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ABSTRACT

MALLISON, DAVID WALKER. Djuna Barnes and Experimental Narration: A Study of Character-narration in the Poetry, Fiction, and Drama of Djuna Barnes With a Detailed Analysis of Its Use in Her Novel, Nightwood. (1968) Directed by: Dr. Robert O. Stephens.

Djuna Barnes is a writer who is unknown to a great number of readers. With the exception of her novel, Nightwood, most of her books are out of print and difficult to obtain. Nightwood remains her most mature work, yet its excellence has been ignored by scholars and critics of American literature. Djuna Barnes' life is also relatively obscure, especially during that time in the 1920's when she was an expatriate in Paris. That there is a need for commentaries about her life and her writings is the supposition upon which this thesis was written.

Chapter One deals with a presentation of women's salons in Paris in the 1920's, particularly the salon of Natalie Clifford Barney, a close friend of Djuna Barnes. Much of the information included within this discussion was obtained from the published memoirs and autobiographies of those who attended Natalie Barney's events. A survey of Djuna Barnes' poetry, prose, and drama follows; the themes of night, the dual nature of women, and lament are pointed out.

In Chapter Two Nightwood is examined. The novel is seen to be unlike traditional modes of temporal narration;

instead of consecutive sequences of action, its images, symbols, and themes are viewed spatially as they refer back and forth to each other while the novel is read. In this way narrative structure is not only unified, but the novel's different expressions of tragedy are seen to be brought closely together.

Chapter Three presents a study of Dr. Matthew O'-Connor. He is seen to be the fictional consequence of an evolving concern by Djuna Barnes over themes described in Chapter One. It is pointed out that in Nightwood he is a special kind of character-narrator as well. In the role of narrator he regulates (as a stage manager) and gambols (as a jester) imagery into spatial patterns; in the process, however, he becomes a tragic character.

DJUNA BARNES AND EXPERIMENTAL NARRATION

A Study of Character-narration in the Poetry, Fiction, and Drama of Djuna Barnes With a Detailed Analysis of Its Use in Her Novel, Nightwood

by

David Walker Mallison

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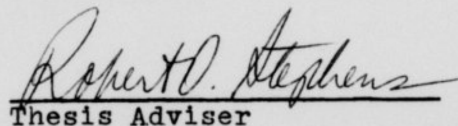

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PREFACE

Djuna Barnes is usually considered a writer for special readers; her works are not only hard to obtain, but when acquired they are difficult to read. For the past thirty years her influence has been quietly ascertained in a number of inadequate ways, and these local reports have only tantalized the curiosities of her dedicated readers. For example a few critics, particularly those who manage to prepare introductions to new fiction, sometimes cite her material as an important influence on the thoughts of the young writers they are introducing. Thus we read of the "cold intensity" of Miss Barnes' style and its conjunction with the prose of John Hawkes.[1] Although such a statement may place Hawkes' novel in some form of traditional perspective, it tells us very little about Djuna Barnes' fiction. Cataloguing her name in introductions is, however, almost conventional. In reviews of modern novels her name is equally popular: "Nothing more intricately conceived than Thomas Pynchon's first novel /‾V.‾7 has appeared in American fiction since the work in the thirties by Faulkner, Nathanael West, and Djuna Barnes..."[2] says Richard Poirier. Writers as well as

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[1]John Hawkes, The Cannibal (New York: New Directions, 1949), ix.

[2]Richard Poirier, "Cook's Tour," review of V., by Thomas Pynchon in New York Review of Books, I, No. I /‾n.d.‾7, 32.

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critics and reviewers claim and often present various kinds of indebtednesses to her also. As we shall see, Lawrence Durrell went farther than most when he created a character who reflected one of her own.

If one is interested in obtaining more pertinent information than this about Miss Barnes - information which would include facts about her life as well as commentaries on her poetry, fiction, and drama - he is likely to experience several disappointments. First, until 1962 only her famous novel, Nightwood, was still in print. The other works had become collector's items. But even more pernicious is the uncommon rareness of any comment at all about her. The popular and comprehensive editions devoted to the expatriate literature of the 1920's give her hardly more than a sentence. Some do not even do this.[3]

Miss Barnes, too, has contributed in many ways to her anonymity by ignoring quite successfully critics, reviewers, and young writers for thirty years. From the beginning she chose to live within a very small and select group, and her disciplined adherence to the code has been disastrously faithful. Thus a great amount of information must be obtained through the thoughts, memoirs, and reflections of others.

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[3]Djuna Barnes' name is conspicuously absent in such classics as Frederick J. Hoffman's The 20's, Malcom Cowley's Exile's Return, Alfred Kazin's On Native Grounds, Edmond Wilson's The Shores of Light and Ihab Hassan's Radical Innocence.

In this thesis we shall be concerned specifically with her use of a special kind of character narration in Nightwood. Our general concern, however, will be an examination of the evolution of this writer and her works through the 1920's and an analysis of Nightwood as a novel which reflects these mysterious years.

Documentation in this thesis follows the form prescribed by Edward D. Seeber in his Style Manual for Students (Indiana University Press, 1965) and the third revision of Kate L. Turabian's A Manual for Writers (Chicago University, 1967). All references to a work which has previously been cited in full form will be made with the abbreviated form.

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CHAPTER I
DJUNA BARNES

Paris in the Twenties

"For years one has dreamed of Paris," wrote Djuna Barnes in 1922, "...thinking in my heart of all unknown churches... Paris evenings...and children trying not to grow out of their clothes before they can get around the corner and home, and a slow haze, while at regulated intervals, water can be heard dripping, dripping, dripping."[1]

> And I say to myself, shall I tell the world what Paris meant to me, or shall I let it sit in its clubs, and its libraries and its homes with Mark Twain and Arthur Symons on its knee, and such desultory sketches as may have fallen from the reeking pens of women, while learning all that Americans failed to notice, on some garden urn?"[2]

In one sense the question is rhetorical if not prophetic, for we do have her intense impressions of Paris in a later novel, Nightwood, as well as in some of her earlier, less known works. Yet in another sense - and an unfortunate one at that - her question remains flatly negative, and we are left to choose among alternatives. To search for that particular garden urn would be ridiculous, but to capture the metaphor might be worthwhile indeed. Even though such an examination would

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[1] Djuna Barnes, "Vagaries Malicieux," Double Dealer III (May, 1922), 249.

[2] Ibid., p. 260.

imply finally an ambitious search through "desultory sketches," any new knowledge obtained should be worth more than the stereotyped, leadened conception of Paris in the 1920's which Gertrude Stein accidently cast by her chance remark to Ernest Hemingway: Paris and its "lost generation," the epithet immortalized in The Sun Also Rises; Paris, a second country of the imagination; a fortunate place to which discouraged American writers went; a romantic home away from home for artists.[3] Hemingway did offer an unusual depth to this notion, particularly in his creation of Lady Brett Ashley. It is here that we see not only how relationships between expatriates can become dreadfully complex, but also how conducive this "fortunate place" can be to make them so. Lady Brett, with her snappy slipover jersey sweater, tweed skirt, and hair brushed back like a boy's ("She started all that."[4])...

> She was looking into my eyes with that way she had of looking that made you wonder whether she really saw out of her own eyes. They would look on and on after every one else's eyes in the world would have stopped looking. She looked on as though there were nothing on earth she would not look at like that, and really she was afraid of so many things.[5]

These were the years of worldly masquerades performed with a deadly accuracy by many women of means. In the late

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[3]Frederick J. Hoffman, The 20's (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 43-44.

[4]Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), p. 22.

[5]Ibid., p. 26.

1920's one might hope to visit Gertrude Stein in her pavillon in the rue de Fleurus, where she could be counted on to be relaxing tensely, stretched on her divan. But with luck one might also receive an invitation to participate in the Friday gatherings at the rue Jacob salon and gardens of Natalie Clifford Barney, a middle-aged heiress from Cincinnati. She was the beautiful blonde Amazon to whom Remy de Gourmont dedicated his Lettres a l'amazone. We learn from Sylvia Beach that Miss Barney befriended artists as well as ladies with high collars and monocles and that many of her own sex found her "fatally" charming.[6] But there is much more that Sylvia Beach left out of her book. For two generations people had trooped to Miss Barney's by the thousands, strolling in her garden by the large, stone Temple to Friendship, listening to Wanda Landowska play the harpsichord, and eating her chocolate cake from Columbins. Among her close friends and visitors over the years were Rainer Maria Rilke, Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Darius Milhaud, Bernard Berenson, Virgil Thomson, and Robert McAlmon. Also, one could expect to see there Colette, Janet Flanner, Renée Vivien, Radclyffe Hall, Mina Loy, and Djuna Barnes..."so charming, so Irish, and so gifted."[7] Among her /Natalie Barney's/ more passionate friendships,

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[6]Sylvia Beach, Shakespeare and Company (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956), p. 114.

