of society, instead accusing the reader through the use of second-person pronouns. The article ends with the following lines: ‘You give the ticket man your nickel and jump for the Park Row local, for you are due to get back to civilization’, which suggests that the reader is grateful to escape overt animality and believes civilisation and animality are choices that can be adopted or shaken off at will.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Caselli, ‘Elementary, my dear Djuna’, p. 98.

<sup>29</sup> Barnes, ‘Who’s the Last Squatter’, *New York*, pp. 119-122.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

## Bestial Procreation

In *Twilight of the Idols* (1889), Friedrich Nietzsche suggests that the innate passions of a person are where their truest selves can be found. However, if uncontrolled, the strength of such raw feelings creates calamity. Reacting to Socrates's argument for rationality, Nietzsche wrote:

rationality at any cost, a cold, bright, cautious, conscious life without instinct, opposed to instinct, was itself just a sickness, another sickness – and in no way a return to 'virtue', to 'wealth', to happiness... To *have* to fight the instincts – that is the formula for decadence: as long as life is *ascending*, happiness is equal to instinct.<sup>34</sup>

What I interpret as Nietzsche's essential argument for balance between passion and intellect is that which Barnes promotes throughout *Ryder*. Reinforcing the argument for balance, Nietzsche wrote, 'All passions go through a phase where they are just a disaster, where they drag their victim down with the weight of their stupidity'.<sup>35</sup> The implication that it is immoral and unnatural to deny one's instincts, but that there must be moderation is echoed by Sophia when in response to Wendell asking, "Mother... what does one do with nature [sexual appetite]?", she replies, "A humane man... would occasionally give it a respite" (R 172).

Nietzsche's discussion of the importance of the balance between instinct, passion and rationale can also be seen in Carl Jung's theory of the four archetypes, which can be traced back to 1902. The most relevant archetype to *Ryder* is the persona archetype along with Jung's theory of the anima (the feminine in the male psyche) and the animus (the masculine in the female psyche). The persona archetype allows one to function in society in socially acceptable ways whilst inherent primal urges are kept under control. Jung suggests that the primal urges cannot be overcome because they are innate, so 'outwardly, people are more or less civilized, but inwardly they are still primitives'.<sup>36</sup> Wendell's identification with the persona archetype is underdeveloped, a point that is conveyed through his attempt to help Molly Dance identify the father of her next child. Wendell tells Molly that if they both have sex, she will be able to identify the father of her next child. Molly agrees to this idea, however after sexual intercourse the following conversation takes place:

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<sup>34</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings* ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 166.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>36</sup> Carl Jung, *Four Archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster* (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2003), p. 176.

“And no,” said Molly... there is only one thing that might make something uncertain of this certainty.”

“What?” said Wendell and stood stock still.

“Whether the child shall know you for its father or no,” said Molly pleasantly.

“What do you mean, woman?” said Wendell sternly.

“Well,” said Molly, stretching herself for comfort, “how shall she, or I, or you, or another know but that Dan, the corner policeman, be he? For not two nights ago he had the same idea, and that only goes to show you,” she added, “that one man’s thoughts are not worth much more than another’s.”

“Oh, my dear,” sighed Wendell, “you are then, just as I found you, and I leave you no better and no worse.” (R 199)

Significantly, the other character to suggest the same theory as Wendell is a policeman – somebody looked to as a symbol of reason and integrity, a figure expected to have perfected the persona archetype for the greater good of society. By reducing Dan, the officer, to the level of Wendell, Barnes further reinforces the notion that the animal and primal is present within us all, much in the manner that Nietzsche suggests. Molly Dance confirms this suggestion with her parting statement that all men share similar thoughts.

The entire chapter, ‘Fine Bitches All, and Molly Dance’, is centred around notions of the animal and the question of which is more bestial – Molly’s dogs or people. Ultimately, both are portrayed as bestial, only the dogs seem less animalistic when behaving naturally and acting out their primal urges because one does not expect them to have formed Jung’s persona archetype and to show control or restraint as is expected of humans. The word order of the title of this chapter implies that the dogs are ‘fine’, Molly less so. Further, Molly believes that ‘the human *breed* [my emphasis] was of no importance anyhow’ (R 191), thus implying an interconnectedness between the dogs’ breeding behaviour and Molly’s, and more widely, between animals and human procreation.

Through the inclusion of Molly Dance (a woman, traditionally portrayed in literature as the primary desirer and protector of children), Dan the policeman (upholder of social ‘masks’ and orderly conduct) and Wendell (the closest prominent figure in *Ryder* to the ‘everyman’) in a scene of promiscuity and the convergence of the animal and human, Barnes engages with and challenges the discussion around racilogies and the primitive, which, in the twentieth century, suggested both an emphasis on the closeness of the relationship between ‘primitive’ cultures and the animal, and the separateness of Western cultures to the animal, thus to the primitive. Platt wrote that modernist literature ‘interrogate[s] the anxieties and desires that are expressed in or projected onto racialised figures’.<sup>37</sup> In light of this argument, Barnes’s portrayal of

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<sup>37</sup> Platt, *Op Cit.*, p. 1.

animality within *Ryder* can be read as an exploration of post-World War I societal concerns around the changing status of women and post-Darwinian anxieties surrounding the origin and status of humankind.

Jung posited that the anima and the animus ‘live in a world quite different from the world outside—in a world where the pulse of time beats infinitely slowly, where the birth and death of individuals count for little.’<sup>38</sup> This statement pre-empted Freud’s theory around the damaged developing ego, which turns in on itself to create a fantasy world, and in which satisfaction is always granted and protected from the disappointment of external forces.<sup>39</sup> Such theories can be used to explain Wendell’s actions and his childish lack of responsibility, positioning the *Ryder* farm as the site of his fantasy world, in which he makes his own rules and lives polygamously to the consternation of society. One of the ways in which Wendell’s imbalance between the anima and animus manifests is through his attachment towards and overidentification with animals. As a figure who identifies strongly with his primal urges, Wendell gravitates towards the animals, because Barnes implies, his behaviour can be accepted by animals but not society.

At the end of *Ryder*, Wendell must choose between Amelia and their children, and Kate and his children with her. After choosing Kate and asking Amelia to leave, Wendell seeks solace from his farm animals:

In the wide field where the night was all among the grass and about the animals, Wendell went, leaning far back and yet stumbling.

The black calf breathed against his side, and the dark cows among themselves, and the horses, with no earth beneath their feet, trembled, as they slept and lay.

And Wendell sat down among them and forbore to hide his face.

Whom should he disappoint now?

“Hee-haw!” said the ass beside him, and he put his hand out and stroked the ass.

Whom should he disappoint now?

The horses whinnied as he touched their fetlocks, and the kine were shaken with the bellows of their breath, and he touched their new horns. The little mice of the fields fled about him, and he gave them his unchanged position, and the night birds murmured above and he moved not, and the creeping things that he had not numbered or known, looked at him from a million eyes, and his eyes were there also, and the things in the trees made walking and running on the branches, and he spoke not. (*R* 242)

Wendell returns to the basic emotional comfort offered by the animals, and physically reverts to a primitive state – he leans back and stumbles, and chooses not to move as the animals gather

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<sup>38</sup> Carl Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* trans. RFC Hull (New York: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 287.

<sup>39</sup> For more on this, see: Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1962), p. 27. Originally pub. 1930.

and creep around him, instead deciding to reclaim his beast-like state. Wendell's behaviour here is childlike, he is mentally in the primitive stages of development as well as having returned to a primitive physical version of himself. When the narrator asks, 'whom should he disappoint now?', the reader is told that Wendell reaches out to the ass and is responded to by the horses. In this moment Wendell acts with primal intuition and intuitive understanding that is extremely similar to Robin's instinctive and bestial interaction with Nora's dog at the close of *Nightwood*. Whereas Robin's animalistic encounter can be read as an act of reclamation and defiance, Wendell's return to a primitive developmental state and his animalistic behaviour are selfish acts that result in destruction. In a move that seems to slightly undo the work of the text with regard to subverting racial stereotypes connected to the primitive, Barnes makes a point of informing the reader that the calf is black and the cows are dark. The infrequency with which Barnes mentions colours or shades in the novel makes this description symbolic and signals modernism's dependence on 'the 'primitive' cultures of Africa and other regions... for 'spiritual' motivation', as Wendell goes to the barn for spiritual comfort and enlightenment.<sup>40</sup>

### **Bulls, Eggs and Faeces**

In a 1922 article written for *Vanity Fair* Barnes wrote of Joyce, 'what a fine lyric beginning that great Rabelaisian flower *Ulysses* had, with impartial addenda for foliage,—the thin sweet lyricism of *Chamber Music*, the casual inevitability of *Dubliners*, the passion and prayer of Stephen Dedalus, who said that he would go alone through the world.'<sup>41</sup> As any Barnes scholar will know, such flowing praise from Barnes for another is rare. The influence of the 'Rabelaisian flower *Ulysses*' (1922) on *Ryder* is present in the similar incorporation and use of animals in both texts, ranging from those suggestive of affluence and plenitude, such as horses, to those less well regarded, such as pigs, who in life and art have typically suggested filth, or served a negative function in political satire. When Amelia and Kate both decide to leave home, Amelia leaves on a horse and Kate leaves on a cow. Amelia exclaims, "I will have no more of this, there is a limit to everything, and I'll not live another day in a sty that shelters that great pigs-bladder (Kate in another dress, dear reader!) of a woman!" (R 145) and the narrator continues:

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<sup>40</sup> Platt, *Op Cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Djuna Barnes, 'A PORTRAIT OF THE MAN WHO IS, AT PRESENT, ONE OF THE MORE SIGNIFICANT FIGURES IN LITERATURE', *Vanity Fair*, 1922 [vanityfair.com/news/1922/03/james-joyce-djuna-barnes-ulysses](http://vanityfair.com/news/1922/03/james-joyce-djuna-barnes-ulysses) Accessed 02/12/2018.

Amelia... on raw-boned Hisodalgus, the horse-that-stood-in-need-of-coxing... saddled the creature with the first best saddle inlaid with raddled leather; and she set a persistent and nowise motherly rowel into the flank, sending up a spiral of dust... her too often laden pelvis, jogging softly and pleasantly with the horse's galloping, for it was a free and flat affair from now on, and would nest no more trouble. (R 145)

Kate is positioned in contrast to Amelia and Hisodalgus: 'And there, posting by her, at a pitching gait, went Kate-Careless on the red cow, sitting high and rolling on the top of the bonnet-of-a-saddle that Amelia had scorned but an hour ago.' (R 146) It is worth noting that in this section of the text Amelia and Kate leave home independently and without each informing the other. As such, one can read the two characters as halves of a whole, attempting to act independently, but still working in unison, with Amelia representing the "civilised" aspect of a person and Kate representing the animalistic.

Although Amelia and Kate are individual characters within the text, they could both be viewed as comic, even parodic inhuman figures, as Amelia is the definition of propriety and Kate of impropriety, with each displaying few of the opposite traits. In the above quotes, Amelia is positioned as socially superior to Kate, with Kate choosing that which Amelia leaves behind – the saddle and the cow. Amelia rides the horse well, while Kate rolls on her cow. And yet, even so, Amelia's suggested dignity is dusty and old, like a relic from the past. Having no place in the primal Ryder household, Amelia's claim to superior birth and social status is mocked. Amelia calls Kate a 'pigs-bladder', the organ containing the waste of the animal, as well as an organ turned into material used to make footballs and rugby balls, thereby implying that Kate (and all women) can be thrown or kicked around. Furthermore, linking Kate to waste supports the hypothesis that the Ryder family live to satisfy their primal needs first and foremost, defecation being one of those needs.

In episode two of Joyce's *Ulysses*, Mr Deasy discusses the Trojan War, stating that 'A woman brought sin into the world. For a woman who was no better than she should be, Helen, the runaway wife of Menelaus, ten years the Greeks made war on Troy. A faithless wife first brought the strangers to our shore here'. I argue that when Amelia attempts to leave the Ryder farm on Hisodalgus the horse, Barnes refers back to and highlights the injustice of Deasy's statement, continuing her defence of women. In *Ryder*, Amelia replaces Helen as the runaway faithless wife and stranger – she is the only British person in the Ryder family and she tries to escape from the family on the horse. Of course, the trojan horse was used to break *into* Troy, and when Amelia tries to *leave* on it, she is unsuccessful. The obvious irony is that Amelia is

not faithless at all, but too faithful, having remained with a husband who brought a mistress into their home. In this way, Barnes exposes the hypocrisy of both Deasy's statement and unreasonable judgements placed on women more broadly.

Barnes also responds to both *Ulysses* and the *Odyssey* with Kate's exit on a pig. The *Odyssey*'s goddess Circe is an untrustworthy manipulator who lures men into her home and turns them into swine. Ulysses' fifteenth episode titled 'Circe' is set in a brothel district in Dublin, continuing the suggestion of an immoral and exploitative woman. *Ryder*'s Kate is Wendell's mistress and cannot be made respectable through marriage because Amelia is already Wendell's wife. Kate is therefore connected to Joyce's 'Circe' through her illegitimate sexual relationship with Wendell, and to Homer's Circe through her manipulation of Wendell into an extramarital relationship and her attempt to ride away on a pig. The suggestion is that Wendell is the pig that Kate has captured and bewitched. Kate's mounting and riding of the pig is in keeping with *Ryder*'s bawdy humour and bestial connections to oxen throughout the text.

Significantly, within *Ulysses*, animals surround characters depicted as being of a lower social status, for example 'old Troy of the D. M. P.' (Dublin Metropolitan Police) and 'an old plumber named Geraghty', but animals are absent from sections of the novel featuring characters such as the Oxford graduate.<sup>42</sup> Joyce moves the connection between particular social groups and the animal out of the realm of implication and into fact through dialogue such as the following:

Dogs at each other behind. Good evening. Evening. How do you sniff? Hm. Hm. Very well, thank you. Animals go by that. Yes now, look at it that way. We're the same. Some women for instance warn you off when they have their period. Come near. Then get a hogo you could hang your hat on.<sup>43</sup>

Here, the speaker not only suggests that human and animals are guided through life by their senses, despite humanity's ability to use reason and language, he also suggests that the senses are more reliable than intellect through the idiom 'hang your hat on', meaning something on which one can depend. It is a smell (a hogo) in which the speaker has faith. The clear link between the bestial tendencies of dogs and the menstrual cycle of women should also be noted.

There are several instances in *Ryder* in which Barnes shows the animal/human connection to be detrimental to the portrayal of women, particularly regarding sexuality. In the previously mentioned chapter, 'Amelia dreams of the Ox of a Black Beauty', the ox walks on his hind legs

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<sup>42</sup> James Joyce, *Ulysses* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 376-377.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 489.

and speaks and behaves as a human does. The ox enters the bedroom of a repressed and exceedingly chaste woman in a scene which suggests rape and the violation of religious sanctity, and, simultaneously, release and freedom. Without asking or waiting for permission, the ox ‘lifted up his four hoofs and laid him down beside her, saying: “I am also.”’ (R 99) In characteristically Barnesean style, it is unclear what exactly the ox means when he says, ‘I am also’, however one can infer that he is also human, or sexual, or any of the traits the woman next to him previously assumed were exclusively human. The ox as a symbol of sexual power and dominance recurs in *Ryder*, much in the same way that birds repeat as a symbol of caged freedom and horses suggest antiquated nobility.