[7]Ibid., p. 112.

claims Caresse Crosby, "one may cite the most beautiful and talented women of Paris."[8]

When she moved to her rue Jacob address, there was some concern that the floors might collapse if there was dancing. So she decided to have music, poetry, and drama instead. William Carlos Williams recalls an evening when he and Ezra Pound were invited to take tea with Miss Barney:

> She was extremely gracious and no fool to be sure, far less so than Ezra under the circumstances. She could tell a pickle from a clam any day in the week. I admired her and her lovely gardens, well kept, her laughing doves, her Japanese servants. There were officers wearing red buttons in their lapels there and women of all descriptions. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a small clique of them sneaking off together into a side room while casting surreptitious glances about them, hoping their exit had not been unnoticed.[9]

One afternoon Pierre Louy's Dialogue was performed on her lawn. At its conclusion, while there was still some applause, a white Arab horse, its mane in jewels, galloped down a path toward the group. Riding it bareback was the mystical and snakelike Mata Hari, who had managed to be quite nude, with the exception of fine jewelry and an extravagant crown. The encore was hailed throughout Paris as a salon premiere, and Miss Barney proceeded to establish the naked

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[8]Caresse Crosby, The Passionate Years (New York: Dial Press, 1953), p. 233. The brackets are mine.

[9]William Carlos Williams, The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 229.

Mata Hari as an enduring performer of Javanese dances at her special "for women only" parties.[10]

In the spring of 1927 a large tea party was given in Gertrude Stein's honor. Miss Barney, usually a teetotaler, permitted drinks to be served this time. Ford Madox Ford opened the event by positioning himself atop the Temple to Friendship and read "Homage to Gertrude Stein." Virgil Thomson then played the piano as a musical backdrop to Miss Stein's prose readings. Mina Loy spoke. Matthew Josephson, who attended the event, gives this account:

> Miss Barney entertained her guests not only with excellent food and tea, but also with liberal quantities of champagne. The Americans relaxed more and more; the sound of jazz music filled the stately house in the rue Jacob. As I left, my last glimpse was of a small _salon_ where some young women, transported by literature and champagne, danced madly about in each other's arms.[11]

For a number of reasons Natalie Clifford Barney's busy _salon_ would provide an illuminating and fascinating study. It remains to be completed, however, for she is still quite alive at ninety and still active. (Three years ago she was hostess to Ezra Pound.) Her recent remarks about her life in Paris in the 1920's are indicative of her veritable nature:

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[10] W. G. Rogers, _Ladies Bountiful_ (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), p. 44.

[11] Matthew Josephson, _Life Among the Surrealists_ (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), pp. 325-326.

"I have got from it all I could; I have got more than it contains. Everything I set out to do I did."[12]

I have attempted to present here the sometimes tenuous information available about Natalie Clifford Barney and her various, influential roles in Paris in the later 1920's. It is not by chance that her name and salon are mentioned in many of the autobiographies of women who were in Paris during these years. Her magnetism encompassed the imaginations of her admirers, and she quickly became the veiled subject of much fiction and a lot of poetry. Remy de Gourmont's dedication to his amazon has been mentioned above. There was also Valerie Seymore, "clever as sin," who was the unusual seductress of Radclyffe Hall's The Well of Loneliness (1928).[13] Valerie is a dashing portrayal of Miss Barney, and the book has become an early example of sexual inversion in modern fiction. Although banned immediately in England, it had a startling success in France and America. In the same year that The Well of Loneliness appeared, a small, hand-painted, limited edition book entitled The Lady's Almanach (printed at the sign of the Black Mannikin) by "A Lady of Fashion" began to attract attention in Paris. This book was actually printed by Robert McAlmon at his Contact Press; its author was Djuna

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[12]Rogers, Ladies Bountiful, p. 57.

[13]Lady Una Troubridge, The Life and Death of Radclyffe Hall (London: Hammond, Hammond and Company, Ltd., 1961), p. 83.

Barnes. The Almanach is, "so they say,"[14] a portrait of Natalie Barney. Divided into twelve parts - each for a month of the year and each month with a drawing by the author - the Almanach is a novel about a lady of fashion, Dame Musset, who maintains a salon for lesbians. It is her destiny to free them from social constraints so that they may enjoy marriage legally.

> Again, just as there are some Fellows who will brag that they can teach a Woman much and yet again, and be her all-in-one, there are, alike, Women, no wiser, who maintain that they could (had they a mind to) teach a taught woman; thus though it is sadly against me to report it of one so curing to the Wound as Patience Scapel, yet did she (On such Evenings as saw her facing her favorite Vintage, for no otherwise would she have brought herself to it), hint, then aver, and finally boast that she herself, though all Thumbs at the business and an Amateur, never having gone so much as a Nose-length into the Matter, could mean as much to a Woman as another, though the gentle purring of "Nay! Nay! Nay!" from the Furs surrounding Dame Musset continued to bleed in her Flank.[15]

J. A. Hirschmann, in his doctoral dissertation on Djuna Barnes, sees a relationship in her style here with the early sections of James Joyce's Finnegan's Wake.[16] Certainly there is that lyrical humor reminiscent of Joyce, as well as a

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[14]Beach, Shakespeare and Company, p. 115.

[15]Djuna Barnes, A Lady's Almanach (Paris: Contact Press, 1928), p. 53. Because of the scarcity of this book, this particular quotation was taken from the doctoral dissertation of J. A. Hirschman. See footnote #16.

[16]Jack Aaron Hirschman, "The Orchestrated Novel: A Study of Poetic Devices in Novels of Djuna Barnes and Hermann Broch," (diss., Indiana University, 1961), p. 65.

touch of ribaldry (phenomenal for a female writer). The Almanach is Miss Barnes' last work until 1936, when Nightwood is published. It will be helpful to trace briefly her life and earlier writings up to 1928 when Robert McAlmon published this book.

Biography and Works

Djuna Barnes was born in 1892 at Cornwall-On-Hudson, New York, of an American father, Wald Barnes, and a British mother, Elizabeth (Chappell) Barnes.[17] Her education was obtained primarily at home, and from 1913 she worked in New York for newspapers as a reporter, illustrator, and special theatrical writer.

Her first mature effort in print came late in November, 1915, in one of Guido Bruno's Greenwich Village Chap Books. This was The Book of Repulsive Women, and it sold for $ .15 a copy. As an editor Guido Bruno was "an extreme case of the Villager wholly committed to the fin de siècle;"[18] thus it is quite natural to expect in his "short-lived and ill-clad magazines"[19] the established and (by then) cliched persuasions of Wilde, Beardsley, and Symons. It would be an unfortunate

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[17]Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, eds., Twentieth Century Authors (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1942), p. 72.

[18]Hoffman, The 20's, p. 38.

[19]Ibid.

generalization, however, to pass off <u>The Book of Repulsive Women</u> as just another perpetuation of 1890's decadence.

<u>Repulsive Women</u> contained eight poems, or "rhythms," as they are called, and five striking drawings which are Beardsley-inspired and quite good. The poetry is not exceptional, and there is a solid dependence on meter and rime. This kind of formalism, of course, is the foundation for a nice, rhythmic pattern; yet there is another equally significant use of rhythm which is implicit within the poem's structure. As J. A. Hirschman points out, the eight rhythms reveal a basic theme that will occur and reoccur in her later books: the moment of simultaneous attraction for and repulsion from women.[20]

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.
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.[21]

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[20]Hirschman, "The Orchestrated Novel," p. 52.

[21]Djuna Barnes, <u>The Book of Repulsive Women</u> (Yonkers: The Alicat Bookshop, 1948), p. 10

In 1948 this book was reprinted by Alicat Bookshop in New York. This publication was suppressed immediately by Miss Barnes, an act which she had performed earlier with The Lady's Almanach. Consequently the 1915 edition and the 1948 reprint are rare and fine collector's items.

By 1917 she was firmly established in Greenwich Village, renting a room in the "Clemenceau Cottage" home of James Light, a director with the Provincetown Players.[22] Berenice Abbott occupied one of his other rooms, as well as the young writer, Kenneth Burke. Miss Barnes and Berenice Abbott quickly became enthusiasts of the fashionable "New Woman" movement of the Village. Matthew Josephson, who visited the Lights that year, remembers many of the New Women as "big-bodied and dressed in masculine clothes; sometimes, at social gatherings, they affected 'exotic' costumes of loosely flowing and shapeless robes; generally they cut their hair short, used neither rouge nor powder, and smoked cigarettes constantly."[23]

Through James Light she had three one-act plays produced by the Provincetown Playhouse Company, which was operating in Greenwich Village at this time. "Three From the Earth," performed on October 31, 1919, was on the same bill as Eugene O'Neill's one-act play, "The Dreamy Kid"; on January 9, 1920, "An Irish Triangle" was given, and on March 26, 1920, "Kurzy

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[22]Josephson, Life Among the Surrealists, p. 41.

[23]Ibid., p. 44.

of the Sea" was performed, once more alongside a play by O'Neill.[24] "Kurzy" is the most interesting of the three, for its subject is a fisherman's son who lands a yellow-haired and naked mermaid. (Norma Millay, in a tennis net and long Godiva hair, played the mermaid.) It is eventually divulged that she is - and has been - a sportive barmaid all along.

During this period she also became friends with Margaret Anderson and her Little Review group. By 1918 this little magazine was having its legal difficulties in New York with the serialization of Ulysses, but amidst these circumstances the original version of "A Night Among the Horses," by Djuna Barnes, was printed in one of its numbers.[25] Although the story is abrupt and sometimes shallow, it does reflect themes which she will use later over and over. For example, within the framework of a decaying aristocracy, we see the author's manner of linking night imagery with the dark visions of the unconscious. The relationship yields an odd kind of personification which is rather like a primitive animal imagery one might recall in dreams. There is a slight hint of this in the rhythm, "Suicide," in word-groups such as "shattered small Cocoon," "twilight rune," and "shock abbreviated."

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[24]Hellen Deutsch and Stella Hanau, The Provincetown (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1931), pp. 233, 235, 239.

[25]Djuna Barnes, "A Night Among the Horses," Little Review, V (December, 1918), 3.

This will be displayed with more maturity in her tour de force, Nightwood, but even here it is quite demonstrable. John, a stable-boy dressed in top-hat and tails, kneels and then crawls along the landscape:

> Dew had been falling covering the twilight leaves like myriad faces, damp with the perspiration of the struggle for existence, and half a mile away, standing out against the darkness of the night, a grove of white birches shimmered like teeth in a skull...His heart ached with the nearness of the earth, the faint murmur of it moving upon itself, like a sleeper who turns to throw an arm about a beloved...Something somnolent seemed to be here... a deep, heavy, yet soft prison where, without sin, one may suffer intolerable punishment.[26]

In her autobiography Margaret Anderson gives one of the few actual descriptions of the Djuna Barnes of this period, but it is difficult to see her comments in any terms except those out of the very "reeking pens" from which we were warned earlier.

> Djuna would never talk, she would never allow herself to be talked to. She said it was because she was reserved about herself. She wasn't, in fact, reserved - she was unenlightened. This led her into the construction of self-myths which she has never taken pains to revise...For us there was no way of establishing a communication with her.[27]

Her poetry began to appear in more magazines, including Vanity Fair and Smart Set, and she became a feature writer

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[26]Ibid.

[27]Magaret Anderson, My Thirty Year's War (New York: Covici, Friede, 1943), p. 181

for McCall's magazine. In the early 1920's she left New York for Paris to write portraits of artistic figures abroad, presumably under the auspices of Vanity Fair.[28] One could indefinitely muse here over Ernest Hemingway's poem, "The Lady Poet With Footnotes,"[29] for in it he mentions (and not very subtly) a lady poet who came over to Paris and wrote for Vanity Fair.

It is interesting to recall Frederick J. Hoffman's rather elaborate set of statistics on the Americans who went abroad during these years, for on the surface Miss Barnes' case seems to have been a standard one.[30] She was of the large, two-thirds majority that made initially a living from feature stories and articles written for American magazines, and, also like the majority, she had been born in the East. Yet there are a number of differences. Although she remained in Paris to write the "other" expatriate novel, Nightwood (published ten years after Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises), one would be at a loss to determine whether this would qualify her as one of Mr. Hoffman's "genuine expatriates." She was thirty years old when she arrived in Paris (most were in their early twenties); she was self-

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[28]Hirschman, "The Orchestrated Novel," p. 53.

[29]Ernest Hemingway, Collected Poems Originally Published in Paris (Pirated Edition) (San Francisco, 1960), p. 10.

[30]Hoffman, The 20's, pp. 46-48.

educated (most had some form of college education); she stayed on in Paris in the 1930's (the majority vanished after the stock market crash of 1929); and she abandoned her journalistic efforts two years after her arrival. A critic's tendencies to view a period through statistics based on the actions of a few popular - but not completely representative - figures brings to mind a poem by Miss Barnes' close friend, Mary Butts, who wrote of Mr. Hoffman's Paris in the 1920's...

> O Lord, call off the curse on great names,
> On the "tall, tight boys,"
> Write off their debt,
> The sea-paced, wave curled,
> Achilles' set.[31]

Finally in Paris, Djuna Barnes became a close friend of the Joyce family, and this led to her two published articles, both of which are about Joyce. The first, "James Joyce," is an attempt to present a journalist's impression of the artist.[32] The second, "Vagaries Malicieux," is also a characterization of Joyce, and, as J. A. Hirschman points out, all the descriptions of him that became clichés later with Ellman are quite fresh here; Joyce's "accidental aloofness," his dislike of art-talk, his perfect memory, and his

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[31]Virgil Thomson, Virgil Thomson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 88. Mary Butts' poetry is quoted in Mr. Thomson's autobiography.

[32]Djuna Barnes, "James Joyce," Vanity Fair XVII (April, 1922), 65, 104.

chief love, Greek mythology.[33] Some of the women mentioned in this article are compared to churches, and we shall see this motif developed extensively later in Nightwood, particularly in the description of Nora Flood.

In 1923 A Book was published by Boni and Liveright. It was a collection of most of her previous work: eight poems, the three one-act plays, fourteen fragmented short stories, and six illustrations. Although some of these stories had been published earlier - including "A Night Among the Horses" - this was their first appearance in a collection. Their general landscapes suggest an attempt to grasp that moment of over-ripeness in traditional aristocracy when decay and spiritual decadence are introduced; in a way the stories here are similar to the deteriorating gentry described in Turgenev's stories, especially "Tadja" and "First Love," but Miss Barnes' are not nearly so successful or controlled. In the story "Aller et Retour," however, there is the exceptional creation of Madame von Bartmann, a woman of great strength, "past forty and a little top-heavy," who is an ominous foreshadowing of Dr. Matthew in Nightwood. She, too, can deliver grand speeches into the night, and, as will be shown later in this thesis, what she teaches us is quite faithful to the Doctor's remarkably

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[33]Hirschman, "The Orchestrated Novel," p. 53.

controlled ravings. In fact, one may catch that perplexing <u>leitmotif</u>, the essence of the entire later novel, in the weighted lines spoken anxiously by Madame von Bartmann's daughter: "O nuit desastreuse! O nuit effroyable!"[34]

In the poetry of <u>A Book</u> there is also the (by now) familiar theme of romanticizing on dead women:

> Over the body and the quiet head
> Like stately ferns above an austere tomb,
> Soft hairs blow; and beneath her armpits bloom
> The drowsy passion flowers of the dead.[35]

In 1928 <u>Ryder</u> appeared in America in a heavily expurgated edition. Besides being her first novel, it is her most ambitious work to date. In its fifty chapters are a large number of different styles, including parodies of Chaucerian, Elizabethan, and Jacobean verse, as well as Fielding's prose. The novel's hero, Jonathan Buxton Ryder, "who possesses a wild craving to populate the puritan countryside,"[36] is a kind of lusty <u>picaro</u> who can never stay at home tied to his family for long. Perhaps in this character we can see at work Miss Barnes' ideas concerning the married male: a moral vagabond who leaves his wife with the resultant problems

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[34]Djuna Barnes, <u>The Selected Works of Djuna Barnes</u> (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Cudahy, 1962), p. 8.