Wendell’s story about the ox-like animal, ‘*Pennyfinder the Bull*’, who was ‘as great as any tree/ Who was besainted in the town he ran./ Loved was he, by every child and man’ (R 62) is given great reverence. The speaker does not simply deliver the lines in free verse, but organises the story into Chaucerian iambic pentameter, and, in the poem’s accompanying image Pennyfinder towers over both houses and people. Although Pennyfinder is loved, he is also feared, and when he dies the people mourn him. Worship of the figure of the bull, or cow, has a long literary and social history, dating back to the Neolithic era. In the Bible, the story of the Golden Calf discusses a statue of a bull made by the Israelites as an idol in Moses’s absence while he travelled to Mount Sinai. In Hinduism, a bull named Nandi is the guardian of Kailahagiri, the home of the god, Shiva. In Greek mythology, Zeus turns his mistress, Io, into a cow to prevent his wife and sister Hera from exposing their affair after catching them together. Through the tale of Pennyfinder the bull and the account of Amelia’s dream, Barnes situates *Ryder* within the established tradition of worship that surrounds the figure of the bull/cow, and attributes to Pennyfinder the traits of strength and sexuality with which the bull/cow is historically associated. The reader learns that

There throve a Bull as great as any tree  
Who was besainted in the town he ran.  
Loved was he, by every child and man.  
...  
When he raised his lippen for to roar  
Many a dame came running to her door (R 62-63)

Pennyfinder the bull is magnificent: the size of a tree and close to holiness. He is physically bigger and taller than the people in the town and thus closer to God than they are. He is also ‘besainted’ by the people. The term be’sainted (c.1807) meant to be awarded, or to attribute

someone or something with special sanctity, but also to be haunted by saints.<sup>44</sup> In this way, the bull's holiness is both internal and external, making him the godliest, most saint-like figure in the text. Pennyfinder's power is suggested through the adoration he receives from the children and men. That the women 'came running... All flour and bren bedabbed, to give him greet' (*R* 63) suggests an urgency and/or desperation that seems to be driven by desire. The noun 'dame' adds special reverence to Pennyfinder if one considers that 'dame' denotes a woman of rank. On the other hand, 'dame' can connote a farcical character played by a man dressed as a woman on stage (this meaning of the term came into use around 1902, so Barnes would have been well aware of it), making a mockery of the women who revere Pennyfinder.

There is a continuous switching back and forth between the sanctity and high status awarded to Pennyfinder, and to animals generally throughout the rest of the verse which outlines 'The Occupations of Wendell', and the mockery made of those who pay such reverence to animals. The outcome is that neither perspective wins, and in the context of this discussion on animality, the characters neither gain control of the 'Internal... beast ye callë dear' (*R* 66) nor entirely succumb to it. That they refuse to eat Pennyfinder when he dies ('And when his body was y-served for sup,/ Why then, God wot, no soul but ate it up!' (*R* 64)) shows a resistance both to claiming the beast as a part of themselves and to conquering it. Wendell's feelings towards animals in this poem can be summed up by his wish for their lives to be equal to those of humans. As previously mentioned, Wendell wishes to bring about animal equality through setting up 'a plan... That every beaste in kindë mightë speak.' (*R* 65) Wendell repeats this sentiment several lines later in the same poem, saying:

Now I would have each one of you to mull  
This cud of thought, that right into each skull  
A flowing brook of speech be haply hung  
To rill in wordës all adown your tongue,  
So that you take not only to the bit  
But both to wisdom and alike to wit,  
That nevermore your throat y-corve is none  
For man be fright to pick the rack of bone  
That to him spoken has (*R* 67)

The empathy shown by Wendell towards animals highlights his connection to animality and suggests an internal, if subconscious, identification of the animal within himself. The inability of the animal to prevent its own death (throat y-corve) through its lack of speech raises

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<sup>44</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*,  
[https://www.oed.com/search?searchType=dictionary&q=besainted&\\_searchBtn=Search](https://www.oed.com/search?searchType=dictionary&q=besainted&_searchBtn=Search) Accessed 2/12/2018.

questions around animality and language. This is a subject explored by Caselli, who suggests that *Creatures in an Alphabet* also ‘examines the division between language and animality’.<sup>45</sup> I see both *Ryder* and *Creatures* as refuting the suggestion that language is separate to animality: the Ryders have language and behave in an animalistic manner, whereas the camel from *Creatures*, for example, does not have access to language but carries an air of superiority in comparison to his ‘master’. The meaningless of language with regard to animality suggested by these texts supports the notion that Barnes’s oeuvre presents animality as innate and inescapable.

In their dealings with Wendell, the characters of *Ryder* are reminded of their evolutionary beginnings, mirroring the way that Wendell is reminded of his primal self when engaging with animals. Wendell’s wife, Amelia, can be viewed as a parody of the section of twentieth-century society which refused the anthropological and psychoanalytical theory of evolution. Of Amelia’s life before Wendell, the reader learns that

In the small British country seat of Tittencote... in the year 1869, John Johannes de Grier lay dying. A long horse-whip, his last partner in this world’s work, lay out beside his bed. It had lain there twenty-four hours, for the day before he came to die he had chased his favourite daughter, Amelia, then seven, about the yard with it, because she, poor unwitting, had thrown the clothesbasket into the hencoop, thereby setting loose upon the air feathers of all sizes. (R 30)

One of Amelia’s earliest interactions with animality is entwined with punishment and the reinforcement that humans and animals (i.e. civilisation and the primitive) must not mix. Although, in keeping with the recurrent interplay between civilisation and animality within the novel, Amelia is punished like an animal, with the same instrument used to train or punish a horse. When Amelia makes her brief escape from the farm, she does so on a horse, suggesting a claiming of both the beast that once dominated her and of Wendell’s tyrannical animality. However, Amelia’s return to the farm suggests that extended, permanent conquering of the primal is impossible. Freud’s theory of organic repression suggests that the human being will always be tied to the animal when attempting to separate from it, because the attempt itself is an acknowledgement of its existence.<sup>46</sup> Thus, Amelia’s attempted departure from the family

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<sup>45</sup> Caselli, ‘‘Elementary, my dear Djuna’’, p. 94.

<sup>46</sup> Freud’s theory of organic repression first appeared in his letters to Wilhelm Fliess (1887-1904), see: *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887-1904*, ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985). This theory was later developed in Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Between Freud’s letters to Fliess and *Civilization*, Freud wrote about organic repression in a footnote to the Rat Man case, ‘Bemerkungen über einen Fall von Zwangsneurose’ (‘Notes Upon A Case of Obsessional Neurosis’), pub. 1909.

farm and inevitable return to it represents the internal act of trying to separate from animality and in doing so, actually reinforcing her link to the bestial.

Barnes makes a concerted effort to inform the reader that Amelia's upbringing was highly traditional and in opposition to Wendell's. Amelia was raised in a small, fictional place in the countryside called Tittencote, in Britain, with a strict and traditional father. The reader knows that Wendell was raised in the United States, by the notably untraditional Sophia. Whereas Amelia is chastised for combining the human and animal, specifically birds, Wendell's body is described as having bird-like features. In this way, animality is incorporated into both Wendell's psyche and his corporeal body: 'In the cradle he looked much as he would look in the grave, a hawk nose, long lip that upon the nipple seemed too purposeful, and a body like a girl's.' (R 17)

The disconnection experienced by the women in the text between their sense of identity and their bodies is repeatedly made clear through the motifs of birth and death. One of the most common motifs of birth within *Ryder* is the egg. The motif of new life and the discomfort experienced by the female characters in the text with sex, their bodies and birth assimilate in the chapter, 'Kate and Amelia Go A-Dunging'. In this chapter Amelia and Kate enter a room, in which Wendell has been keeping pigeons, to tidy the room and clean up the pigeons' faeces. The reader is told of the pigeons' 'merry pigeon lust, squirting trouble as they went' (R 114), directly implying the primal satisfaction of these birds through suggestions of excrement, reproduction and 'lust'. Again, despite the squalor in which they live, the birds are shown to be more civilised than Amelia and Kate who must clean up their mess in an act of subservience. The pigeons reproduce in the same place that they eat, sleep and defecate because they have been confined by humans who think this is appropriate. Kate says, "'Their young [the pigeons'] are most gruesome, and die by the million'" (R 114), she then 'pitched three out of the window' (R 114), behaving more barbarically than the birds could themselves and displaying detachment in opposition to Wendell's overflowing empathy for the birds. It is also relevant that the birds in this chapter are pigeons – one of the few breeds that mate for life and which is known for its homing instinct. Taking this analysis further, one might say that in this instance within the text, the pigeon stands in place as a representative of monogamy and renewal, neither of which can be maintained in the Ryder household. Alternatively, Kate's unwillingness to acknowledge the value of the pigeons' young might be read as her (and more broadly, society's) denial of the link between themselves and animals. Margot Norris suggests that a cleft has been created in

society due to the refusal to accept the animal within us, the acceptance of which she believes would be ‘a surrender to biological fate.’<sup>47</sup>

The motif of the egg as also linked to the grotesque and the figure of the fool is one that can be traced as far back as at least the sixteenth century. Timothy Hyman and Roger Malbert discuss the frequency with which Pieter Bruegel uses the egg as a symbol in his paintings, for example, the 1559 piece, ‘Fool Drinking on an Egg’.



Fig. 14. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, ‘A fool trying to hatch an empty egg’, 1569.

The primal immediacy of this piece is relevant to *Ryder* and the subject of evolution and the animal-human connection. The painting suggests birth through the egg and the satisfaction of base needs through the drunken fool sitting on top of it. That the fool sits on top of the egg could imply that he has taken the place of the hen and has birthed the ginormous egg, which, we can see through a small hole, contains a man in place of a chick, thereby directly reducing

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<sup>47</sup> For more on this discussion, see: Margot Norris, *Beasts of the Modern Imagination: Darwin, Nietzsche, Kafka, Ernst, & Lawrence* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 171.

the man to the level of an animal, and also blurring the divide between the drunken *man* and the female hen.

Kate's ruthless dismissal of the pigeons' eggs works as a symbol of societal rejection of anthropological theories post-nineteenth century. One knows that Barnes was familiar with sixteenth-century Renaissance art through the influence of both sixteenth-century language and art on *Ladies Almanack* and *Ryder*. One might suggest that within *Ryder*, Barnes intentionally builds on the tradition of the egg as a motif in relation to the animal/human.

Traces of Francisco Goya's work, in particular his *Los Caprichos* (1799), are also visible in *Ryder* and *Repulsive Women*. Through the *Los Caprichos* Goya exposes the faults he saw at work in contemporary Spanish society, specifically surrounding 'religion, morality, love, ignorance, marriage and superstition', many of the same themes explored by *Ryder*.<sup>48</sup> Number 30, titled 'Ensayos' (meaning test or trial), depicts a large, domineering ram watching a person abuse (or possibly kill) another. The ram maintains a disapproving air and is the most dignified of all the figures, closely followed by two cats.



Fig. 15. Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, 'Ensayos' from *Los Caprichos*, 1799.

<sup>48</sup> Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, *Los Caprichos*, Glasgow University Library Special Collections Department, [special.lib.gla.ac.uk/exhibns/month/aug2006.html](http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/exhibns/month/aug2006.html) Accessed 02/12/2018.

Barnes attributes to Hisodalgus, Wendell's horse, the same dignified, slightly detached air as Goya's ram. Hisodalgus is present during the bestial acts of the humans as the reader learns in 'The Occupations of Wendell', in which Wendell attaches 'a sponge of fibres soft/ Which well before, and well behind he oft/ Hither and thither about his bum y-swoped' (R 61) to Hisodalgus. In other words, Wendell attaches a sponge to Hisodalgus that he uses to wash himself between sexual encounters. Through Hisodalgus's silence and socially accepted horse-like behaviour the animalistic behaviour of Wendell and the humans, is highlighted.

Much like *Repulsive Women* and *Ladies Almanack*, *Ryder* engages with Barnes's interest in the social rejection of certain people who have either been rejected by society and made Other or who have isolated themselves and become Other. The text's interrogation of humans' innate animality undermines the grandiosity that was attached to the human species prior to nineteenth-century anthropological discoveries. *Ryder* suggests a need for balance between the animal and the civilised self, arguing for the convergence of the two, and showing the consequences of indulging too heavily in one's primal desires or over intellectualisation through the dichotomous and unbalanced lives of Amelia and Kate, and the general failure of the Ryders to contribute successfully to society. Society's rejection of the Ryder family increases throughout the novel until the family disbands. Prior to the breakup and the end of the unconventional, polygamous arrangement, the Ryders remains separated both geographically and morally from the rest of society, much like *Ladies Almanack*'s lesbians and *Repulsive Women*'s grotesque figures.

## Chapter 4

### *Nightwood's All Encompassing Night*

*Nightwood* is arguably Barnes's most widely recognised and appreciated work, and is making something of a comeback after having 'dropped into oblivion' almost immediately after publication.<sup>1</sup> Laura Wallace traces the reception history of the novel from publication to the early 2000s, suggesting that it has predominantly been categorised as a lesbian or modernist text with associated flattering and unflattering reviews.<sup>2</sup> Parsons notes that within *Nightwood*, 'The world of the night is the metonym by which Barnes expresses the repressive oppositional culture of modern society and its categorization of the normal and the perverse.'<sup>3</sup> With this in mind, it is the intention of this chapter to focus on the connection between the Othered and the night within *Nightwood*. In addition to the exploration of the night within this text, I suggest that ideas which repeat throughout Barnes's oeuvre, such as animality, the grotesque and Sapphism, are drawn together to work cohesively. *Nightwood* is 'comprised of modern history's outcasts — circus artists, racial minorities, homosexuals, Jews, cross dressers, and the disabled', each of whom the reader meets through the character's connection to either the puritan, Nora Flood or the somnambule, Robin Vote.<sup>4</sup> Dr O'Connor; Frau Mann, a genderless circus aerialist; Felix Volkbein, a tragic historian of his own fictional past, as well as Robin's husband and father to their sickly child, Guido; and Jenny Petherbridge, 'a widow, a middle-aged woman... [with] a beaked head' who features as an ageing relic from a stale past that is unwelcome in *Nightwood's* Parisian Left Bank (much like *Ladies Almanack's* Patience Scalpel); these are society's outsiders, the Other, represented a final time in Barnes's work.

Throughout the novel, Felix attempts to create structure where society dictates it should be, but where *Nightwood* resists. He first tries to establish a past that never existed, and later, tries to build a stable familial situation that destructs before it ever comes together. There is a cruel humour in the novel's resistance to Felix's attempts at writing a plot as his efforts are undermined incessantly. He is paired inextricably with the least structured character in the text: Robin, who leaves him, while his child (his legacy) is sick and dependent. The punishment in

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<sup>1</sup> Emily Coleman quoted in Plumb, *Op Cit.*, p. xxiv.

<sup>2</sup> See: Laura Wallace, "'My History, Finally Invented': *Nightwood* and Its Publics', *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 3:3 (Fall 2016), pp. 71-94.

<sup>3</sup> Parsons, *Op Cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Katherine A. Fama, 'Melancholic Remedies: Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* as Narrative Theory', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 37:2 (Winter 2014), p. 43.

*Nightwood* for attempting to write a plot that refuses to be written is severe. Joseph Frank describes *Nightwood*'s disjointed narrative across the eight chapters as 'searchlights, probing the darkness each from a different direction yet ultimately illuminating the same entanglement of the human spirit.'<sup>5</sup> The different directions of what Frank describes as searchlights deliberately confuse the reader, making it impossible to maintain a sense of time and space in temporal chaos, mimicking the characters' attempts to understand their entanglement with one another. The novel's resistance to linear plot and temporality creates a dream-like quality which finds its origins in Barnes's lesser known works such as *Repulsive Women* and the play, *Three from the Earth*.