[35]Djuna Barnes, <u>A Book</u> (New York: Boni and Liveright, Inc., 1923), p. 209.

[36]Hirschman, "The Orchestrated Novel," p. 58.

of his infidelity. The novel has a gusto to it that is Rabelaisian in scope, and it is altogether remarkable that its author happens to be a woman.

> And how was it, my Pretty Love? - Box her Ears, the Dirty Wanton! - and was it coming over the Stile, or was it this side of the Fence or the other? How went he about it? Did he lie to you, Frowsy Smelt? Said he that you had Sweet Chops and a Winter Eye? And you, how fared you at that Moment? Were you easily bedabbled, or came you reluctant to the Filthing? Backward looking, or leaping at the Bait?[37]

In Ryder we are also introduced unequivocally to Dr. Matthew O'Connor who, as I stated above, is one of the main characters in the later novel, Nightwood, and who is the subject of the final chapter of this thesis. To the best of our knowledge Dr. Matthew's three appearances in Ryder have never been mentioned by Miss Barnes' critics, and we believe the omission is quite unfortunate. Here the Doctor is the family physician to the Ryder family and, in Chapter Thirty-Two (entitled "The Soliloquy of Dr. Matthew O'Connor"), he laments in a familiar manner:

> ...one out of many...when I first came down the aisles swinging my tin hips, see me, Matthew O'Connor, holding my satin robe about my backsides, tripping up to God like a good woman, and

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[37]Djuna Barnes, Ryder (New York: Horace Liveright, 1928), p. 30.

> me only seventeen and taking on something scandalous for the ways my sins were with me![38]

This was the year of A Lady's Almanach. However, even as new editions were being readied for distribution at Robert McAlmon's Contact Press, Miss Barnes was gathering every unhidden copy to be destroyed. Although official reasons for her act will probably never be known, it has been suggested in Part I of this chapter that the Almanach's heroine, Dame Musset, might have been Natalie Clifford Barney, and this can at least lead to speculation here about the causes for the book's suppresion in such an odd way. Were Miss Barnes' writings in 1928 completely private or were they private and purgative also? A reading of the first three lines of the first sentence of the Almanach is sufficient to represent the nature of the problem as well as our speculation:

> Now this be a Tale of as fine a Wench as ever wet Bed, she who was called Evengeline Musset and who was in her Heart the Grand Red Cross for the Pursuance, the Relief and the Distraction, of such Girls as in their Hinder Parts...lament Cruelly...[39]

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[38] Ibid., p. 172.

[39] Djuna Barnes, A Lady's Almanach, p. 1. This quotation was taken from a zerox copy of page one of A Lady's Almanach owned by the novelist, Bertha Harris, who is residing currently in Greensboro, North Carolina.

As we have seen, The Book of Repulsive Women reprint was also suppressed by Miss Barnes. Consequently, the Repulsive Women reprint as well as A Lady's Almanach are almost impossible to obtain today.

From here to 1936, when Nightwood was published, there is very little information about Miss Barnes to be found. It is known that she had begun Nightwood quite early in the 1930's, probably between 1930 and 1931. During this time she lived with Peggy Guggenheim and her family at Hayford Hall, a greystone structure on the moors in Devonshire, England.

> The bedrooms were simple and adequate...One bedroom, however, was rather dressed up in rococo style, and it looked so much like Djuna that we gave it to her. It was in this room, in bed, that she wrote most of Nightwood.[40]

The novel was first published in England in 1936 and in America in 1937. Both editions have the famous introduction by T. S. Eliot. Since its publication Miss Barnes has lived both in London and New York; at the present she keeps an apartment on Patchen Place in Greenwich Village.

In 1958 her most recent work, The Antiphon, a tragedy in blank verse, was printed in England and America. The late Dag Hammarskjold and Karl Ragnar Gierow translated it

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[40]Peggy Guggenheim, Out of This Century (New York: Dial Press, 1946), p. 138.

into Swedish for a production at the Royal Dramatic Theater in Stolkholm. Its performance there was a muted success, and its minor popularity here has never warranted the tremendous tasks involved in staging it for American audiences. Nevertheless, some of the verse in this play is Miss Barnes' best; here the older themes of death and the dual nature of women are delivered in a kind of prophetic anguish.

> Where the martyr'd wild fowl fly the portal
> High in the honey of cathedral walls,
> There is the purchase, governance, and mercy.
> Where careful sorrow and observed compline
> Sweat their gums and mastics to the hive
> Of whatsoever stall the head's heaved in -
> There is the amber. As the high plucked banks
> Of the viola rend out the unplucked strings below -
> There is the antiphon.
> I've seen loves so eat each other's mouth
> Till the common clamour, co-intwined,
> Wrung out the hidden singing in the tongue
> Its chaste economy - there is the adoration.
> So the day, day fit for dying in
> Is the plucked accord.[41]

This is a song for a Cassandra to sing. Its sophistication spans fifty years. Although it is a woman's soliloquy here, there is one man who sang it just as well, Dr. Matthew, the transvestite guru of Nightwood.

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[41]Djuna Barnes, Selected Works, p. 214.

CHAPTER II

NIGHTWOOD

Spatial Form

Before Nightwood is examined, it will be helpful to consider Joseph Frank's essay, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature,"[1] for two rather important reasons: First, Frank appears to be one of the earlier critics who observed quite accurately an evolution of esthetic form in some of the poetry and fiction written during this century. To Frank this gradual development of form indicated ultimately that a reader had to approach some works spatially, as if they occurred in a moment of time, rather than sequentially, as in a temporal pattern of events. The other important reason for our concern is that Frank uses Nightwood as his principal example of how spatial form can operate in fiction. His analysis of this novel is a first-rate introduction to its difficulties.

Frank points out that there is a "deliberate disconnectedness" in some poetry which contributes to a reader's difficulties when meaningful conclusions are the concern.[2] Most readers hope to rely on a traditional, syntactical structure in poetry that is temporal in sequence. In some

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[1]Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," The Sewanee Review, XLV (Spring and Summer, 1945).

[2]Ibid., p. 229.

poems, however, there is nothing even close to this kind of structure which can be relied upon. The reader must depend instead on his final, over-all perception of what the disconnected word groups meant to him; any "meaning" obtained would be the simultaneous result of any number of juxtapositions of these word groups which the reader entertained in his mind. Such is the method by which Ezra Pound structures the "Cantos," and it is also the basis to T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land." The formalism in these poems

> is based on a space-logic that demands a complete reorientation in the reader's attitude towards language. Since the primary reference of any word group is to something inside the poem itself, language in modern poetry is really reflexive: the meaning-relationship is completed only by the simultaneous perception in space of word groups which, when read consecutively in time, have no comprehensible relation to each other. Instead of words and word groups to the objects or events they symbolize, and the construction of meaning from the sequence of these references, modern poetry asks its readers to suspend the process of individual reference temporarily until the entire pattern of internal references can be apprehended as a unity.[3]

The difficulties in achieving this kind of immediate perception of the structural wholeness of a poem are only amplified for the writer - and readers - of novels. The established manner of presenting a temporal sequence of events in a novel - a procedure which we have learned to

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[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 229-230.

expect - must be dissolved into a larger number of intertwining relationships which will reflect upon each other relentlessly. The narrative will, of course, proceed through the maze of references uninhibited, yet the time-flow of this narration will be broken again and again as the relationships begin to pile upon one another.

Frank uses as an example Flaubert's famous country fair scene in Madame Bovary. Rodolphe is wooing Emma with a heavily clichéd speech while below their window the crowd of the country fair buzzes with activity. On a platform on a level between the crowd and the lovers one hears politicians bleating their pompous speeches. Flaubert abolishes any sense of time-as-sequence in this scene by viewing each level quickly, "cutting back and forth...in a slowly-rising crescendo until - at the climax of the scene - Rodolphe's Chateaubriandesque phrases are read at almost the same moment as the names of prize winners for raising the best pigs."[4]

This isolated instance of spatial form working in a particular scene can be observed on a greater level when it controls an entire novel, such as James Joyce's Ulysses. Here the reader can at best acquire "a sense of Dublin as a totality, including all the relations of the characters to one another and all the events which enter their consciousness."[5]

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[4]Ibid., p. 231.

[5]Ibid., p. 234.

In this way Ulysses is read in a manner similar to the reading of modern poetry - but on a tremendously larger scale; that is, the narrative structure becomes a means by which fragmented information may be pieced together finally into a perceptible whole.

In a somewhat parallel situation is Proust's elaborate attempt to imprint his novel upon his idea of the form of Time. We witness an incredible number of characters appear and suddenly disappear with mysterious ease as things past are enveloped into the future. Yet we tend to perceive these images spatially, apart from the flow of temporal sequence, and we carry away a sense of reoccurrence that is constantly reflecting upon itself. This goes far beyond the connotations of déjà vu, for here we sense ultimately the passing of time by suspending it.

Before proceeding to Nightwood, Frank makes an important distinction between it and the two works above by Joyce and Proust. The difference is demonstrated by recalling an analogous situation concerning the paintings of Cezanne and Braque. Cezanne's work is characterized "by a tension between two conflicting but deeply-rooted tendencies: on the one hand, a struggle to attain esthetic form - conceived... of form-and-color harmonies - and, on the other hand, the desire to create this form through the recognizable depiction

of natural objects."[6] As we know, Braque and the later abstract painters dropped their attempts to attain form naturalistically for a solid concentration in purely formalistic harmonies. Proust and Joyce, says Frank, are quite like Cezanne here, in that they present characters spatially in terms of verisimilitude.

> But in Nightwood, as in the work of Braque and the later abstract painters, the naturalistic principle is totally abandoned: no attempt is made to convince us that the characters are actual flesh-and-blood human beings. We are asked only to accept their world as we accept an abstract painting or, to return to literature, as we accept a Shakespearean play - as an autonomous pattern giving us an individual vision of reality, rather than what we might consider to be its exact reflection.[7]

It should be pointed out here, however, that the world of Ulysses and A la recherche du temps perdu can be accepted as an autonomous pattern also and, much scholarship to the contrary, their visions of reality can be reflected in dimensions just as individual as Nightwood. Spatial form is indeed a common unifying factor in all three works, yet in the former two novels we consume the mass of naturalistic detail by "spatial apprehension," whereas in Nightwood naturalism is replaced rapidly "by the demands of the décor necessary to enhance the symbolic significance of the

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[6]Ibid., p. 435.

[7]Ibid.

characters."[8] This act by which a character is severed completely from any trace of naturalism is in any case an imaginative process performed by the reader while he is reading, and the "character" that is consequently viewed is in fact the essence of the character portrayed.

We find, then, that Nightwood lies somewhere between the novels written with spatial form in mind but which are still governed by naturalism and the poetry which has no temporal pattern at all. This is one reason why T. S. Eliot, in his introduction to Nightwood, claims that the novel will appeal only to special readers, particularly those who read poetry. Most contemporary novels, he says,

> obtain what reality they have largely from an accurate rendering of the noises that human beings make in their daily simple needs of communication; and what part of a novel is not composed of these noises consists of a prose which is no more alive than that of a competant newspaper writer or government official. A prose that is altogether alive demands something of the reader that the ordinary novel-reader is not prepared to give.[9]

To account for this novel, then, we must first understand that it has a narrative structure that is quite unlike the traditional modes of temporal narration; thus we cannot expect to rely on consecutive sequences of action, either

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[8] Ibid., p. 438.

[9] Djuna Barnes, Nightwood (New York: New Directions, 1961), xii.

physical or by a stream of consciousness. Rather, what we must finally depend upon are those images and symbols which are viewed spatially - as they refer back and forth to each other - throughout the time-act of reading.[10]

An Analysis of Nightwood

What is to be communicated in Nightwood, says T. S. Eliot, grows out of a rhythm in prose that is its own style.[11] This has been the area of the main criticisms of the novel, for many have damned its style, contending that it is too obscure if not overly exotic. Theodore Purdy lamented in his review of the novel in The Saturday Review that the prose was no more tortured than the characters;[12] in a similar manner Philip Horton catalogued his reservations in New Republic, admitting that although the novel was of a high quality, at times the prose became downright oppressive.[13] But if we accept Joseph Frank's conclusions in his essay on spatial form, the burdensome difficulties are somewhat lightened. Nightwood's eight chapters, says Frank, are like "searchlights, probing the darkness each from a

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[10] Frank, "Spatial Form," p. 439.

[11] Barnes, Nightwood, xii.

[12] Theodore Purdy, Jr., "Atmosphere of Decay," review of Nightwood, by Djuna Barnes in The Saturday Review of Literature, XV (March 27, 1937), 11.

[13] Philip Horton, "Fiction Parade," review of Nightwood, by Djuna Barnes in New Republic, XC (March 31, 1937), 247.

different direction, yet ultimately focusing on and illuminating the same entanglement of the human spirit."[14] Instead of a narrative structure where the eight chapters would become eight distinct parts of a plot progression, the unifying factor here is a referencing and cross referencing of certain motifs.

Language, says the Doctor in Nightwood - he carries the major portion of the novel in his monologues - should always be doubted because of its deceptiveness; it makes false whatever is seen or done "because we have a word for it, and not its alchemy."[15] A statement such as this might place some readers in a position to be wary of how the Doctor uses whatever he says in the novel. It is quite important to understand, however, that it is not Miss Barnes the narrator who is speaking; it is one of her characters instead. In a sense he steps out of character to warn us of his own peculiar way of handling his own talk. Such a situation allows the reader a special perspective for seeing what is to be communicated within the novel's prosodic rhythms.

> It's all of a certain night that I'm coming to...
> a night in the branchy pitch of fall...for I'm a

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[14] Frank, "Spatial Form," p. 438.

[15] Barnes, Nightwood, p. 83. The pagination for all quotations cited from this novel will be presented in the text after the quotation.

> fisher of men and my gimp is doing a <u>salterello</u> over every body of water to fetch up what it may. I have a narrative, but you will be put to it to find it. (p. 97)

If the Doctor is to be taken seriously ("I've only just started." /p. 18/), the reader must discard any notions of a deterministic representation of nature. The night to which he is referring has already occurred temporally, yet it is still taking place spatially. Naturalism, as we shall see, will shift into a region of autonomy - "The foetus of symmetry nourishes itself on cross purposes; this is its wonderful unhappiness." (p. 97) - and in its place the prose will intensify the essences of the characters.

Such a deviation away from naturalism implies a stronger emphasis on the relationships of the meanings of words and word groups to each other. Not only will the novel's images begin to assume a recognizable pattern, but we shall observe similar images change into different forms for each particular character. In this way we can "see" a character gradually become enveloped into a few distinct image clusters which will, in turn, define his specific pose. This is not unlike a system of verbal <u>leitmotif</u> where an almost omniscient narrator diffuses different points of view to each character; they - the characters - can reflect their peculiar differences only by constant allusions to each other.

This can be understood by observing how the novel's title is used by Miss Barnes. Scattered throughout the book "night" and "wood" imagery is displayed extravagantly and poetically to structure the many shades of a particular character. In effect, these two words clarify the chaos of the book. As in some modern poetry, however, it is the reader who must wade into the apparent confusion and become a part of its rhythms. Only then can we come to know the intensity of her style.

The first four chapters of the novel are introductions to the four characters. As we shall see, each of the chapters' titles is a kind of epithet for the character introduced, and each will suggest an image which he or she will assume: "Bow Down" - Felix Volkbein; "la Somnambule" - Robin Vote; "Night Watch" - Nora Flood; "The Squatter" - Jenny Petherbridge. Dr. Matthew O'Connor is quite active in each of the four chapters, making his learned and heartfelt asides to the reader about a character's comments or actions and performing as a kind of interpreter or stage manager. With the following three chapters ("Watchman, What of the Night?", "Where the Tree Falls" and "Go Down, Matthew") the Doctor presents monologues on his most favorite of subjects, the night, and by his doing this the reader can see newer meanings into the beginning four chapters. The final chapter, "The

Possessed," is what Frank aptly calls a coda,[16] and it offers an ending for which we have been prepared all along.