*Nightwood* was repeatedly rejected by publishers throughout 1934-1936. In August of 1934, the American publisher, T. R. Smith rejected the novel, claiming that it was too difficult to 'extricate the story from the mass of brilliant and somewhat mad writing.'<sup>6</sup> Katherine Fama has written on the narrative structure of *Nightwood* and argues that Barnes deliberately uses melancholia as a disruptive device throughout to 'interrogate and reform narrative practice,'<sup>7</sup> specifically, the narrative disruption occurs because the 'forward movement of narrative plotting gives way to a melancholia that instead explores, replays and repeats.'<sup>8</sup> As an example, Fama cites the unlicensed doctor, clandestine cross-dresser and superficial prophet, Matthew-Mighty-Grain-of-Salt-Dante-O'Connor, whose monologues initially interject and ultimately replace the novel's omniscient narrator. Fama's argument is convincing, and I believe that the interrupted narrative and repetition which she ascribes to melancholia plunges the reader directly into the misaligned, marginalised, otherworld of the Other. As Marcus wrote, '*Nightwood* makes a modernism of marginality.'<sup>9</sup> In looking for linear narrative Smith rejected *Nightwood*, calling it mad, failing to appreciate that its 'madness' is deliberate. Arguing for Barnes's *intentional* resistance to an ordered and structured plot in favour of disruption and chaos, Fama adds to the small but growing body of work contributed to by those such as Caselli and Galvin, who acknowledge the authorial intent behind the complex structure and composition of Barnes's texts.

Emily Coleman was present throughout the writing and editing of *Nightwood* and, much like Smith, was confused by the novel, suggesting to Eliot that perhaps some revisions should

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<sup>5</sup> Joseph Frank, *The Widening Gyre: Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1963), pp. 31-32.

<sup>6</sup> T. R. Smith quoted Plumb, *Op Cit.*, p. xi.

<sup>7</sup> Fama, *Op Cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>9</sup> Marcus, *Op Cit.*, p. 88.

be presented to Barnes regarding the lack of clarity within the text.<sup>10</sup> Coleman's specific concern was the constant movement between various characters within the novel and the lack of focus on any particular character that this allows. Eliot addresses the interconnectedness between characters and events in his preface to *Nightwood*, writing that 'The book is not simply a collection of individual portraits; the characters are all knotted together, as people are in real life' (*N*, preface, xx). Indeed, the characters are entangled as people are 'in real life', thereby breaking away from rather more traditional, linear plots in order to create a relatable sense of realism (an obviously modernist technique), whilst simultaneously exposing the reader's 'insistent desire for narrated meaning' through their unease with the disorganisation of *Nightwood*'s narrative.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to Fama's suggestion of narrative interruption within *Nightwood* and Frank's comparison of the chapters to probing searchlights, Glavey wrote that '*Nightwood* [']s... organizing trope is an image of motion caught in a snare that draws on the ekphrastic notion of still-movement'.<sup>12</sup> Thereby interpreting what Fama and Frank see as melancholy and confusion respectively as stasis within the novel that prevents movement and narrative, rather than interrupting it. The arguments outlined by Fama, Frank and Glavey are all valuable in exposing the disjointed narrative that runs throughout *Nightwood*, however I do not see the melancholy, stasis and entanglement of the characters as separable from one another but argue that they are interdependent and contribute equally to the non-linear, complex narrative structure of the text. The unstable relationship between the mainstream and the marginalised, and convention and unconventionality within in the text further complicates forward movement in *Nightwood*.

Frequently within the text the retelling of an event precedes the showing of the event to the reader. This recurring technique throughout the text prevents a clear timeline from developing and works to exaggerate the chaotic network of the characters' lives. It is also an effective way for the omniscient narrator to remain omniscient, blameless and unlocatable. Barnes achieves this 'lack of culpability' through various methods throughout her oeuvre, whether through the incorporation of Elizabethan language with modern, through traditional and religious woodcut drawings combined with Rabelaisian humour and grotesque, or through the omission of dates of precise locations of events. The task of locating oneself within *Nightwood* is further complicated by the lack of cohesion between the characters, as each seeks to absorb others into their perceived reality. In the chapter 'Watchman, What of the Night?', O'Connor says, "'To

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<sup>10</sup> For more on this, see: Plumb, *Op Cit.*, p. xvii.

<sup>11</sup> Fama, *Op Cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>12</sup> Glavey, *Op Cit.*, pp. 17-18.

our friends... we die every day' (N 86). In a subsequent chapter Nora echoes this sentiment with the statement that, 'for all of us die over again in somebody's sleep' (N 135). There is an almost equal split in *Nightwood* between the characters who live by day and those who live by night. The absorption of the groups into one another's realities makes night time endless, as the characters effectively pass the night back and forth between each other.

Barnes describes the difference in the Greenwich Village community's relationship with time in relation to society's relationship with time outside of the Village in 'Becoming Intimate with the Bohemians' (1916): 'Four o'clock in the afternoon and someone as spilled a glass of wine it creeps across the tablecloth in a widening pattern of sulky red. It is morning in Bohemia.'<sup>13</sup> And later, 'And then in the end, when everything else closes up and the chairs are lifted into the laps of the tables and the lights go out—all together—there is always the Hell Hole on Fourth Street and Sixth Avenue.'<sup>14</sup> The outsiders about whom Barnes writes across her texts: the poor, the homosexual, the Coney Island 'freak', the sexually 'promiscuous' woman, the cross-dressing man, first carve out geospatial locations for themselves, i.e. the move to Greenwich Village or Paris's Left Bank, and once there, redefine temporal boundaries.

*Nightwood* highlights the irony to be found in the mass rejection of social, racial and economic groups, who in turn form their own communities to alienate the original rejecters, typified by characters such as Nora and Felix. In reclaiming their power, the rejected group, the minority, becomes a source of fascination to the majority, who wish to understand and engage with the Other. In this way, the Other becomes the exclusive 'loved thing... [they] could never touch, therefore never know' (N 11). Founder of the experimental journal *transition* (1927-1938), Eugene Jolas, wrote that

A vast cosmos lies slumbering in us. Personal and ancestral memories are hidden in our being awaiting the spell of the conjuror. In order to understand this condition, we must needs dissolve the personality first before constructing the new ethos. Only by recognizing the fact that the primordial background of life is characterized by enormous scissions can we recapture the lost qualities of our psyche.<sup>15</sup>

*Nightwood* repeatedly suggests that this dissolving of the personality is the act that those outside of bohemian communities cannot achieve. For this reason, the mainstream becomes the excluded and the standard assumption that those labelled Other are somehow disadvantaged is

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<sup>13</sup> Djuna Barnes, 'Becoming Intimate with the Bohemians', *New York*, p. 233. Originally published in *New York Morning Telegraph Sunday Magazine*, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>15</sup> Eugene Jolas, *The Language of Night* (Holland: The Servire Press, 1932), p. 42.

subverted. The clear divide between mainstream society and the Other in *Nightwood* is amplified through the repetition of motifs linked to night and day. I argue that specifically within the text, night is presented as the temporal time and realm of the Other, while day is inhabited by those existing in mainstream society. The day characters are Nora, Felix and Jenny, who pursue control, tradition and stability throughout the novel, only to continually fail against the unstable, plotless text. The night characters, who feature as the most powerful representatives of the Other, are Robin and O'Connor. A difficult dynamic exists between the night and day characters. Those affiliated with the day seek out those affiliated with the night in the hope that the influence of the night characters will enable them (the day characters) to 'recapture the lost qualities of... [their] psyche', as Jolas wrote, through what I believe is the perceived connection between the night characters and animality, and the characters' ease with their own primal nature. Through the day characters' perception of the night characters, Barnes comments on the attributes given to those considered Other, such as perversion, freakishness and exoticness, typified by pre-twentieth-century interest in carnival freak shows.

The two distinct groupings of night and day characters within the text remain separate throughout, despite repeated effort on the part of both groups to align. As such, one might infer that although Barnes represented the Other continuously throughout her literary career, respectfully portraying minority groups, she did not believe that the complete inclusion of the Other into the mainstream was possible due to an inherent difference between the two groups. Nora spends a significant amount of time in the literal night of *Nightwood* attempting to understand the 'lost qualities of [her] own psyche', which she believes can be found by understanding Robin and her queer experience of temporality and geographical space. However, O'Connor explains that one's going down into the night is an act of fate, over which the individual has little control. He says to Nora:

What converse does he hold [the sleeper], and with whom? He lies down with his Nelly and drops off into the arms of his Gretchen.... She who stands looking down upon her who lies sleeping knows the horizontal fear, the fear unbearable (*N* 77-78).

O'Connor's understanding of sleep reads as a foray into the subconscious mind, in which any number of thoughts and memories could exist without one's conscious knowledge.

O'Connor asks Nora if she has 'ever thought of the peculiar polarity of times and times; and of sleep?' and then states that he 'will tell you [Nora] how the day and the night are related by their division.' (*N* 72) I would suggest that O'Connor's emphasis on the *polarity* of night and

day, reflect Barnes's view of the polarity between society's majority, which is first made evident in her journalism, written decades prior to *Nightwood*. In 'Becoming Intimate with the Bohemians' Barnes wrote, 'The deadening down, down, into a gray, drunken slumber, the still, dead beer; the heavy air, the inert bodies—daylight.'<sup>16</sup> On the one hand, the dash in this line highlights the stark difference between those who have been drinking all night (the 'bohemians'), who are almost unconscious, and the daylight, which is representative of renewal, cleanliness and life. On the other hand, the drunk and unconscious have spread into the early morning, separated only by a dash, threatening to contaminate the daylight with the remnants of the previous night, with degradation and death. In this way, through the alignment of the two distinct social groups with contrasting natural elements beyond the control of humanity (the sun and moon), Barnes implies that the separation between the mainstream and the Other is beyond human interference. In 'Becoming Intimate with the Bohemians' the implication that the Other refuse to disappear once the night is over recalls the defiance of the grotesque figures in *Repulsive Women* and the satirical boldness of *Ladies Almanack*, with its brazen discussion of Sapphism.

Throughout *Nightwood* O'Connor exhausts his power of rhetoric in attempting to explain the attraction of the night, with its atmosphere of degradation and hopelessness, to various characters, specifically Felix and Nora. The dichotomy between 'them and us' in which the outsiders cannot understand those inside the bohemian night time community and those within do not think of communities outside is first explored by Barnes in her 1916 Greenwich Village articles. Although *Nightwood* is situated within Paris's Left Bank rather than New York's Greenwich Village, Barnes's writing on the two locations are comparable because of the mass migration of the Greenwich Village community from New York to Paris in the early 1920s, which created a similar bohemian community across the Atlantic.<sup>17</sup>

Barnes's portrayal of the Other remains consistent throughout her oeuvre, as she repeatedly shows that the Other are innately different to, but not less than, conventional society. However, Scott Herring views this differently, writing that through *Nightwood*, Barnes positions herself as 'a slumming journalist turned Jolasian artist'.<sup>18</sup> I disagree that Barnes wrote to appease

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<sup>16</sup> Barnes, 'Becoming Intimate with the Bohemians', p. 243.

<sup>17</sup> For more on this migration, see Heise, *Op Cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>18</sup> In writing 'Jolasian artist', Herring refers to Jolas's suggestion that in their search for "the underworld", the artist enters a mystical realm far removed from cultural or geographical specificity... In this realm the writer... slums into the underworld of the self to return with a novel language'. See: Scott Herring, *Queering the Underworld: Slumming, Literature, and the Undoing of Lesbian and Gay History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 176.

slummers, as her writing resists the temptation to present those within the bohemian community as taboo. Furthermore, her writing on Greenwich Village is deliberately evasive, as Heise notes, ‘Barnes... kept the city’s sexual mysteries a mystery in order to make them “real,” safeguarding her marginalized neighborhood from the modern city’s fatal exposures.’<sup>19</sup> Throughout her Greenwich Village articles as well as throughout *Nightwood*, Barnes is deliberately vague about any real, significant details, writing, ‘No, I shall not give them away’ in response to a slummer who seeks out ‘the odd women and men who sit on the curb quoting poetry to the policemen or angling for buns as they floated down into the Battery.’<sup>20</sup> Further on in the same article Barnes writes scathingly of a woman who has travelled to the Village with her daughters to marvel at the locals: ‘this sad little fur-trimmed woman with her certified daughters was ignorant of those lost places that are twice as charming because of their reticence.’<sup>21</sup> This line exudes bitterness and mockery, and ends with the implication that Barnes has no intention of ruining the charming reticence of the typically Greenwich Village establishments sought out by the slummers. In opposition to Herring’s point of view that Barnes’s writing on Greenwich Village moved from exposure to clandestine obscurity, one might argue that the new position Barnes adopts in *Nightwood* is that of one who portrays the bohemian communities in a less glamorised way.

‘Becoming Intimate with the Bohemians’ informs the reader that, ‘Upstairs is respectability, wife, children, music; a violin plays a sorry tune like melancholy robins on a telegraph wire charged with gossip. In the basement is all that is naughty: spicy girls in gay smocks or those capricious clothes that seem to be making faces at their wearers... Men with arms full of literature, pockets jingling with light coin, resplendent in ties’.<sup>22</sup> ‘Upstairs’ is dismal, while downstairs bohemia is ‘spicy’ and a place of corruptive influences like literature. Barnes continues:

“A liqueur, Tito”—this to her latest lover lounging beautifully, a handsome man of fifty summers, but not these summers; an Italian, perhaps, or a Russian or a Frenchman, for the Bohemians have a preference for foreign make. I personally am with them: the foreigner lies so bewitchingly; he is so cleverly bad.<sup>23</sup>

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Herring uses the term slumming as Heise describes it: ‘Historically, middle-class residents and tourists could and did use the underworld as a site of abjection against which to define themselves while still indulging in its sins.’ Heise, *Op Cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> Heise, *Op Cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>20</sup> Barnes, ‘Becoming Intimate with the Bohemians’, pp. 237-238.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

The obvious fetishising of ‘the foreigner’ recalls the discussion on primitivism in the previous chapter, which address Barnes’s rejection of popular twentieth-century notions of the primitive. The presence of the Italian, Russian or Frenchman within the Villagers’ geographical space further aligns the community with the Other.