In the first chapter, "Bow Down," we witness almost at once the loss of narrative time. As J. A. Hirschman points out, the verisimilitude lasts only for the first eight and a half pages, which cover our introduction to the Baron Felix Volkbein's past.[17] In a proper, sequential narrative loaded with detail Miss Barnes opens her novel: "Early in 1880, in spite of a well-founded suspicion as to the advisibility of perpetuating that race which has the sanction of the Lord and the disapproval of the people, Hedvig Volkbein - a Viennese woman of great strength and military beauty...gave birth, at the age of forty five, to an only child, a son, seven days after her physician predicted that she would be taken." (p. 1) The Baron, Jewish and "built like a medieval abuse," (p. 26) is a pretender to aristocracy. "His embarrassment took the form of an obsession for what he termed 'Old Europe': aristocracy, nobility, royalty." (p. 9) His racial memory forces him to be a "collector" of his hypothetical past, for the mingled passions that make up his real past - the diversity of bloods and the ghetto - accumulate convincingly before him, serving his embarrassment.

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[16]Frank, "Spatial Form," p. 438.

[17]Jack Aaron Hirschman, "The Orchestrated Novel: A Study of Poetic Devices in Novels of Djuna Barnes and Hermann Broch," (diss., Indiana University, 1961), p. 65.

However, in these opening pages Miss Barnes writes into the Baron's pose a catalogue of events and objects out of the historical or real past, and herein lies the brief example of verisimilitude. The Baron's life is described in terms of a cluttered museum collection: long rococo halls, Roman fragments, the Medici shield, Tunisian velvets, and the bones of the Imperial Courts. Indeed, he is viewed as the Solitary, the Wandering Jew, passing ceaselessly through history and time.

He finally enters Paris; the narrator says it is 1920; and the novel shifts abruptly to a completely different style. History and real time stop in Paris, and we immediately see the Baron "bowing, searching, with quick pendulous movements for the correct thing to pay tribute." (p. 9) The stylistic change is quick and dramatic and, with a finely tuned cinematic technique, the Baron's rapid pendulous swaying illustrates not only the image of a sudden stop, but also his suspension into this new landscape of the night. For it is finally night in the novel, and the decayed aristocracy which the Baron ironically impersonates finds its fitting locale in the twilight of Paris. The reader is taken once more into his past, to Vienna, but it is now seen through a more controlled prose. We learn that he admired circus performers "with something of the love of the lion for the tamer." (p. 11) Although their fake titles were gaudy and cheap

(Princess Nadja, the Duchess of Broadback), it was these misfits for whom he felt a commanding respect. A trapeze artist - an old friend of the Baron's - is recalled by the narrator: Her skin and red costume are seen blending together;"...one somehow felt that they ran through her as the design runs through holiday candies...the bulge in the groin where she took the bar...was as solid, as specialized and as polished as oak." (p. 13)

The title of this chapter, "Bow Down," is appropriate to the pseudo Baron's attitude toward his great tradition. In restaurants he bows slightly to anyone who looks as if he might be important "...making the bow so imperceptible that the surprised person might think he was merely adjusting his stomach." (p. 9) The Baron's constant bowing down reflects his special kind of descent, which will culminate in his attempt to take a wife in order to have a child; this will fulfill his notions of aristocracy, yet the child will be more grotesquely animal-like than human.

After the Baron and the Doctor meet briefly, the Doctor leaves what little plot that exists for the warmth of his favorite café and, in nice Elizabethan form, gives a monologue on his new acquaintance. "There's something missing and whole about the Baron Felix..." says the Doctor, and he cites a parable to show that what is missing is love. "I tell you...if one gave birth to a heart on a plate, it would

say 'Love' and twitch like a lopped leg of a frog." (p. 27)

Alan Williamson, in his essay "The Divided Image," observes that the world of Nightwood is permeated by the dualism of day and night: the day requires men to behave "as if they were immortal," as if they were rational beings capable of communicating satisfactorily through language and love;[18] the night reveals the subconscious, that is, the forces which seem to control this same individual's life. Thus when the Doctor acknowledges that words cannot begin to portray the alchemy of events, he not only has the night in mind, but also its violence:

> ...no sooner has our head touched the pillow and our eyes left the day, than a host of merrymakers take and get. We wake from our doings in a deep sweat for that they happened in a house without an address, in a street in no town, citizened with people with no means with which to deny them... Sleep demands of us a guilty immunity. There is not one of us who, given an eternal incognito, a thumbprint nowhere set against our souls, would not commit rape, murder, and all abominations. (p. 88)

If there is a malady here which is peculiar to the human situation, it is that these irrational and dark forces make a man vulnerable to his own violence. And with very little labor this vulnerability is in turn the cause of his isolation. Mr. Williamson suggests that Djuna Barnes renders

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[18] Alan Williamson, "The Divided Image: The Quest for Identity in the Works of Djuna Barnes," Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, VII (Spring, 1964), 61.

this situation significant in terms of a myth "which bears a close kinship to the Christian myth of the Fall, but which offers little possibility of Christian redemption."[19] It is actually an Eden myth which draws on the Hermetic tradition,

> ...according to which man was created, in the union of conscious mind and animal matter, as a single hermaphroditic being, whose fragmentation into separate sexes occurred at the time of the Fall. This bisexual Adam was static and immortal, encompassing all human possibilities in potentiality; thus it was complete within itself, neither needing nor desiring anything in the external world.[20]

This time before the Fall is remembered by way of a racial memory, a Jungian longing for a childhood of innocence. Yet imbedded into this yearning is an implied regression - a downward movement - which is a descent from the rational consciousness to the baseness of animal instincts.

Robin Vote,[21] *la somnabule*, the sleepwalker, is suitably introduced to the Baron and the reader while she is being revived by the Doctor from a fainting spell. The

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[19] *Ibid*., p. 60.

[20] *Ibid*.

[21] In her informal memoirs Peggy Guggenheim - to whom *Nightwood* is dedicated (along with John Holms) - recalls an interesting incident which occurred at a party she attended in Paris in the 1920's: "Later I received a proposal (I can hardly say of marriage) from the girl who was to become the well known Robin of *Nightwood*. She got down on her knees in front of me." (p. 33) This lady's identity is not known. (see footnote #37, Chapter I).

description of her is characteristic of the way in which Miss Barnes uses imagery to create the essence of character:

> The perfume that her body exhaled was of the quality of that earthly 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, and sleep worn, as if sleep were a decay fishing her beneath the visible surface. (p. 34)

The damp-earth imagery and the exotic texture of this passage are remarkably similar to the section from "A Night Among the Horses," (1918) which was quoted in Chapter One of this thesis.[22] The word groups in that passage all point toward the same feeling for a particular moment when time reflects back upon itself. The stable-boy is seen crawling in the night, "damp with the persperation of the struggle for existence;" Miss Barnes reminds us then that "Something somnolent seemed to be here...a deep, heavy, yet soft prison where, without sin, one may suffer intolerable punishment."

This particular kind of imagery is that of the unconscious life, "very old species low on the evolutionary scale."[23] "Earth-flesh" and "fungi" seem to be connected with the sea, which is at least the evolutionary origin of

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[22]See footnote #26, Chapter I.

[23]Williamson, "Divided Image," p. 74.

life. Robin's life - as well as the stable-boy's - is the life of sleepy innocence, and it is out of this sleep - a "guilty immunity" - that she is presented in Chapter Two. Beneath her flesh this sleep "fishes" into the regions of her unconscious.

> Sometimes one meets a woman who is beast turning human. Such a person's every movement will reduce to an image of a forgotten experience; a mirage of an eternal wedding cast on the racial memory; as unsupportable a joy as would be the vision of an eland coming down an aisle of trees, chapleted with orange blossoms and bridal veil, a hoof raised in the economy of fear, stepping in the trepidation of flesh that will become myth. (p. 37)

This "eternal wedding cast on the racial memory" is a meeting of the unconscious and the conscience or, the beast (baseness of animal instinct) turning human (rational consciousness). Like the bisexual Adam of the Hermetic myth, she is enclosed in a "sleep incautious," neither needing nor desiring anything in the external world.

Alan Williamson sees Robin's transformation into myth as the direct source of her trepidation. This becomes clear "when one realizes that this transformation takes place concretely in the eyes of the disoriented individuals who love her, in that her complete but indeterminate identity represents to each of them his particular mirror image, his means of self-completion and salvation."[24] Those who love her will

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[24] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

exploit but not transform her; thus, she will be driven into an even more confining enclosure and, at the same time, they will be destroyed by her inability to respond.

When the Baron sees her he thinks of "the converging halves of a broken fate," (p. 38) which in a way is his own destiny; he sees in her also the son that she can produce for him. "To pay homage to our past," says the Baron, "is the only gesture that also includes the future." (p. 39) The Doctor warns playfully that "the last muscle of aristocracy is sometimes an idiot...- we go up - but we come down." (p. 40) The Baron does not catch the implications of coming "down," yet the reader has at least a hint of the kind of child the Baron and Robin will make. Later in the novel the Doctor remembers the scene:

> Felix (with the abandon of what a mad man knows to be his own madness) could not keep his eyes away, and as they arose to go, his cheeks now drained of colour, the points of his beard bent sharply down with the stiffening of his chin, he turned and made a slight bow...as if in mortal shame. (p. 123)

The destruction of Robin's relationship with others has its source here in Felix's attempt to force this transformation upon her, compelling her to assume an unlikely role; the action itself demands a response from the depths of her "sleep incautious." Felix assumes that he witnesses her transformation, mainly because he thinks he loves her,

but this does not make it an actuality at all. Instead, what he sees is the mirror image of himself.

Robin's pose, "a tall girl with the body of a boy" (p. 46) is surrounded by plants, "melancholy red velvet," and a fluid blueness. Her temples are "like those of young beasts cutting horns, as if they were sleeping eyes." (p. 134) Her eyes are "mysterious and shocking blue," timeless behind the lids - the "long unqualified range in the iris of wild beasts who have not tamed down to meet the human eye." (p. 37) Although her descent motif is of a different nature than that of the Baron's, they are both doomed by their mutual dependence upon each other. "Fate and entanglement," warns an excited Doctor, "have begun again." And with that he raises his glass for a toast to the reader: "To Robin Vote," he says, "she can't be more than twenty." (p. 40) With a quick change of tempo - again quite close to modern cinematic technique - the roar of a falling steel blind in front of the brooding Doctor crashes into the chapter, and the scene is over.

The next character who performs a descent is Nora Flood. She is described in "Night Watch" by an accumulation of wood imagery. The "grain of her face" (p. 50) is weather-beaten; she is a "wood in the work," (p. 50) a "tree coming forward in her, an undocumented record of time." (p. 50) She is an American Westerner who keeps the "strangest <u>salon</u>

in America," (p. 50) for Catholics, Protestants, Brahmins, poets, artists, people in love, and dabblers in black magic and medicine - the latter including the Doctor, we assume. She has an early Christian temperament; "she believed the word," (p. 51) and this fills her with a belief in the inherent goodness of man. Such an attitude protects her momentarily from her descent.

Nora is actually introduced to the Doctor in Chapter One. She happens to be at the same table with the Doctor and Felix, and it is she who interrupts the two by asking ironically, "Are you both really saying what you mean, or are you just talking." (p. 18) She then introduces herself, saying, "I am doing advance publicity for the circus; I'm Nora Flood." Although she vanishes until her next appearance in the third chapter, there are still scattered allusions to circuses: We have already mentioned the Viennese trapeze artist with the polished oak groin, and we have pointed to the Baron's early lion-like respect for circus performers. Thus it is not very surprising that later, in Chapter Three, Nora meets Robin at a circus. The scene is quite important, however, because it not only reveals the kind of relationship they will have, but it also confirms our interpretation of Robin.

> Then as one powerful lioness came to the turn of the bars, exactly opposite the girl /Robin/, 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 impassionable heat, her eyes flowed in tears that never reached the surface. At that the girl stood up...and Nora took her out. (p. 54)

This is a good example of spatial form at work. Nora - by intuition - and the reader - by reading the first two chapters - see why the lion's action affects Robin in this way. Being part beast and part human, Robin seems to evoke pity from both species, and Nora, with her Christian belief in natural goodness, can love quite strongly on pity. Yet the images and their motifs which come together here - the circus, Nora, lions, wood, and descent - have been suspended in space for two chapters. Waiting now in the barred ring is the flash of an animal act which points directly ahead to Nora's descent; she will "bow down" like the lion - as will Felix and Robin - and she will be wrenched violently from her Puritan tradition into a painful anonymity. Later she tells the Doctor of her brief affair with Robin, and once more we observe descriptions in terms of her epithet, the sleepwalker:

> I saw her always like a tall child who had grown up the length of the infant's gown, walking and needing help and safety; because she was in her own nightmare; I tried to come between and save her, but I was like a shadow in her dream that could never reach her in time, as the cry of the sleeper has no echo, myself echo struggling to answer. (p. 145)

Nora's obsession to possess and protect forces Robin to wander through the nights of Paris. It is interesting that Miss Barnes does not permit Nora to carry a great deal of dialogue; she seems to become dramatically effective in her anonymity. As she walks alone into the night searching for Robin, the Doctor sums up her dilemma for us: "'There goes the dismantled - Love has fallen off her wall. A religious woman,' he thought to himself, 'without the joy and safety of the Catholic faith, which at a pinch covers up the spots on the wall when the family portraits take a slide...there goes mother of mischief, running about, trying to get the world home.'" (pp. 60-61) The implications of the Catholic Church are intriguing. The Doctor implies that if Nora had been a Catholic she would not have been blinded by Robin's peculiar and corrupting nature; she could have accepted Robin's fall in a different perspective, that is, within a dimension of understanding that would reject outright her dogmatic Protestant faith in natural goodness. In this light Joseph Frank sees the Doctor's observations as a crucial factor in interpreting the entire novel.[25]

Nora sees Robin leave with another woman, Jenny Petherbridge[26] ("The Squatter"), the smallest and most

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25 Frank, "Spatial Form," p. 454.

26 In Kenneth Burke's essay on Nightwood he provides some peculiar and questionable linguistic relationships

bourgeois character in the novel. Robin's acceptance of Jenny points out once more that she has not changed at all. Jenny's epithet is appropriate, for she is a dealer in second-hand dealings with life." (p. 60) She even speaks with a lisp. Her relationship with Robin is quite different from those of Felix and Nora, however, for she cannot possibly see Robin either as a fulfillment of a notion of aristocracy (Felix) or as an object to protect (Nora). She merely places Robin among the tiny jaded elephants on her bureaux; she loves Robin only because others have done likewise.

If Jenny is the smallest character in the novel, Dr. Matthew-Mighty-Grain-of-Salt-Dante-O'Connor is certainly the largest. He is presented as a character already descended, and in this way he is comparable to Robin. He appears in the first four introductory chapters as a kind of Tiresias (from San Francisco), always there at the moment of high emotion, always handy with irony.

His first monologue is the fifth chapter, "Watchman, What of the Night?" Nora awakens him at three in the morning and finds him in bed wearing a woman's flannel nightgown.

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between the characters of the novel: "Jenny" has affinity with "Djuna"; "Baroness" has a similar structure to "Barnes," and "Robin" is an acrostic form of the b-r-o-n in "Baroness." Kenneth Burke, "Version, Con-, Per-, and In-," Southern Review, II (Spring, 1966), p. 337.

He is heavily rouged and his lashes are painted. "God," thinks Nora, "children know something they can't tell; they like Red Riding Hood and the wolf in bed!" (p. 79)

The Doctor's strongest weapon against suffering is talk, "which he uses, not to show a way to salvation, but merely to distract, and to give the listener a sense of dignity which will make him more able to endure."[27] Nora has come to him for advice on her collapsing relationship with Robin, but the Doctor can only show her how to bear its loss. The great monologue which then rolls from his mind is compared by Joseph Frank to the religious sonnets of John Donne;[28] it is one of the inspirational factors in a limerick by Ezra Pound;[29] and it is an important part of the subject for the next chapter of this thesis.

"The night has been going on for a long time," (p. 82) says the Doctor, and "the tree of night is the hardest tree to mount, the dourest tree to scale, the most difficult of branch." (p. 83) This is not only an example of more treewood imagery; it is also a punning comment on Nora as well as his earlier reminder of this particular night in the

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[27]Williamson, "Divided Image," p. 74.