Barnes uses Nora’s attempted intrusion on the night and the realm of the Other to enforce the surreal atmosphere of *Nightwood* and its purposeful divorce from narrative time, as her day melds with night. Within the text times are not specified, dates are not provided; it is unclear how many days, weeks, months or years it takes for the action to unfold. Of nights in general, Elizabeth Bronfen writes:

The night is not simply a time for sleeping... a vibrant time opens up after darkness. At night the diurnal world undergoes reflection and commentary. At night we encounter another way of reckoning time; a time that cannot be reckoned; a time of reckoning... on the threshold between the past day and the next, consigned neither to unconscious sleep nor to the routine of mundane consciousness, the night offers each of us a heightened attentiveness... Uninhibited, under the protection of darkness, we can give ourselves over to memories or fantasies, but also to doubts, wild conjectures, and anxieties.<sup>24</sup>

Bronfen’s description of night time could almost be written specifically about *Nightwood*. *Nightwood*’s night is active, although it shows little regard or awareness of day time. The threshold of which Bronfen speaks is the default, perpetual state that dominates *Nightwood*, locking its characters in a continuous cycle of freedom/safety and entrapment/danger. Being ‘consigned neither to unconscious sleep nor to the routine of mundane consciousness’ is reminiscent of Robin, the ‘born somnambule, who lives in two worlds’ (*N* 31). Bronfen also touches on the ‘wild conjectures, and anxieties’ generated in the absence of daytime, voiced by O’Connor in his ironic statement that ‘the night is a skin pulled over the head of day that the day may be in torment. We will find no comfort until the night melts away’ (*N* 76). The irony of this statement derives from the fact that the metaphorical and psychological night is never truly absent in *Nightwood*, a text that probes ‘the unknowable recesses of the unconscious night world’.<sup>25</sup>

A universal summary of the night is useful but neglects subtle differences between various kinds of nights. The distinction between nights and the acknowledgement that there are different kinds of nights has been highlighted by Joachim Homann in his introduction to *Night Visions: Nocturnes in American Art, 1860-1960* (2015), in which he wrote, ‘the American

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<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Bronfen, *Night Passages: Philosophy, Literature, and Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> Scott Herring, *Op Cit.*, p. 16.

fascination with the night in the modern period would be better understood if examined within an international context'.<sup>26</sup> In this way, the particular use of the night as a motif in American art could be better understood. O'Connor echoes this sentiment, despite speaking of the literal night in this instance. O'Connor asks Nora to consider Parisian nights, American nights and nights of other times (*N* 70-95). Indeed, when considering the night, in addition to discerning geographical location, one must also consider the era of the night(s) in question. *Nightwood's* nights are based in Paris in the early-twentieth century, when the 'main source of nighttime light was no longer the faraway moon or the stuttering flame of a gas lamp, but the clear steady glow of the incandescent filament.'<sup>27</sup> And when 'brilliantly illuminated streets, public places, and private residences changed entire patterns of existence', enabling activities such as dancing, window shopping, and drinking to flourish, drawing greater crowds onto the streets at night, and in turn, creating a new subculture.<sup>28</sup> One should also remember that the construction of rural night times is different to that of the urban night, even in present times, remaining much as the pre-modern urban night. Nora only considers her night, and at most, nights in Paris, which exasperates O'Connor, who asks, "Have you thought of the night, now, in other times, in foreign countries?" (*N* 73), encouraging Nora to think of that which is 'different', as *Nightwood* urges its readers to consider those who are 'different', consigned to, or aligned with, bohemia. O'Connor says:

"Have you thought of the night, now, in other times, in foreign countries – in Paris? When the streets were gall high with things you wouldn't have done for a dare's sake, and the way it was then; with the pheasants' necks and the goslings' beaks dangling against the hocks of the gallants, and not a pavement in the place, and everything gutters for miles and miles, and a stench to it that plucked you by the nostrils and you were twenty leagues out!" (*N* 73)

Throughout *Nightwood* and indeed across her oeuvre, Barnes suggests that the grotesque filth attributed by O'Connor to previous eras is still very much alive in the marginalised communities of Greenwich Village and the Parisian Left Bank in the twentieth century, or rather, that those outside of these alternative communities perceive the Left Bank and Greenwich Village in this way. Perhaps *Nightwood's* streets now have pavements and there are no dangling pheasants or goslings in shop windows, but the streets at night are certainly 'gall high' with things Nora would not have done (during her discussion on the night with O'Connor,

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<sup>26</sup> Joachim Homann, *Night Vision: Nocturnes in American Art, 1860-1960* (Prestel, Munich, London, New York: Delmonico Books, 2015), p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> Avis Berman, 'City Lights: Urban Perceptions of Night' in *Night Vision: Nocturnes in American Art, 1860-1960* ed. Joachim Homann (Prestel, Munich, London, New York: Delmonico Books, 2015), p. 33.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

she tells him, “I used to think... that people just went to sleep, or if they did not go to sleep, that they were themselves” (N 72)) and which a select few of *Nightwood*'s characters can only do under the cover of night, in the specific location of the Parisian Left Bank. These things are specifically excessive drinking, casual Sapphic encounters and intermingling with people of various races and religions. Nora's inability to understand the appeal of such activities follows Patience Scalpel's inability to understand the Sapphism of Musset's circle.

Scott Herring argues that *Nightwood* presents the alternative Left Bank community as a permanent 'primitive underworld'.<sup>29</sup> Contrastingly, Avis Berman suggests that it is merely 'The power of the night... [which] transform[s] any particular location after dark into a spectacle of cosmic proportion', not particular groups of people in specific locations.<sup>30</sup> Berman's theory implies that regardless of location, once the sun has risen, society can be reintegrated. Barnes's perspective on the full-time underworld versus the part-time (night-time) underworld falls somewhere in between. In 1916 Barnes wrote:

men and women resting; limbs wide-flung, arms pendent, listless; round the fountains and on the corners children, dark-eyed Italian children shrieking now with Yankee-cockney accent, a moment later whispering to their deep-bosomed mothers in the Tuscan of Dante... a bunch of Jewish girls like a nosegay, there a pair of Norwegian emigrants, strong of figure and sparing of speech; a coloured girl on the sidewalk<sup>31</sup>

Barnes suggests that bohemia does not merge with conventional society, regardless of the time of day. However, she also suggests that the bohemian world is not part of an underworld, rather she makes a point of stating the charm of the Othered and their connection to that which is natural, defiantly disassociating them from any kind of illicitness.

Brassaï's first collection of photography, *Paris by Night* (1933), suggests the 'underworld' of which Herring and Heise write and the day/night divide discussed by Berman. Brassaï's series of black and white images of Parisian night time, taken in the early twentieth century, suggest an atmosphere brimming over with sexual promiscuity, immorality and potential threat. The images draw the viewer's attention towards obvious objects of focus, whether

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<sup>29</sup> Scott Herring, *Op Cit.*, p. 187.

Thomas Heise developed Herring's use of the term 'underworld' with regard to Bohemia, writing, 'what exactly is the underworld? A phantasm and a spectre, the product of a paranoid disposition that sees disorder and cultural and biological decline around every corner? A real territorial culture in the crumbling urban architectures of ethnic slums and racialized ghettos, in the theatres and on the street corners of America's vice zones, and the in the rotting spaces of subterranean living? A romantic figment of a literary imagination looking for signs of authentic life in the modern age? The answer is "yes."... we must examine our own act of looking and ask what it reveals about our culture, our fears and desires, our standards for citizenship, our urban policies.' Heise, *Op Cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Berman, *Op Cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>31</sup> Djuna Barnes, 'Greenwich Village As It Is', p. 225-226.

people, shop windows, cars, or empty park benches, but equally towards prominent, thick shadows, which suggest the unseen danger of the night, as explored within *Nightwood*. As with *Nightwood*, Brassai's images convey sexuality, threat and freedom. His night-time photographs, which include images of prostitutes and their clients, burlesque performers and lone figures on empty streets, contrast greatly to his day-time Parisian photographs, which capture figures such as Picasso, Salvador Dalí and his wife, Gala, both of whom look warmly into the camera. In this way, Brassai's photography pre-empt's Berman's notion that a city, or any specific location can really be two separate cities or locations occupying the same space, one version by day and the other by night.

### **Erratic Rhythms and Internal Time**

Until the end of *Nightwood*, Robin inhabits an in-between space, which exists somewhere between bohemia (or Heise's and Herring's underworld) and convention. Robin's somnambulism absolves her of responsibility throughout the novel, but also positions her close to death. In this way, she acts out a similar role to Nora's deceased grandmother, of whom Nora dreams twice, as Robin is only ever anywhere in part. It is as though at any time, it is only the spirit or sense of her in a place. When both the reader and Felix first meet Robin she is unconscious, having passed out in a hotel room. No reason is given for Robin's unconsciousness and it seems that she easily slips between the conscious world and the unconscious. In light of this, and in relation to O'Connor's later comment that, 'Robin is not in your life, you are in her dream, you'll never get out of it' (*N* 132) I present the previously unargued hypothesis that from the moment in which Felix and O'Connor meet Robin in her hotel room, there is a shift between 'reality' and Robin's dream world, with the rest of the novel taking place inside Robin's dreamscape. This narrative theory does not seem to have been presented so far in scholarship on *Nightwood*. The argument for a shift from reality into Robin's dream is supported by the following two extracts, the first of which Michelle Phillips sees as a replica of Henri Rousseau's painting, *The Dream* (1910)<sup>32</sup>:

On a bed, surrounded by a confusion of potted plants, exotic palms and cut flowers, faintly oversung by the notes of unseen birds, which seemed to have been forgotten – left without the usual silencing cover, which, like cloaks on funeral urns, are cast over their cages at night by good housewives – half flung off the support of the cushions from which, in a moment of threatened consciousness she had turned her head, lay the young woman, heavy and dishevelled.

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<sup>32</sup> For more on this, see: Michelle H. Phillips, *Representations of Childhood in American Modernism* (London, Palgrave Macmillan: 2016), pp. 101-102.

Her legs, in white flannel trousers, were spread as in a dance, the thick lacquered pumps looking too lively for the arrested step her hands, long and beautiful, lay on either side.

The perfume that her body exhaled was of the quality of that earth-flesh, fungi, which smells of captured dampness and yet is so dry, overcast with the odour of oil of amber, which is an inner malady of the sea, making her seem as if she had invaded a sleep incautious and entire. Her flesh was the texture of plant life, and beneath it one sensed a frame, broad, porous and sleep-worn, as if sleep were a decay fishing her beneath the visible surface. About her head there was an effulgence as of phosphorus glowing about the circumference of a body of water – as if her life lay through her in ungainly luminous deteriorations – the troubling structure of the born somnambule, who lives in two worlds – meet of child and desperado. (N 30-31)

And secondly:

A series of almost invisible shudders wrinkled her skin as the water dripped from her lashes, over her mouth and on to the bed. A spasm of waking moved upward from some deep shocked realm, and she opened her eyes. Instantly she tried to get to her feet. She said: 'I was all right;' and fell back into the pose of her annihilation. (N 32)

In the first extract, one learns that Robin is inextricably connected to and enmeshed with earthiness, recalling Russo's concern around the polarised portrayal of the female body in grotesque literature, which presents the body of Woman as either a cavernous 'crone' or suggests a 'connection between the female body... and the "primal" elements, especially the earth.'<sup>33</sup> In aligning Robin with earthiness, Barnes implies a strong connection to nature, to innate knowing over intellectual knowledge and language, and invokes the grotesque women focused on in *Repulsive Women*.

Robin is surrounded by plants and her body produces the scent of fungi. The plants are a combination of average houseplants and wild, Other palms, situating Robin as the connecting force between that which is conventional and tame, and that which is Other, unknown and perhaps unknowable. That Robin has begun to merge with the plants invokes thoughts of abandonment and decay, the latter is reinforced through the phrases 'funeral urns' and 'decay', and the line, 'her life lay through her in ungainly luminous deteriorations', which suggests both that Robin is not in control of her life and that life itself is rapidly escaping her. Through the decay, Robin's body moves from one grotesque archetype to another: from the earthy, intuitive body to the old crone or witch. Robin 'lives in two worlds', that of consciousness and unconsciousness (whether through sleep, or death). Her position between the two is precarious, as suggested by the narrator, Nora and O'Connor at intervals throughout the text and through the image of decay 'fishing beneath the visible surface', which could easily surface at any

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<sup>33</sup> Russo, *Op Cit.*, p. 1.

moment. The term 'fishing' is again, ambiguous and troubling. The phrasing suggests that it is the decay which is fishing, seeking a way out, and yet fishing typically refers to the act of entering something with the view to bring another thing out. It is active, rather than passive. It seems to make sense to read this phrase as though the personified decay is fishing for consciousness, which it seeks to bring through to the unconscious. This hypothesis supports my original theory that from this point forward in the text, the action takes place in Robin's unconscious dreamscape.

That Robin's life is merely luminous deteriorations suggests the insubstantiality of the life that she does exude, and the aspects of it that are positive (luminous) are immediately undermined by the negativity of the noun, 'deteriorations'. This suggests that Robin's presence is more prominent in unconscious space, close to sleep and death, than in consciousness.

The silencing cover used to quiet the birds at night has been forgotten, implying that the night and all that is threatening has been allowed to cross over into the safety of day. Note that it is 'good' housewives who shut out the night, thereby signalling that those who let in the night are bad and are perhaps not even housewives at all, but maybe one of those women from the New Woman movement, 'a pamphleteer... One of the birth controllers'.<sup>34</sup> The reader can infer from this passage that the night is threatening because Robin, the 'born somnambule' is part desperado – threatening because she has been pushed to criminality through overwhelming despair. Such blurring of night and day activities as suggested through the nightly act of covering a birdcage to signal the close of day and of celebration (through the prevention of bird song) can be read as further proof that night and day have combined in the unreality of Robin's dreamscape, which is 'threatened' by consciousness.

The entire extract which details O'Connor's and Felix's coming upon Robin fuses sleep and death, as though they are entirely interchangeable. Robin seems as though she has 'invaded a sleep incautious and entire' (*N* 31). Surely, if she has entered the sleep entirely, no part of her is left to return to consciousness and waking, invoking suggestions of dying and of death. The second extract included above does nothing to counter the argument for Robin's all-encompassing, permanent sleep. Robin's waking is described as a 'spasm', a corporeal and involuntary act that does not require consciousness. It is also an act which, whether mild or severe, is temporary. One can thereby infer that Robin has not woken, and, significantly, it is from this point in the novel that she is referred to as a somnambule. The spasm brings Robin upwards, from somewhere below described as a 'deep shocked realm', a space that sounds very

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<sup>34</sup> Barnes, 'Becoming Intimate with the Bohemians', p. 240.

similar to the setting of *Nightwood*, Paris's Left Bank and the realm of the Other. Finally, after Robin wakes (potentially?) and speaks, she 'fell back' (again, linked to going down), suggesting both a literal collapse into a reclining position and a move from consciousness back into unconsciousness, to the underworld/Other world. Ultimately, Robin's return to unconsciousness might either be sleep, or death, suggested through 'annihilation'. On this topic Carolyn Allen wrote that 'representation of Robin's consciousness is largely absent from the narration,' which would be the case if she is unconscious, as the entire novel would then be the product of her unconscious mind.<sup>35</sup> By giving Robin limited expression, Barnes illustrates the point she makes within her journalistic work, that those classed as Other have little or no voice, presenting the reader with an insight into their lived nightmare and a 'guide into the Town of Darkness through Robin Vote's subterranean body'.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly to *Nightwood*, Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1943) explores humanity's relationship to time, religion and the universe. The speaker of 'Burnt Norton' (published contemporaneously to *Nightwood*) experiences a psychological removal from universal, public time as the result of his acute focus on memories and unexplored possibilities. This removal from communal time mirrors the separation from public time experienced by Nora as a result of trauma. In contrast, the latter calmness suggested by the 'still point' within 'Burnt Norton' is closely aligned to Robin's child-like and unimpeded relationship with time.<sup>37</sup> The psychological descent into past time that is experienced by the speaker of 'Burnt Norton' reads as follows:

Footfalls echo in the memory  
Down the passage which we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened  
Into the rose-garden. My words echo  
Thus, in your mind.<sup>38</sup>

The speaker assesses that which has been necessarily left behind because an alternative path has been chosen. The melancholia expressed in the lines above resemble the melancholia that Fama sees within *Nightwood*. This melancholia also draws the speaker out of the present moment and into the realm of imagination, thereby offering a disrupted and alternative narrative, based not on 'reality' or facts, but supposition. Additionally, the above section from

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<sup>35</sup> Carolyn Allen, 'The Erotics of Nora's Narrative in Djuna Barnes's "Nightwood"', *Signs* 19:1 (Autumn 1993), p. 188.

<sup>36</sup> Herring, *Queering the Underworld*, p.188.

<sup>37</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'Burnt Norton', *Collected Poems: 1909-1962* (London: Faber, 1963), p. 191. 'Burnt Norton' was first published in 1936.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

'Burnt Norton' is similar to both the influence of Robin on the characters who meet her, as well as the journey through her unconscious mind: Robin takes the place of 'Burnt Norton's' 'footfalls' moving around people's memories and her animalistic restlessness and desire for satisfaction above all else creates in people a melancholy about all they have sacrificed or left unexplored. The similarities between 'Burnt Norton' and *Nightwood* continue if one proceeds with the hypothesis that the majority of the book takes place in Robin's sleeping, unconscious mind. Although rather than Robin entering the minds of the other characters, they have entered her mind and traipse through her memories, feeling dislocated and detached. The wider implication of this reading and comparison is that although the characters exist separately to Robin, once the action shifts from the 'real world' into Robin's unconscious in chapter two, she technically becomes all of the characters, as her mind creates the other characters' roles and the novel's action from this point forward, in a novelistic version of a monoplay.<sup>39</sup> Such a reading presents an alternative explanation for the surrealistic overtone of the novel, the interrupted narrative and the characters' innate attraction towards (and fear of) Robin. For Felix, Nora and Jenny in particular, Robin holds the same fascination that Greenwich Village does for the slummers in Barnes's 1916 articles on the topic.

### **Organised Dreams/ Disorganised Reality**

In addition to *Nightwood's* exploration of Robin's subconscious, the novel gives the reader an insight into Nora's subconscious through her dreams. Nora's struggle to locate Robin within and through the 'interminable night' (N 55) penetrates Nora's subconscious. Alongside the almost equal focus placed on various characters' perspectives and a deliberately unstructured plot, dreams function as a significant way in which *Nightwood* blurs reality and fantasy. Dreams (aspirations) also impact the momentum and narrative of *Nightwood*, as 'trauma gives rise to a sense of timelessness by distorting people's perception of time and continuity as characters', and the characters' failed dreams keep them trapped in the past.<sup>40</sup> The impact of dreams in *Nightwood* pre-empts Jean Rhys's use of dreams in *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), which blurs the past and present. Through Nora's dreams, which are presented twice within *Nightwood*, the text plunges the reader into her subconscious, which mirrors her reality (it is in

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<sup>39</sup> One can assume that the characters do exist separately because most of them are introduced to the reader before we meet Robin in her unconscious state, except Jenny Petherbridge and some minor characters.

<sup>40</sup> Maren Tova Linett, *Modernism, Feminism, and Jewishness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 140.

this way that dreams add to the surreal and unlocatable sense of *Nightwood* as a text, both geographically and temporally). An overview and analysis of Nora's dreams in comparison to her reality will help to illustrate these points.

The initial dream relayed to the reader is a recurring one dreamt by Nora, in which she and Robin stand in Nora's grandmother's room. This room is at the top of the house and exudes 'an expansive, decaying splendour' (N 56), harbouring relics such as 'portraits of her [Nora's grandmother's] great-uncle, Llewellyn, who had died in the Civil War, faded pale carpets, curtains that resembled columns from their time in stillness – a plume and an inkwell – the ink faded into the quill' (N 56), all of which draw a contrast between the twentieth-century present in which Nora and Robin exist, represented through Nora's own presence within the dream, and a long-passed era. Although Robin is a perpetual source of confusion and distress within *Nightwood*, undermining and challenging convention and tradition, others are fascinated by her.<sup>41</sup> When relating how close she became to Robin, Jenny tells Felix, "“She is really quite extraordinary... I must say I understand her better than other people”" (N 103), although she really cannot comprehend Robin at all. By competing in this way, Jenny, Nora and Felix are really competing to show how well they can contain something wild, understand something complex and opaque, and most importantly, continue to function with this figure – who represents the threatening Other – alongside them. While Robin's influence is not beneficial, it is as though once touched by her, by night, and by the perceived freedom and rebellion within her, others become addicted and cannot relinquish being so close to something so primal.

In the dream about her grandmother's room, Nora is positioned high up, looking down at Robin, 'as if from a scaffold' (N 56), resembling Jesus at his crucifixion. Also conative of religion and holiness is the source of light that is emitted from just behind Nora, and which shines down on Robin. This light is suggestive of the daylight that Nora brings to Robin's night, and more broadly, to the underworld of the Parisian Left Bank. In the dream Nora attempts to encourage Robin to climb the stairs, but knows she cannot, and that Robin could never join her, further enforcing the separation between Nora and Robin, and between 'bohemian' culture and 'mainstream' culture. In Nora's dream, Robin is relegated to the shadow side and Nora is completely detached from it, seeming to agree with Jungian

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<sup>41</sup> Robin's presence alone is enough to create a break with tradition and stability. In this way, she functions similarly to the primary characters of *Ladies Almanack*, who are thoroughly modern and resist the late-nineteenth-century Western ideals represented by Patience Scalpel. It is a trend within Barnes's work that one or more figures represent the outdated social and/or political conventions against which the text stands. One can also see this in *Ryder*, most clearly through the contrast between Wendell's wife, the English conventionalist, Amelia and his American, forward-thinking mistress, Kate.

psychology which highlights a split between the two aspects. However, Barnes's potential challenge to this notion of separation is visible when Nora says, 'The dream will not be dreamed again.' (N 56) This line is positioned in the middle of the dream sequence, and it is unclear to the reader whether Nora wakes up to say it before falling asleep again, or whether she says it to herself inside the dream, knowing she is dreaming. Either way, the realms of fantasy and reality are melded together. This ambiguity of language is present across Barnes's oeuvre in moments in which she seeks to obscure meaning. Heise pinpoints Barnes's journalism as the start of such deliberate vagueness in her writing, stating that

If Barnes was trying to work out an aesthetics of privacy in her journalism by balancing innuendo with indirection, with *Nightwood* she opts for a neo-baroque semantic excess that is difficult to see through. The text's opacity is compounded by a narrative of digressions, diversions, arabesques, and false leads that leave many readers lost.<sup>42</sup>

In line with Heise's hypothesis around *Nightwood*'s deliberate confusion, I suggest that Barnes presents striking similarity between the possessions listed in Nora's dream and those present in her waking life. The distinct lack of definition between the two realms and the objects contained within them exacerbates the melding of Nora and Robin, signifiers of night and day, bohemia and mainstream, conscious and subconscious. The dream items also suggest a sense of discordance through their antiquity, which is at odds with Nora's modernity and the present moment. The real-life objects that fill Nora and Robin's apartment in the rue du Cherche-Midi are described below:

Looking from the long windows one saw a fountain figure, a tall granite woman bending forward with lifted head, one hand was held over the pelvic round as if to warn a child who goes incautiously.

In the passage of their lives together every object in the garden, every item in the house, every word they spoke, attested to their mutual love, the combining of their humours. There were circus chairs, wooden horses bought from a ring of an old merry-go-round, venetian chandeliers from the Flea Fair, stage-drops from Munich, cherubim from Vienna, ecclesiastical hangings from Rome, a spinet from England, and a miscellaneous collection of music boxes from many countries; such was the museum of their encounter. (N 50)

The unusual collection of items gathered together suggest an air of former liveliness, crowds and splendour that is now absent from the items, thus highlighting solemnity of the Nora and Robin's environment and in doing so, reinforcing the suggestion that 'stuff' tethers the characters to that which is now lost. Objects and possessions are ways for Nora, O'Connor and

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<sup>42</sup> Heise, *Op Cit.*, p. 104.

Felix to locate themselves, in much the same way that protagonist Sasha Jensen uses shops and restaurants to do the same in *Good Morning, Midnight* whilst living in Paris and attempting to cope with several nervous breakdowns.

The contrast between the items that have been thrown together, and which ‘attested to their mutual love’ – the circus chair, the chandeliers, the spinet from England – convey the discord between the two characters. The circus chair is linked specifically to Robin and suggests her inherent animality, recalling her interaction with the lioness at the Denckman circus. Whereas the spinet and the English origins of the instrument point towards Nora, who is ‘known instantly as a Westerner.’ (N 54)<sup>43</sup> Strikingly, the height and implied cautioning of the fountain figure at their apartment recall Nora’s dream and her position above Robin. The line ‘one hand was held over the pelvic round as if to warn a child who goes incautiously’ is reminiscent of Barnes’s interaction with turn-of-the-century sexological reasoning, which suggested that Sapphic relationships turn one woman into the symbolic mother and the other into the child.<sup>44</sup>

Nora’s dreamscape is constructed with ageing relics harking back to a period that no longer exists. It is suggested that the past was a safer space, whereas the present moment moves to an erratic rhythm that Nora cannot understand. This sentiment is in direct contrast to Berman’s suggestion that ‘The cathartic and regenerative force of the night was felt intensely by some artists practicing in the postwar years.’<sup>45</sup> Barnes flouts this view within *Nightwood* through the strong sense of dislocation, timelessness and fracture, which each generate uncertainty, fear and a futile longing for daylight hours, that ultimately offer little reprieve.

### **Sleep, Animality and the Psychological Night**

The night and sleep in *Nightwood* are rife with complications and threat for all but Robin, who sleeps the deep, untroubled sleep of a child. Nora tells O’Connor that Robin used to come back to her for ‘sleep and safety’ (N 125), to which he replies it is because of ‘dawn! That’s when she came back frightened. At that hour the citizen of the night balances on a thread that’s running thin’ (N 125). This thread evokes the image of a tightrope walker, recalling Nora and

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<sup>43</sup> The English spinet serves a similar purpose to the piano and lace in chapter eight of *Ryder*, ‘Pro and Con, or the Sisters Louise’. This moment is discussed in Chapter 3. The spinet anglicises, conventionalises and civilises Nora, defining her against Robin’s animality.

<sup>44</sup> Engagement with this concept can be seen throughout *Nightwood* in Nora and Robin’s relationship. The former taking on the role of the parent and the latter the role of the child. This subject is focused on in detail in Chapter 2.

Allen’s article, ‘The Erotics of Nora’s Narrative in Djuna Barnes’s “Nightwood”’ looks extensively at *Nightwood* in relation to sexology and Sapphism.

<sup>45</sup> Berman, *Op Cit.*, p. 145.

Robin's first meeting at the Denckman circus, as well as of the circus folk at the start of the novel, and reinforcing Nora and Robin's link to that which is Other. The thread also reads as a lifeline out of, and away from, the corrupting night (the subconscious) and back to daylight and safety. As Georgette Fleischer states, 'All the inhabitants of *Nightwood* are afflicted by who they are, and its internal poetic condemns each to desire what will clinch the mortal coil.'<sup>46</sup> For Robin, this is the night and for Nora, it is Robin. It is the thinning thread that brings Robin out of her indulgent animality and back to the semi-reality of her somnambulistic daylight hours until the animal/human divide dissolves completely at the end of the novel. Nora says to O'Connor:

"It's over now," she was asleep and I struck her awake... she who had managed in that sleep to keep whole... No rot had touched her until then, and there before my eyes I saw her corrupt all at once and withering, because I had struck her sleep away. (*N* 131)

Sleep is preservative for Robin and by removing Robin's sleep, Nora simultaneously removes Robin's escape from her own animality and primal nature. Robin does not merge completely with her inner animal until the end of her relationship with Nora, after which

she [Robin] began to bark also, crawling after him [Nora's dog] – barking in a fit of laughter, obscene and touching... moving head to head, until she gave up, lying out, her hands beside her, her face turned and weeping; and the dog too gave up then, and lay down, his eyes bloodshot, his head flat along her knees. (*N* 153)

As discussed, the symbolism of this final moment is suggestive of Robin's acceptance of that which she has resisted throughout the novel (both through her connection with Nora, who 'By temperament... was an early Christian... [and] believed the word' (*N* 46), and through her somnambulism), her primal self, her animality.

Allen wrote that 'the enigmatic final scene in which Nora collapses at the chapel door and Robin eventually lies weeping next to Nora's dog suggests that the women cannot live together in the world of the day.'<sup>47</sup> I agree with Allen that Nora and Robin cannot exist together in 'the world of the day' people but would extend the notion further to suggest that the final scene also shows that the two women cannot both live together in the world of the night, either.

In 1935 Barnes wrote to Coleman, saying, 'Nightwood,' like that, one word, it makes it sound like night-shade, poison and night and forest, and tough, in the meaty sense and simple

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<sup>46</sup> Georgette Fleischer, 'Djuna Barnes and T. S. Eliot: the politics and poetics of *Nightwood*', *Studies in the Novel* 30:3 (1998), p. 421.

<sup>47</sup> Allen, *Op Cit.*, p. 188.

yet singular,... Do you like it?’<sup>48</sup> Coleman did not, although she conceded that there was logic to the name.<sup>49</sup> Other titles such as ‘Anatomy of the Night’, ‘Through the Night’ and ‘Night without Sleep’ were each considered and dismissed by Barnes. ‘Nightwood’ as a title is an opaque one, leaving a great deal to readers’ imaginations. What does it mean as a word, never mind as a title? Its simplicity is effective, suggesting the eminence of the night within the text and the focus on that which is wild, impermeable, and/or separate from society. Barnes claimed that it was not until October 1936 that she realised the connection between ‘Nightwood’ as a title and Thelma Wood’s<sup>50</sup> name, writing, “‘Nigh T. Wood—low, thought of it the other day. Very odd.’”<sup>51</sup> Barnes’s sudden realisation about the title is not entirely convincing, as she seems to have intentionally based Robin Vote on Thelma Wood, as she explained, “‘God knows who could have written as much about their blood while it was still running. I wrote it you must remember when... I still did not know whether Thelma would come back to me or not... in that turmoil of Charles [Ford] and Morocco, sickness, Hayford Hall—everything, then the end here in New York’”.<sup>52</sup> Barnes also wrote that she “‘could not face Thelma’s reading it [*Nightwood*].”<sup>53</sup>

Plumb presents an alternative theory of the origin of *Nightwood*’s title, writing that Barnes ‘told Hank O’Neal that the title was taken from the second line of William Blake’s “‘The Tyger” (1794): “Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright / In the forests of the night”’.<sup>54</sup> Across the years spanning *Nightwood*’s creation and publication (c. 1927 - 1936), Barnes told several different stories regarding her decision on ‘Nightwood’ as a title. One can certainly see the influence of Blake’s poem on the text, specifically in Robin’s encounter with the lion at the circus. One can say with certainty that ‘The Tyger’ was in Barnes’s thoughts when writing *Creatures in an Alphabet*, which reads, “‘Tyger! Tyger!”—Who wrote that?’, as discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>55</sup>

Blake’s poem ‘Night’, from *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1789) depicts two worlds, one in which nature is brutal and predators hunt prey and another, one in which angels have interfered to make predators the protectors of their former prey. In this new world, instead of hunting sheep, the ‘lion’s ruddy eyes/ Shall flow with tears of gold’<sup>56</sup> as he is humbled by the

<sup>48</sup> Barnes quoted in Fleischer, *Op Cit.*, p. 411.

<sup>49</sup> See: Plumb, *Op Cit.*, introduction.

<sup>50</sup> The sculpture and silverpoint point artist, Thelma Wood, was Barnes’s long-term partner from 1921-1929.

<sup>51</sup> Plumb, *Op Cit.*, p. ix.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. ix-x.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. x.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>55</sup> Djuna Barnes, *Collected Poems*, p. 143.

<sup>56</sup> William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (Liverpool: printed by Blake, 1923), p. 22.

vulnerability of the sheep, ‘pitying the tender cries.’<sup>57</sup> Similarly to the suppressed animality of Blake’s animals is the subdued primal immediacy of the lioness that Robin encounters at the circus. Both Blake’s and Barnes’s lions express increased and uncharacteristic humanity. However, in contrast to the repressed animality of Blake’s lions, Barnes’s lions achieve unification between primal feeling and humanity, which makes ‘the air seem full of withheld strength’ as they pass by (*N* 49). The union between opposing aspects of the self is in line with *Ryder*’s presentation of innate, ever-present animality which coexists alongside the civilized self. Whereas the innate animality of Blake’s lion has been replaced by civilised thought and feeling.

Angels are the ultimate power in ‘Night’ as they subvert the animals’ true nature, whereas in *Nightwood* it is humans who tame the circus lions. In both cases, animality is consigned to a space that is separate from ‘civilisation’, creating distance between the animals and their own innate and primal nature. However, *Nightwood*’s circus lions, and particularly the lioness, maintain a subtle power, one which implies that they have submitted willingly, but retain the capacity to access their animality. The inclusion of phrases and words such as ‘tears’, ‘river’, ‘eyes flowed’, ‘yellow eyes afire’ and ‘gold’ in ‘Night’ connect the poem and *Nightwood* through their mutual attribution of both deep sadness and sovereignty to the animals they discuss. Barnes’s lions are intuitively capable of a level of almost human, conscious thought as are Blake’s, although his lions have been given this awareness by the angels. In this way, Barnes’s discussion of animality encompasses greater respect for the primal aspects present within both the animal and human, a notion which gathers momentum when one considers that the lioness and Nora’s dog enable Robin to *reclaim* her own animality and become Other, while Blake rejects the animal in favour of not only human, but the divine. Barnes attributes her animals with the power to *impart* wisdom, whereas Blake’s animals *receive* enlightenment. Robin’s return to an animalistic state at the close of *Nightwood* is presented as her own return to divinity.

Blake’s connection between animality, which stands for violence, cruelty and death, and the night, is distinct. Not only is the poem titled ‘Night’, the threat produced by the wolves, tigers and lions is only a concern at night, contrasted directly with the ‘green fields and happy groves’ in which ‘lambs have nibbled’ during the day time.<sup>58</sup> The poem opens with the line ‘The sun descending in the West’.<sup>59</sup> Clearly, the sun, a long-standing symbol of hope, positivity and life

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

has removed its protection by going down. But, more interestingly, the adjective ‘descending’ signals to the reader that the sun has moved into a lower realm, a space similar to *Nightwood*’s ‘underworld’. If one takes the poem ‘Night’ as a metaphor for humans and humanity, it seems that the night within the piece serves as a representation of animality and desires usually repressed in the unconscious, while the taming of the predators symbolises the triumph of the civilised mind over innate primitivism. Barnes reacts against such repression of the mind’s own night, its and innate animality by closing her novel with Robin’s descent into animality. Alternatively, it might be suggested that as with *Ryder*, the complete disintegration of Nora and Robin’s relationship in *Nightwood* conveys the possible destruction to the familial structure should one succumb completely to their own animality.

However, unlike in *Ryder*, in which submission to animality is entirely disastrous, animality in *Nightwood* carries some degree of hope and salvation. Despite being attached to the night, Robin is also connected to light throughout the novel. Mention of Robin attracting sources of light first appears in the novel at the Denckman Circus. One reads that ‘the animals did not seem to see the girl, but as their dusty eyes moved past, the orbit of their light seemed to turn on her.’ (N 49) Here, the reader can infer that the essence of the animals’ primal nature recognises in Robin a kindred spirit, and in doing so, seeks to bring Robin’s innate animality to light, into consciousness, while Nora seeks to draw out Robin’s humanity.

*Nightwood*’s circus scene mirrors Barnes’s 1915 article, ‘Djuna Barnes Probes the Souls of Jungle Folk at the Hippodrome’, in which Barnes relays her experience of the people and animals who form a circus act at the hippodrome. She explains, ‘I went down afterward into the depths where the animals are kept, and slipping up to the cages of these animals at last privately... and finding myself quite alone with nothing but my iniquitous past, I slowly raised my hand—in salute!’<sup>60</sup> Barnes writes that to find the animals, she ‘went downwards’, preempting ‘Becoming Intimate with the Bohemians’ and ‘Greenwich Village As It Is’, in which she makes clear the upper and lower divide and the left and right divide between that which is perceived to be respectable and that which is perceived as disreputable. Barnes writes, ‘Upstairs is responsibility... In the basement is all that is naughty’<sup>61</sup>; ‘Here on the north side are stately houses inhabited by great fortunes... and on the other side a congeries of houses and hovels passing into rabbit warrens’<sup>62</sup>; ‘Satin and motorcars on this side, squalor and push carts on that:

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<sup>60</sup> Djuna Barnes, ‘Djuna Barnes Probes the Souls of Jungle Folk at the Hippodrome’, *New York*, p. 197. Originally published in *New York Press* 14<sup>th</sup> February, 1915.

<sup>61</sup> Barnes, ‘Becoming Intimate with the Bohemians’, p. 234.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

it is the contrast which gives life, stimulates imagination, incites to love and hatred'<sup>63</sup>; 'The business of making love is conducted under the table beyond Fourteenth Street, but does that establish a precedent forbidding the business of holding hands above the table?'.<sup>64</sup> Barnes goes *down* to find the animals, not up, and in doing so makes the literal descent into animality that is repeated, both through actions and the literal phrasing 'go down', 'going down' and 'went down' within *Nightwood*.

The colloquial phraseology of 'went down' to describe her descent into the animals' domain is juxtaposed to the predominant, more formal language used throughout the rest of the article. It is likely that Barnes deliberately intended this contrast, making a play on words, suggesting oral sex but also conveying, through the deterioration of her language, a reduction of refinement. This theory gains momentum when read alongside chapter seven of *Nightwood*, 'Go Down, Matthew', a title that also suggests oral sex.<sup>65</sup> In chapter seven, O'Connor becomes drunk and raving, and yields under extreme pressure, berating 'The people in my life who have made my life miserable, coming to me to learn of degradation and the night.' (NW 145) Matthew's 'going down' is his descent into madness in addition to his literal going down into the night.

In 'Djuna Barnes Probes the Souls of Jungle Folk at the Hippodrome' Barnes writes 'at last' she was able to be with the animals and her 'iniquitous past' suggesting a longing to connect with the animalistic aspects of herself similar to Nora's attempts to do the same through association with Robin. Barnes's enthusiasm regarding the animals and the reacquaintance with her primal self is reinforced through the defiance of her salute to the animals in the hippodrome. The exclamation mark could be interpreted as Barnes's own surprise at her sense of alliance with the animals. Barnes's animal-human meeting reads as a victorious reclaiming and reintegrating of several aspects of herself that had previously been rejected.

One might propose that the moment in which Nora notices Robin at the Denckman circus, convention and bohemia are forced to confront one another. Nora observes an interaction between Robin and one of the circus lions:

Ponderous and furred they came, their tails laid down across the floor, dragging and heavy, making the air seem full of withheld strength. Then as one powerful lioness came to the turn of

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225-226.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>65</sup> Steve Pinkerton notes that 'The standard sexual meaning [of going down] was indeed operative during the period in which Barnes wrote'. See: Steve Pinkerton, *Blasphemous Modernism: The 20th-Century World Made Flesh* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 114.

the bars, exactly opposite the girl, she turned her furious great head with its yellow eyes afire and went down, her paws thrust through the bars and, as she regarded the girl, as if a river were falling behind impassable heat, her eyes flowed in tears that never reached the surface. (N 49)

Scholarship surrounding this moment of the text has suggested that the large cats, and in particular, the lioness, are representative of Robin's wildness. However, the connection between this scene and *Nightwood's* final chapel scene has not been made. The lioness 'went down' when regarding Robin, which is also the exact motion Robin makes when looking at Nora's dog at the end of the novel: 'Robin began going down. Sliding down she went; down her hair swinging... And down she went, until her head swung and against his; on all fours now, dragging her knees.' The phrasing of the sections that depict Robin's meeting with the lioness and the dog are almost identical, using the same words, phrases and actions. The lions drag their tails, in front of the dog Robin drags her knees, the lioness went down, and so does Robin, as the reader is told several times. Further, the concluding chapter of *Nightwood* is suggestive of bestiality, as is Robin's encounter with the lioness. The lion looks at Robin as through 'impassable heat', heat also being the term for animals ready to mate. Such a reading of Robin's interaction with the lioness encourages the reader to note the three clear stages to her becoming Other. The initial interaction with the lioness signals the awakening of Robin's own primal nature, the second stage happens throughout the text in which Robin gradually does down into her own animality and detaches herself from Nora and finally, she succumbs completely to this animality and becomes Other in going down with Nora's dog. Significantly, when Robin finally goes down, 'the dog began to cry' (N 153), as if recognising the unsettling disparity between Robin's human form and potent animality.

Nora is alienated from each of these three stages of Robin's move into her complete position as the Other. The lioness bows and in this mysterious moment between she and Robin, something is acknowledged, passed from the lion to Robin, but Nora remains unaffected. Later, Nora also stands by as an observer when the mysterious connection is recreated between her dog and Robin, who seems to pass similar, primal awareness onto the dog. Nora's unintentional absence from these moments is noteworthy because she, like those outside of the Parisian Left Bank, or Greenwich Village, and the readers of Barnes's journalism, and the slummers who gape at the bohemians, cannot assimilate themselves into the unfamiliar world that both attracts and repels them.

One can also read *Nightwood's* night as symbolic of its characters' minds, building upon a tradition in which the night has long served as a literary metaphor for a troubled state of mind, according to Hélène Valance, who wrote that 'Since at least the Romantic era, night had been

associated with mental life'.<sup>66</sup> In the early twentieth century, specific literary and artistic movements, such as surrealism, developed motifs and symbols such as the night as representatives of the mind, bringing the focus of art and literature specifically to the internal, personal experience. For example, André Breton's first *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924), which discusses madness, hallucinations, dreams and 'Beloved imagination'<sup>67</sup> of which he writes, 'what I most like in you is your unsparing quality.'<sup>68</sup> One can also look to Breton's visual art and that of Max Ernst to see the influence of the subconscious and dreams on surrealist art.

Shortly after the publication of Breton's manifesto, Ernst invented the frottage technique, which involves placing paper or canvas over various surfaces and rubbing graphite over the paper or canvas to create often dreamlike, or nightmarish shapes and backgrounds. From his frottage technique, Ernst developed the grattage technique, which involves the scraping off of pre-applied paint on a canvas once the canvas has been laid on the desired surface, in the reverse process to frottage. Ernst's painting, *Forest and Dove* (1927) was created using the grattage method and features dark towering structures that loom over a caged bird. Presumably the tall structures are trees, though they appear distorted and mechanical, as though they are made from iron not wood. The terror experienced by the enclosed bird visually summons Nora's distressed night-time pursuit of Robin, which mirrors the development of her inner chaos as the novel progresses. Nora tells O'Connor:

one night she [Robin] ran behind me in the Montparnasse quarter, where I had gone looking for her because someone had called me, saying, she was sick and couldn't get home... [she was] running behind me for blocks saying, with a furious panting breath, "You are a devil! You make everything dirty!".... Then I walked away very fast. My head seemed to be in a large place. She began running after me. I kept on walking. (N 129-130)

Nora relays this incident to O'Connor towards the end of the novel, which coincides with Nora's final involvement with Robin and her deepening focus on self-reflection. While Nora tells O'Connor this story, she sits at a table writing a letter to Robin that she is unlikely to ever send. O'Connor asks, "'Can't you be quiet now?... now that you know what the world is about, knowing it's about nothing?'" (N 112), but Nora's search has turned inwards and is no longer

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<sup>66</sup> Hélène Valance, 'Lost Horizons: Nocturnes and the Crisis of Images at the Turn of the Twentieth Century' in *Night Vision: Nocturnes in American Art, 1860-1960* ed. Joachim Homann (Prestel, Munich, London, New York: Delmonico Books, 2015), p. 18.

<sup>67</sup> André Breton, *Manifesto of Surrealism*, The University of Alabama, [tcf.ua.edu/Classes/Jbutler/T340/SurManifesto/ManifestoOfSurrealism.htm](http://tcf.ua.edu/Classes/Jbutler/T340/SurManifesto/ManifestoOfSurrealism.htm) Accessed 06/12/2018.

Originally published: 'Manifeste du surréalisme', *Éditions du Sagittaire*, October 1924.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

about the world, or Robin. In this moment, the text seems to respond to Jolas's statement that, 'The poet is a mediumistic element. In order to create the state of mind adequate for orphic emotions, he develops in himself once more the practice of divination... he shuns discursive thinking in an attempt to find the great identity'<sup>69</sup> and further on, 'The highly sensitized individual sinks into himself, he tries to penetrate to the unutterable'.<sup>70</sup> Jolas implies that the artist is both capable of annihilating his or her individuality to access a greater consciousness and delving into the depths of their psyche to achieve the same ends. Nora attempts to understand the greater consciousness through her discussions with O'Connor, and when this fails, she withdraws and tries to 'penetrate... the unutterable' through frantic obsession. In this sense, Nora's meditations are the universal meditations of the artist that Jolas describes, as her plight has forced her to both move beyond her own consciousness (and to delve into the depths of her own misery) in the attempt to understand an entirely foreign point of view, that of the Other.

The artist's affiliation with the inner mind, represented by night or night time is a broad topic and one which has been engaged with by numerous modernist writers, including Eliot, Conrad and Rhys. However, the specific division between the night and day, and the implication that some are bound to one and cannot inhabit the other has been the topic of fewer texts. Emily Dickinson's poem 'Good Morning—Midnight' (written c. 1862, pub. 1929) presents a speaker who longs for, but has been rejected by, morning, which I read as symbolic of mental clarity and mainstream society within the poem. Rhys's novel of the same name demonstrates the influence of both Dickinson's poem and Barnes's novel. Maren Linett discusses the presentation of trauma in both *Nightwood* and *Good Morning, Midnight*, explaining that Rhys approaches issues of timelessness, 'not via Barnesian strings of images, but through fragmented, nonlinear narrative.'<sup>71</sup> I would argue that nonlinear narrative is present in both novels. *Good Morning, Midnight*'s Sasha Jansen explains to the reader, 'Usually, in the interval between my afternoon sleep and my night sleep I went for a walk... I was walking along in a dream, a haze'.<sup>72</sup> Jensen describes the physical traipsing of the streets that one recognises in Nora's night walks in search of Robin (and psychological peace) and Dickinson's speaker's psychological night.

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<sup>69</sup> Jolas, *Op Cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>71</sup> Linett, *Op Cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>72</sup> Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1967), p. 87.

## Performing the Night

Performance repeats throughout *Nightwood* as an evolving motif. Every speech made by O'Connor reads like a performance; his one-sided rhetoric on the night displays this most clearly. O'Connor makes the following speech from his bed after Nora has interrupted him at around three o'clock in the morning:

The room was so small that it was just possible to walk sideways up to the bed... A pile of medical books, and volumes of a miscellaneous order, reached almost to the ceiling, water-stained and covered with dust. Just above them was a very small barred window, the only ventilation. On a maple dresser, certainly not of European make, lay a rusty pair of forceps, a broken scalpel, half a dozen odd instruments that she could not place, a catheter, some twenty perfume bottles, almost empty, pomades, creams, rouges, powder boxes and puffs. From the half-open drawers of this chiffonier hung laces, ribands, stockings, ladies' underclothing and an abdominal brace... A swill-pail stood at the head of the bed, brimming with abominations.... In the narrow iron bed, with its heavy and dirty linen sheets, lay the doctor in a woman's flannel nightgown.

The doctor's head, with its over-large black eyes, its full gunmetal cheeks and chin, was framed in the golden semicircle of a wig with long pendent curls that touched his shoulders, and falling back against the pillow, turned up the shadowy interior of their cylinders. He was heavily rouged and his lashes painted. (N 70-71)

O'Connor is a perpetual performer, alternating between the doctor and the woman 'boil[ing] some good man's potatoes and toss[ing] up a child for him every nine months by the calendar' (N 82). The items in his room are mismatched, archaic and broken, implying a lack of success in both of the roles he plays. O'Connor's room contains medical books and instruments for his role as the doctor, various beauty products and tools for use in his role as a woman, along with the outfit he wears in bed, which contrasts dramatically with his physical masculine form. The dust and swill-pail undermine both roles O'Connor plays. The non-European dresser signals O'Connor's difference, his position as Other, and aligns him with Felix, who 'from the mingled passions that made up his past, out of a diversity of bloods, from the crux of a thousand impossible situations... [has] become the accumulated and single – the embarrassed.' (N 8) The dated phrasing used to describe ribbons (ribands) dislodges O'Connor from the early twentieth century in which *Nightwood* is set and positions him outside of the text, as a timeless, despairing prophet. The threat throughout the novel of that which is Other continues in this section with the violent undertones of O'Connor's 'over-large black eyes' and 'gunmetal cheeks and chin'. There is something about him of 'Red Riding Hood and the wolf in bed' (N 71). Even in despair and vulnerability, O'Connor (the Other) cannot be trusted. *Repulsive Women's* women are also untrustworthy in the eyes of society and are left to their degradations

and slow deaths, ‘Those living dead up in their rooms’ (RW 16). The parodic characters of *Ladies Almanack* form their own separate Sapphic community on the fringe of society, as do the Ryder family. However, ultimately, the niche spaces that Barnes’s bohemian and grotesque characters carve out for themselves, whether in apartments, geographic locations or particular times of day, do not ensure their survival. In Barnes’s work, the principal representatives of the Other always die: Dame Musset, Sophia Ryder and Robin (if one considers her complete disassociation with humanity and embracing of her innate animality as a kind of death).

Marcus reads O’Connor’s bedroom scene and his belongings as Barnes’s open mockery of Freud, writing that

*Nightwood*’s project is to expose the collaboration of Freudian psychoanalysis with fascism in its desire to “civilize” and make “normal” the sexually aberrant misfit. *Nightwood* asserts that the outcast is normal and truly human.... Nora is the archetypal Dora or female hysteric and Dr. Freud is brilliantly parodied in the figure of Dr. Matthew-Mighty-grain-of-salt-Dante-O’Connor.... The psychoanalyst’s office is a filthy bedroom with a reeking chamber pot. Freud’s famous totems, the sacred objects from ancient cultures that people his shelves and tables in H.D.’s famous tribute, are mocked by O’Connor’s rusty forceps, broken scalpel, perfume bottles, ladies’ underclothing, and abdominal brace.<sup>73</sup>

The ridicule of Freud that Marcus proposes perhaps aligns more clearly with Barnes’s parody of sexology in *Ladies Almanack*. I would suggest that it is primarily within *Ladies Almanack* that Barnes addresses the alienation and vilification of homosexual people in particular, specifically lesbians. Within *Nightwood*, Barnes highlights the plight and reduction of all groups classified by twentieth-century American and Parisian society as Other, including the “paupers”... poets, radicals, beggars, artists, and people in love’ (N 45), or in Heise’s words, the ‘submerged peoples’.<sup>74</sup> In addition to potentially mirroring Freud’s office, O’Connor’s possessions suggest experiences and a past which no longer serve him. As well as securing characters to the past, ‘stuff’ within *Nightwood* takes the place of stable human relationships, providing reassurance and security to the characters. The mismatched junk in O’Connor’s filthy bedroom is similar to the odd assortment of belongings that Nora harbours within her flat in an attempt to recreate Robin, and that which Felix keeps as a memento of his faux aristocratic ancestry.

The two roles that O’Connor alternates between – the authoritative doctor during the day and the ‘good woman’ at night – tie into the opposition throughout the text between day and night and the presentation of day as conventional and safe, and the night as unconventional,

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<sup>73</sup> Marcus, *Op Cit.*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>74</sup> Heise, *Op Cit.*, p. 6.

threatening and thrilling. Barnes highlights the difference between night and day by having O'Connor discuss the night and degradation, while visually alluding to innocence in his 'golden semicircle of a wig', which is connotative of a halo. Although, alternatively, it could be argued that as O'Connor is actually a man dressed as an innocent woman, not an innocent woman, he plays into the notion of the unknowable night, which offers nothing but an illusion of safety, because what is known during the day is transformed at night. O'Connor's repetitive back and forth between his identity as the male doctor and the woman suggests that for one to shake off the confines of the day and remerge as their 'night' self, they must die and be reborn each night.

### **Damnatory Lust**

The grotesque body, and the body in general, function as an access point into an idea, or as a symbol within much of Barnes's work. The dissection and judgement of *Repulsive Women's* bodies works as a counterattack against society's forced perfectionism of Woman. Grotesque bodies resurface covertly in *Ladies Almanack*, in which Dame Musset discusses her childhood abuse. Musset's abuse, like the force feeding of the Suffragettes, transforms her body into that which is grotesque. The removal of victims' bodily authority, in addition to the reduction of the person to isolated body parts, suggests a Rabelaisian, carnivalesque subversion of hierarchy and control, and a complete reduction to pure corporeality. Additionally, the impact on the victim is both terrible and lasting, as with Ruskin's noble grotesque. In 1913 Sylvia Pankhurst published her article 'Forcibly Fed: The Story of My Four Weeks in Holloway Gaol', in which she describes the violent and physical intrusion onto, and into, her body:

Then the doctors came stealing in behind. Someone seized me by the head and thrust a sheet under my chin. I felt a man's hands trying to force my mouth open... I felt his fingers trying to press my lips apart, -- getting inside, -- and I felt them and a steel gag running around my gums and feeling for gaps in my teeth... Then I felt a steel instrument pressing against my gums, cutting into the flesh, forcing its way in. Then it gradually prised my jaws apart as they turned a screw. It felt like having my teeth drawn; but I resisted—I resisted. I held my poor bleeding gums down on the steel with all my strength. Soon they were trying to force the india-rubber tube down my throat.... worse than any pain was the sense of degradation, the sense that the very fight that one made against the repeated outrage was shattering one's nerves and breaking down one's self control.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Sylvia Pankhurst, 'Forcibly Fed: The Story of My Four Weeks in Holloway Gaol', *The Unz Review: An Alternative Media Selection*, p. 90. [unz.com/print/McClures-1913aug-00087](http://unz.com/print/McClures-1913aug-00087) Accessed 06/12/2018. Originally published: 'Forcibly Fed: The Story of My Four Weeks in Holloway Gaol', *McClure's Magazine* (August 1913), pp. 87-93.

Pankhurst's account highlights the slyness of the doctors, forceful sex-like intrusion and violence, complete abuse and disregard for the body, and the ultimate destruction of all self-ownership. The entire experience reads as a physical and moral nightmarish, grotesque spectacle in which Pankhurst is reduced to the state of cattle. Carol Adams' *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990) further suggests the connection between the rearing and consumption of animals and the treatment of the female body, writing, 'the bondage equipment of pornography—chains, cattle prods, nooses, dog collars, and ropes—suggests the control of animals. Thus, when women are victims of violence, the treatment of animals is recalled.'<sup>76</sup> The bondage devices that Adams notes resemble the steel gag, steel instrument and rubber tube forced into Pankhurst's mouth and down her throat, aligning her body and abuse with the body and abuse of force-fed geese in the production of *foie gras*, thereby offering a specific example of the woman-animal connection proposed by Adams.

Sexually grotesque and taboo bodies reappear in Barnes's oeuvre following *Ladies Almanack*, as the following *Nightwood* extract suggests:

Look for the girls also in the toilets at night, and you will find them kneeling in that great secret confessional crying between tongues, the terrible excommunication:

"May you be damned to hell! May you die standing upright! May you be damned upward! May this be damned, terrible and damned spot! May it wither into the grin of the dead, may this draw back, low riding in the mouth in an empty snarl of the groin! God damned me before you, and after me you shall be damned, kneeling and standing away till we vanish!... drinking the waters of night at the water hole of the damned." (N 85)

In these lines, O'Connor refers to women giving and receiving oral sex in public toilets. The role of the night is harbourer of illicit sexual encounters, excrement and religion, with each of these facets sullyng the other: excrement the sexual activity and the sexual activity, religion. Alternatively, one might suggest that the night combines and reduces society's distinctions and hierarchies to one level, making all equal. In this way, the night brings together the two realms of the mainstream and the Other.

O'Connor's 'waters of night' suggest the sexual fluids of all women engaged in Sapphic sexual activity and his charged, negative description of this recalls the lake of fire in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). O'Connor speaks of homosexual women's condemnation in a style similar to God's condemnation of Lucifer:

To bottomless perdition, there to dwell

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<sup>76</sup> Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York & London: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), p. 68.

In adamantine chains and penal fire,  
 Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms.  
 Nine times the space that measures day and night  
 To mortal men, he with his horrid crew  
 Lay vanquished, rolling in the fiery gulf  
 Confounded though immortal: But his doom  
 Reserved him to more wrath; for now the thought  
 Both of lost happiness and lasting pain  
 Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes  
 That witnessed huge affliction and dismay  
 Mixed with obdurate pride and steadfast hate:  
 At once as far as angels ken he views  
 The dismal situation waste and wild,  
 A dungeon horrible, on all sides round  
 As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames  
 No light, but rather darkness visible  
 Served only to discover sights of woe,  
 Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace  
 And rest can never dwell, hope never comes  
 That comes to all; but torture without end<sup>77</sup>

Although damned through his own actions, Lucifer maintains a sense of useless pride similar to that expressed by the women who have a choice and choose to engage in the communal Sapphic activity O'Connor describes, despite the 'dismal situation waste and wild'. The waste also relates to the literal waste surrounding Barnes's women in the toilet cubicles. Milton's 'bottomless perdition' and 'penal fire' reads like Barnes's 'secret confessional' and the hell to which one woman damns another. The omnipotent force Barnes's Sapphic women have defied is society, which enforces patriarchy and heterosexuality. Milton's 'lost happiness and lasting pain' resembles the impression of the women 'crying between tongues', wilfully engaging in an act that causes them torment. The tongues referred to are the women's literal tongues but also allude to speaking in tongues, thereby conjuring images of hysterical women. Speaking in tongues, cunnilingus and hysteria are presented prior to *Nightwood* in *Ladies Almanack* during Musset's death, in which her disembodied tongue protrudes from an urn and performs oral sex. In both texts, cunnilingus is degraded through an association with either death or faeces, in turn, portraying the women involved as bestial, grotesque and immoral in much the same way that contemporary society might have viewed them.

Both the extract from *Paradise Lost* and *Nightwood* invoke the image of uncontrollable body parts moving wildly of their own accord. *Paradise Lost* speaks of 'baleful eyes' and *Nightwood* of tongues, mouths and groins intermingled with threatening images of violence. Perhaps the most striking similarity between the extract from *Nightwood* and that from

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<sup>77</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 5-6.

*Paradise Lost* is the use of fluid (typically associated with the bodies of women, and/or sexual acts) as entrapment. The lake restrains Lucifer and *Nightwood*'s women are 'kneeling and standing away till we vanish!...drinking the waters of night at the water hole of the damned.' The bodily fluids of the women are likened to the night, obviously a corruptive force in *Nightwood*, while 'the hole of the damned' can be read as the vagina. The women enact this desperate scene at night and light is withheld from Lucifer and God's traitors.

O'Connor's description of Sapphism in toilets contains overtones of the grotesque: the grinning mouth, the mockery made of death, the discussion of genitals, the reference to areas that are low on the body, and the catering to base bodily functions. The phrase 'grin of the dead' suggests images from the tradition of the Danse Macabre, except, in *Nightwood*, instead of death, it is hell and damnation that comes for all. O'Connor says, 'But what of our own death – permit us to reproach the night, wherein we die manifold alone. Donne says: "we are all conceived in close prison, in our mothers' wombs we are prisoners all."' (N 86) Again, the night is linked to womanhood, sexual acts (inadvertently, through reproduction), and death. By stating that we die alone O'Connor suggests that when one dies it is always night internally, as the conscious, which dominates during waking life, is overtaken by the unconscious, by night. In this way, O'Connor's entreaty for death to overtake the women performing cunnilingus in toilet cubicles may refer to a wish for unconscious desire to overtake conscious thought, rather than a literal death. Further allusions to the Danse Macabre are evident in O'Connor's description of Robin and Jenny's meeting. He says:

It's all of a certain night that I'm coming to... a night in the branchy pitch of fall – the particular night you want to know about – for I'm a fisher of men and my gimp is doing a *Saltarello* over every body of water to fetch up what it may. (N 87)

A *Saltarello* is thought to be a lively kind of dance favoured in the fourteenth century. No record survives of the dance steps themselves, however the music has lasted to present day and indicates that the accompanying dance would have been of an upbeat tempo. Parsons wrote that O'Connor embodies 'the madness of a clown who mixes absurd humour and nihilistic despair'.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, in this extract the doctor appears as something of a grim puppeteer, manipulating ensnared men and making them dance over whatever ghastly thing is dragged from the water.

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<sup>78</sup> Parsons, *Op Cit.*, p. 74.

Previous chapters have looked at specific themes in relation to individual texts: the grotesque female body in *Repulsive Women*, sexology in *Ladies Almanack* and animality within *Ryder*. *Nightwood* encompasses each of these previously discussed themes, which work together in the novel to create the overarching notion of the Other. Similarly to the previous three texts, *Nightwood*'s narrator is unlocatable – first through omniscience and later, through absence as the narration is taken over by O'Connor. Unreliable though it is, O'Connor's narration provides a gateway into *Nightwood*'s 'underworld', positioning the reader as the slummer, of which Herring writes. In this way, Barnes forces the reader into a position of culpability in their adopted role as voyeur.

## Conclusion

This thesis has argued that one of Barnes's primary interests and concerns throughout her oeuvre is the Other: the people, places and things within society that are marginalised, as well as the people who have *chosen* to live on society's periphery. The figures are Othered through their opposition to a heteronormative, white, bourgeois majority. Under the branch of the Other, Barnes addresses grotesque female bodies, Sapphism, animality and fractured temporality. I have argued that although Barnes's work does not read as immediately political, it is political as the 'personal is political', and pushes for the recognition and the better treatment of the Othered. Further, in modernist literature the political is reached by way of the personal. Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) demonstrates well modernism's engagement with the political via the personal, as the First World War is approached through Clarissa Dalloway's internal stream of consciousness and preparation for her seemingly unpolitical social party.

Society's marginalised first surface in Barnes's earliest articles and interviews from 1913 onwards and remain a consistent theme throughout her oeuvre. The Othered people whom Barnes revisits between the period of 1913 and 1982 are primarily women and 'bohemians', in addition to those who love, dress and behave differently, and believe otherwise to the majority; transvestites, genderless women, circus performers, Puritans, Jews, lesbians and the general 'repulsive'.<sup>1</sup> The Othered places are those inhabited by Othered people, forgotten places and all places in Barnes's work once transformed by night.

I see Barnes's interest (obsession?) in representing the marginalised as a career-length battle against real social oppression and rejection of difference. In her unpublished thesis on Barnes, Deborah Tyler-Bennett argues that 'this sense of combat... suggests that writing enables a type of duel with the past'.<sup>2</sup> This sentiment is echoed sixteen years later by Galvin, who explains that Barnes engages in a rewriting of history through her insertion of contemporary, taboo motifs into archaic genres and language.<sup>3</sup> To Tyler-Bennett and Galvin's suggestions I would add that in

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<sup>1</sup> I borrow the term 'bohemian' from 'Becoming Intimate with the Bohemians'.

<sup>2</sup> Deborah Tyler-Bennett, 'A FOREIGN LANGUAGE WHICH YOU UNDERSTAND': THE ART AND LIFE OF DJUNA BARNES 1892-1982' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leicester, 1993), p. 339.

<sup>3</sup> Galvin, *Op Cit.*, p. 90.

addition to battling with and rewriting the past, Barnes *undermines* and *interrogates* the past to expose the negligent treatment and damaging consequences of many twentieth-century socio-political attitudes, such as those towards women and non-heteronormative sexuality.

Tyler-Bennett also suggests that the lack of exploration of Barnes's work in comparison to many of her modernist contemporaries is due to 'the sheer diversity of Barnes's texts which represents the challenge to the critic, from the pithy journalistic articles to the poetic candour of the elegies, or from the bawdy critique of the patriarchy in *Ryder* to the allusive tragedy of *The Antiphon*.'<sup>4</sup> Barnes's oeuvre is more diverse than perhaps it initially seems, however I would add that the difficulty of unpacking Barnes's often deliberately opaque texts is also a significant reason for her work receiving such a lack of attention.

It became apparent early on in my research that despite the protestations of Barnes and early Barnesean scholars against the importance of *Repulsive Women*, the pamphlet is extremely relevant in a study of Barnes's work. *Repulsive Women* is not a mature text by any means, but what it does show is the origin of concerns that continued to interest Barnes throughout her writing career and from which she hardly diverts (one notes the female body, animality, the grotesque, time and Sapphism in *Repulsive Women*). The text also situates Barnes as a socially conscious and concerned artist as early as 1915, despite her assertions that she was not interested in 'movements'.

Study of *Ladies Almanack* confirmed in my mind the political concerns of Barnes's writing through the text's overt engagement with sexological theories and terms (I am thinking specifically of the use of the term 'invert'). I have come to suspect that Barnes's reluctance to be affiliated with any particular social or political group is a principal reason in her covering up of the socio-political nature of the text with satire and the pretence of a solely whimsical private joke amongst friends.

In Chapters 3 and 4 I have shown that in addition to highlighting the prejudicial treatment of those on society's periphery, *Ryder* and *Nightwood* engage with anthropological discussions around the position of humanity in relation to the animal, arguing that animality is an innate component of the human disposition. The suggestion that the primal and primitive are inherent and highly prominent within

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<sup>4</sup> Tyler-Bennett, *Op Cit.*, p. 339.

humanity challenges highly regarded late-nineteenth to early-twentieth-century anthropological work, which suggests that civilisation had successfully suppressed its animality and developed upon and surpassed primitivism.

Barnes's position on the primitive is also in opposition to predominant modernist, specifically surrealist, thinking, which viewed the primitive as an external source of inspiration and renewal. Rather, Barnes challenges modernism's easy definitions of the primitive and suggests that heavy emphasis on either the primitive or primal is harmful; the social rejection of the *Ryder* family and Robin's inability to fulfil social expectations highlight this point.

I have argued that the merging of woman and animal is used by Barnes to convey predominant twentieth-century Western attitudes towards women, predominantly that women are driven by instinct over intellect, and are unknowable, bestial and alien. The particular animals that Barnes combines with her female figures in texts such as *Repulsive Women* and *Ryder* are reptilian and harsh, or animals popularly consumed by humans, such as birds and cows, thereby viewed as unthreatening. I have read these contrasting types of animals as symbolic of the two categories into which women have repeatedly been assigned within literature.

It has been my intention to show that *Nightwood* encompasses the socio-political concerns that interested Barnes throughout her career, bringing the grotesque, (then) unconventional relationships and animality together to depict the realm of the Other, in what I, and many others, have argued is her most highly developed work. *Nightwood* remains Barnes's most recognised work, a fact that this thesis attributes to the text's maturity and proficiency in bringing together previously explored motifs in earlier texts to represent and examine the literal, metaphorical, emotional and psychological placement of the Other. It is arguably *Nightwood* that has triggered the re-examination of Barnes's work within modernist studies.<sup>5</sup> Although, as this thesis highlights, Barnes's position as a modernist writer is still debated due to her adherence to pre-twentieth-century traditional literary forms, incorporation of archaic language and opposition to the modernist misuse of the primitive. Michelle Phillips argues that

Modernism's love affair with the new has been linked to youthful resistance, to experimentation, and to innovation, but in the late 1930s—on the cusp of the Second

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<sup>5</sup> Nancy Bombaci, *Freaks in Late Modernist American Culture: Nathanael West, Djuna Barnes, Tod Browning, and Carson McCullers* (Oxford: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2005), p. 66.

World War—Barnes suggests that it can also be viewed as a cooptation of innocence that is artificial, empty, and even heartless.<sup>6</sup>

In this extract, Phillips writes specifically about *Nightwood*, but I would repeat that Barnes's resistance to modernism's focus on the new is present prior to this seminal text, existing within *Ryder*. Barnes resists primitivism as a means through which to navigate, or wholly reject modernity, instead suggests that communities and individuals who live by primitivism's 'simplicity' are rejected. In fact, this notion is conveyed as early as 1913 in her article 'Who's the Last Squatter?', which is discussed in Chapter 3. While I agree with Phillips that Barnes's resistance to 'Modernism's love affair with the new' is borne out of the belief that the presentation of 'youthful experimentation' and 'innovation' is false and insubstantial, I would also add that Barnes presents modernism's appropriation of the primitive as ignorant. As a solution to the potential ignorance of seeking comfort from external, unfamiliar and fetishised sources, Barnes's oeuvre shows that there is value in looking to the past for answers. And, in addition to this, to reworking the past. One might read Barnes's texts as obsessive with their insistence on exhuming, dissecting and demanding answers from the past.

Further on, Phillips adds, 'Nightwood reads like a depressive, behind-the-scenes troll through these tortured lives [of the Other]. While there is much that is arguably new in the novel—like its postmodern population of characters—Barnes evinces a compelling reluctance to embrace "the new" as a fashion-forward mode of cultural resistance.'<sup>7</sup> I read Phillips's assessment of *Nightwood* as refusing to engage in what she terms 'a fashion-forward mode of cultural resistance', as *Nightwood*'s refusal to engage with twentieth-century modernity. Phillips's statement supports the argument that Barnes's texts favour rigorous exploration of the past to understand both previous and contemporary social injustice.

The resurgence of Barnes's work and its current influence is seen in Daviel Shy's 'feature-length experimental narrative film [titled *The Ladies Almanack*]... based on the novel of the same title by Djuna Barnes', which premiered on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018 at The ROXIE, San Francisco.<sup>8</sup> H  l  ne Cixous stars in the film as herself. Shy explains that *The Ladies Almanack* is 'a kaleidoscopic tribute to women's writing

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<sup>6</sup> Phillips, *Op Cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>7</sup> Phillips, *Op Cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>8</sup> Daviel Shy, *The Ladies Almanack*, theladiesalmanack.com. Accessed 09/11/2018.

through the friendships, jealousies, flirtations and publishing woes of female authors and artists in 1920's [sic] Paris.<sup>9</sup> Shy's embrace of Barnes's *Ladies Almanack* as a way into viewing 'women's writing' in the 1920s in Paris is significant; women's writing in the 1920s is significant and varied ground to cover and there is a plethora of native or expat twentieth-century Parisian authors from which Shy might have chosen. I contacted Shy to ask about her decision to use *Ladies Almanack* as the text through which to open an exploration of women's writing in 1920s Paris, but unfortunately received no response. I assume that significant factors in this decision might have been the intimate and glib overtone of the text, generated through the focus on the interactions of a close-knit group living and working in Paris at the same time, in addition to this small group being based on real-life figures, thereby potentially offering an insight into the lives of several real-life women writers in the 1920s, rather than just offering the perspective and experiences of the author. While the re-examination of *Ladies Almanack* and its conversion into another medium is useful in attracting new audiences to Barnes and her work, the presentation of the text as gossip reinforces negligent assumptions that the work has little to offer beyond a brief, witty insight into the lesbian lives of a group of outrageous women and ignores the social and political concerns of the text. There are also broader problematic aspects to using *Ladies Almanack*, or indeed any singular text, as a way into, or as representative of, an entire subcategory. *Ladies Almanack* is a text with an obvious focus on Sapphism and an engagement with twentieth-century sexological theories, expressed through the presentation of a small, particular group of expats living on the Parisian Left Bank and therefore offers a limited representation of female authors and artists in 1920s Paris.

**'All time is unredeemable.'**

- Eliot, 'Burnt Norton'.<sup>10</sup>

Myth and religion are prominent motifs in Barnes's work and the route through which I moved from Eliot and H.D., on whom my research initially focused, to Barnes. In addition to myth and religion, there are similarities between Barnes's and Eliot's interest in and presentation of the body, perceptions of time, the primal and primitive,

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Eliot, *Op Cit.*, p. 189.

and notions of transcendence. Perhaps such connections are to be expected considering the close working relationship and friendship of the two writers. However, despite the rather less close relationship between H.D. and Barnes (the two were never really involved in the same circles), H.D.'s autobiographical novel, *HERmione* distorts psychological time in a manner similar to *Nightwood* and the *Four Quartets*' 'Burnt Norton'.

*Nightwood* and 'Burnt Norton' explore time as a simultaneously communal and private experience, however *Nightwood* approaches time from the perspective of trauma and fragmented narrative, situating time practically (through consideration of night and day), while 'Burnt Norton' engages with time philosophically. The fragmentation and contemplation of time situates 'Burnt Norton's' speaker in a state of Otherness and marginalisation, similar to that which is experienced by *Nightwood's* Nora, as neither can experience the defined temporality available to the majority of society. Unlike *Nightwood*, time in 'Burnt Norton' is a central concern, rather than the by-product of something else, such as psychological distress, as is the case with *Nightwood*. In a *Radio 4* discussion on 'Burnt Norton', Fran Brearton discussed the centrality of time to the poem:

Time and its relation to what is timeless and within that you can encompass how history relates to religion, how the individual relates to the past and the future... the point of that intersection [between time and timelessness] he [Eliot] then says is the incarnation. So vertical axis and horizontal axis, and that meeting point between them. And where do you find timeless moments *through* time that actually bring you to that revelation?<sup>11</sup>

Brearton's analysis of time in 'Burnt Norton' positions the poem's engagement with temporality as philosophical, which implies that Time (as a noun) is distinct from timelessness, therefore raising the question of what Time actually is. Through the distinction Brearton makes between Time and timelessness, the implication is made that some things can exist outside of time. Further, Brearton states that Eliot writes of both personal and public time in 'Burnt Norton', as I have previously suggested, and that the public and private experience of time form two distinct categories – a concept explored thoroughly by psychoanalysts, scientists, writers and artists alike.<sup>12</sup> I agree

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<sup>11</sup> Professor Fran Brearton, 'In Our Time: Four Quartets', talk hosted by Melvyn Bragg, *Radio 4*, 22/12/2016 [bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b0858w43](http://bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b0858w43). Accessed 12/11/2018.

<sup>12</sup> Kelly Noel-Smith wrote incisively on Freud's difficulty in presenting a unified theory of time and timelessness in *Freud on Time and Timelessness* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

with Brearton's suggestion that 'Burnt Norton' proposes that one can only escape the confines of time by accessing the 'intersection' in which time and timelessness meet. Although the escape *from* time must be made *within* time: 'Only through time time is conquered.'<sup>13</sup>

'Burnt Norton's' opening stanza reads:

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future  
And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable.

....

What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.<sup>14</sup>

Lines 1-3 of the above extract suggest that both the past and present exist within the future, while the future exists in the past. If this is the case, all time exists in one moment. In this way, time as 'unredeemable' is surprisingly negative. Perhaps time is unredeemable because there is nothing to reclaim if all time is always present. Although the term 'unredeemable' implies something that one *cannot* get back or repossess. Time does not belong to one, nor is the time which has passed truly available to us now. In the final two lines of the extract, the speaker informs the reader that any path one takes leads one to the same situation regardless, thereby suggesting that freewill and freedom are, to an extent, illusions.

In *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom* (1980) a book about Tarot reading that, superficially, seems wholly unrelated to a discussion of Eliot's poetry, Rachel Pollack states that

many people agonize over every decision, no matter how small or great, because they cannot accept that once they take an action in one direction they have lost the chance to go in all the other directions previously open to them. They cannot accept the limitations of acting in the real world.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Eliot, *Op Cit.*, p. 192.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>15</sup> Rachel Pollack, *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), p. 15. Before turning to research on the Tarot, Pollack taught English at the State University of New York. In *Seventy-Eight Degrees* Pollack makes insightful connections between the imagery on Tarot cards, literature and myth. She wrote that the 'incorrect' belief in the Romany origins of Tarot have led to

It is this sentiment, this experience of limitation that one might expect ‘Burnt Norton’'s philosophy of timelessness to alleviate. Yet rather than increase options and remove fear around outcomes and possible ramifications through the discussion of timelessness, ‘Burnt Norton’ narrows humanity’s possibilities through the implication that all paths lead to the same point regardless of which decisions one makes in the short term. The only obvious ultimate and shared destination is death, which Brearton cites as another of ‘Burnt Norton’'s principal themes.

‘Burnt Norton’'s grandiose philosophical consideration of time bears similarities to O’Connor’s monologues on the night and time, whereas Nora’s experience of time is presented as one continuous moment because temporal boundaries have been blurred by her grief. In this way, *Nightwood*’s presentation of the ‘intersection’ between time and timelessness is negative and induced not by a release from Time, but through entrapment in one, extended moment. Time and narrative in this novel are disrupted through the characters’ experiences of trauma, and are also used as devices through which to depict trauma, as Linett has argued. To this I would add that the deliberately confusing the presentation of time in the novel highlights the unconventional times and spaces inhabited by the Other. One only needs to read Barnes’s articles on Greenwich Village to note the unusual times kept by the ‘bohemians’.

As with *Nightwood* and Eliot’s ‘Burnt Norton’, H.D.’s *HERmione* traces its protagonist’s difficult and convoluted quest to understand her identity and relationship to time. The novel conveys Hermione’s psychological distress and torturous relationship with time through intense repetition:

Her Gart stood. Her mind still trod its round. I am Her Gart, my name is Her Gart. I am Hermione Gart. I am going round and round in circles. Her Gart went on. Her feet went on. Her feet had automatically started, so automatically she continued, then stumbled as a bird whirred its bird oblivion into heavy trees above her. Her Gart. I am Her Gart. Nothing held her, she was nothing holding to this: I am Hermione Gart, a failure.<sup>16</sup>

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depictions of eccentric figures dressed in ‘bright scarves and flouncing skirts and gold earrings... [who] take names like ‘Madam Sosostris’’, referring to Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922), p. 263.

<sup>16</sup> Hilda Doolittle, *HERmione* (London: Virago Press, 1984), p. 4.

The repetitious words and slight alterations to repeated phrases has a rhythmic effect similar to dance steps, encouraging the reader into a trance-like state simply through the act reading of the passage, which becomes an instinctual as well as intellectual pursuit. The repeated words also read like a ritual, suggesting that Hermione attempts to summon her identity through the mock-ritualistic incantation of repeated words. The autonomy with which Hermione moves throughout her day recalls *Good Morning, Midnight*'s protagonist, Jensen and her abstracted walks through Paris, and indeed, her mental precariousness.<sup>17</sup> Hermione's physical body is separated from her mind, which continues to move without her body agreeing: 'Her mind still trod its round... she was nothing holding to this'. Through this separation, Hermione reaches the still point that 'Burnt Norton's' speaker seeks and that *Nightwood*'s Nora cannot escape. And as with Nora, this still point, this intersection is a place of confusion and abstraction, rather than enlightenment and completion. Hermione's abstracted thoughts and disassociated actions resemble Nora's night walks through Paris and constant letter writing. In *Nightwood*, *HERmione* and *Good Morning, Midnight*, the central female figures experience a disconnect to both practical and mental time as a result of trauma, instead turning to repetition as a means through which to locate and solidify their identities: Hermione repeats, 'Her Gart. I am Her Gart.'

I have come to see the similar depictions of trauma and time across Barnes's, Eliot's, H.D.'s and Rhys's work as mirroring the response of the Other to their rejection by the mainstream. The texts' traumatised figures are trapped in a seemingly never-ending moment of their own personal time, forgoing the shared public experience of time, in which one is usually involved alongside their personal experience of temporality. This psychological entrapment creates a separate, undesirable space in which the characters exist. This unpleasant mental space resembles the often-unpleasant geographical space the socially Othered inhabit, whether through choice or a lack of alternative options. In addition to the work of Eliot, H.D., and Rhys, one can see how Barnes's oeuvre also aligns with the presentation of trauma and time in the literature of Woolf, Marcel Proust, Beckett, Kafka and others.

Moving forward, I am interested in collaborating with art scholars to produce research that further explores depictions of the Other in Barnes's paintings and

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<sup>17</sup> It is not entirely accurate to say that *HERmione* 'recalls' *Good Morning, Midnight*, as *HERmione* was written twelve years prior to Rhys's novel, but was not published until 1981.

drawings. Further study into the presentation of the Other and the marginalised in Barnes's minor works: the short stories written under the pen name Lydia Steptoe, the plays produced for the Provincetown Players, and the early and late poetry, would also be a beneficial addition to existing Barnes scholarship.

## Appendix

Fig. 16. 'Claude McKay and Baroness v. Freytag'. Photo taken by George Grantham Bain, 1922.



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