[28]Frank, "Spatial Form," p. 450.

[29]D. D. Paige, ed. Letters of Ezra Pound (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1950), p. 286. Mr. Pound remarked in a limerick that "Her Blubbery prose/had no fingers or toes."

"branchy" pitch of fall. Mr. Williamson points out that Matthew's talk undergoes variations according to the person to whom it is addressed; thus the universal malady of mankind is expressed by him in terms of "night" and "love" when he speaks to Nora and in terms of "the past" when he talks with the pseudo-Baron.[30]

The great monologue can do nothing for Nora's predicament, however, and in this light Matthew fails. His final deterioration is a culmination of many of these minor failures, collected in the first three chapters in his dealings with Felix, Nora, and Jenny. His dismay reaches reckless proportions when he realizes that it was in fact he who introduced Jenny to Robin, although it is equally true that he introduced all three to the reader. At one point he shouts at Nora, "Oh...a broken heart have you! I have falling arches, flying dandruff, a floating kidney, shattered nerves and a broken heart." (p. 154) Nora can only leave in a state of pious confusion, and Matthew, a broken man, returns to his favorite warm bar. "May they all be damned! The people in my life who have made my life miserable...Why doesn't anyone know when everything is over except me?" (p. 165) His final drunken words, in the next-to-final chapter, sum up the preceding events, foretell of the horror to come, and become a final verdict on himself: "I've not only lived my

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[30] Williamson, "Divided Image," p. 73.

life for nothing, but I've told it for nothing...Now...the end - mark my words - now <u>nothing but wrath and weeping</u>!" (p. 166)

Just as the Doctor predicted earlier - "Nora will leave that girl some day; but though those two are buried at opposite ends of the earth, one dog will find them both." (p. 106) - the last chapter shows Robin transformed into a mad dog while Nora watches in dismay. Robin returns to the state of the violent beast; the "incautious sleep" overcomes her, and she is left "lying out, her hands behind her" (p. 170) in the same position that she occupied when she was introduced. She is driven into her sleep by the selfish exploitation of others, and they, in turn, are destroyed. It is altogether ironic that the incident occurs in a small chapel. The Doctor, finding himself too deeply involved in their sufferings, makes a final judgment on his time: "What a damnable year, what a bloody time." (p. 165)

The basic unifying factor of this novel, then, is the referencing and cross referencing of certain recognizable motifs which display spatially an expression of doom. Each character has a particular epithet - Bow Down, <u>la somnambule</u>, Night Watch, The Squatter - and each becomes his individual interpretation of a few key images and motifs - night, wood, descent, and beasts - which are scattered deftly throughout the novel. A great amount of subtle punning is evident - it

is usually performed by the Doctor - and looming above this is the formidible pun itself, "nightwood," which can mean night "madness" in a Middle English and Elizabethan context.[31]

Although there is a discernable pattern to this kind of madness, Miss Barnes is still controlling our spatial apprehensions in other ways as the novel progresses. While these motifs and images pile upon one another, we keep receiving informative comments and poetic monologues from Dr. Matthew; it is he who generously helps the reader through the maze of confusing relationships, yet in the process we watch him literally drown himself. To understand the Doctor's remarkable position in the novel - both as a character and as a narrator - is the subject of the following chapter.

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[31]The Oxford English Dictionary, ed. James A. H. Murray et. al., X (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), p. 265.

CHAPTER III

NARRATION

Doctor Matthew

In part II of Lawrence Durrell's Justine the narrator offers the reader his earliest recollections of that protozoic and mythological profile, Scobie, the retired "pirate" who resides in Alexandria; he recalls that on the very first occasion of their encounter Scobie treated him to a "reedy rendering of 'Watchman, What of the Night?'"[1] Although most readers probably accepted this as a mere rendering of a common hymn, some may have recognized Scobie's ostensible source, Chapter Five of Nightwood. Add to this the unusual circumstances of his death which are finally revealed in Balthazar,[2] and we can infer not only the influence of Nightwood upon Durrell but the deathless demise of Dr. Matthew O'Connor as well.

As a fictitious character, Dr. Matthew appears to have evolved and matured with the early writings of Miss Barnes. That there was a living prototype for him, however, is certainly evident from an evening in Paris remembered by Edward Dahlberg:

[1]Lawrence Durrell, Justine (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1957), p. 123.

[2]Lawrence Durrell, Balthazar (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1958), p. 170.

> After leaving Italy I returned to Paris - to the Dome, the Select, and the Coupole. There was no place else to go. One night I sat at the Coupole until three in the morning with Hart Crane and the quondam surgeon Djuna Barnes describes in Nightwood. The doctor told tales that were as fabulous as Ophir. He spoke of tars habited as women and with such names as Hazel Dawn and Eve Fig, Eve signifying the serpent and Fig being the symbol of the womb. When I left the Coupole the surgeon held my hand closely in his and, telling me what innocent teeth I had, made a proposal which I declined with punctilio.[3]

As we mentioned in Chapter One, in the early story, "Aller et Retour," (A Book), there is a foreshadowing of the Doctor in the character of Madame von Bartmann. During her brief visit with her daughter, Richter, she seizes the occasion of a dark evening to give advice: "I liked to go out in the evening...because I'd known it such a little while, and after me it would exist so long." (Selected Works, p. 9) This is an intimation of the Doctor's opening lines to Nora in "Watchman, What of the Night?" - "...for the night has been going on for a long time...and the tree of night is the hardest to climb..." (pp. 83-84) Madame von Bartmann then shifts from the wisdom of her reminiscences to a mode of prophetic imperative: "You must know everything and then begin. You must have a great understanding, or

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[3]Edward Dahlberg, Alms for Oblivion (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1964), p. 56. Mr. Dahlberg's encounter with the Doctor is quite similar in circumstance to that of Peggy Guggenheim's with Robin's model. (See Footnote #21, Chapter II)

accomplish a fall...Man is rotten from the start...Rotten with virtue and with vice. He is strangled by the two and made nothing." (Selected Works, p. 9) In a similar manner we have seen the Doctor warn the reader - and Nora - of the disturbing alchemy which results from assuming such a "great understanding." He then turns to warn himself: "..the reason the doctor knows everything is because he's been everywhere at the wrong time and has now become anonymous." (p. 82) The Madame - who we begin to realize is anonymous also - dismisses her daughter and rolls up "in a bed with a canopy of linen roses, frilled and smelling of lavender." (Selected Works, p. 10) With very little altered we observe the same scene masqueraded in Nightwood when Nora enters the Doctor's bedroom and finds him bewigged, rouged, and perfumed. (pp. 78-79)

In Ryder Dr. Matthew O'Connor is authentic. As a family physician to the Ryder family, he is the source of much advice and some delicate humor. A young protagonist of the novel, Wendell Ryder, comes to him for advice just as Nora does in Nightwood. It should be noted, however, that the Doctor's pose here is not as accomplished formalistically as it is in the later novel. Here he is a character; in Nightwood, as we shall see, he is a character who will perform other important functions as a narrator.

In the chapter entitled "The Soliloquy of Dr. Matthew," we become acquainted with his tendencies toward digression.

The soliloquy is actually his thoughts "on the way to and from the confessional," and they reveal the basic and well known traits of his character:

> ...and a great peace is in me and my tears are caught up in light and heat and expectation, and my feet go with me, saying, Matthew O'Connor, you'll come to no bad end, for I'm a woman of a few thousand gestures and a hundred words, and they are going one by one into the ranks of the seraphim, and amid the mighty army of the church, and one by one they'll fly away into forgiveness...redeemed into the kingdom of heaven, and who am I that I should be damned forever and forever, Amen? (Ryder, p. 177)

Here the Doctor's Catholicism - which he will have recourse to constantly in Nightwood - rests alongside his homosexuality - "It's always been my wish...to be called Hesper, first star of the evening." (Ryder, p. 156) We see him also as a supplier of sage advice, especially to children. In Ryder these idiosyncracies betray his apparent isolation, which is underlined finally by the realization that no one in the novel treats him in any way other than as a harmless - but perhaps wise - eccentric. Nevertheless whenever he is presented, there is an authorial tone of awe and hesitant respect; this is obvious in his own chapter, "The Soliloquy," where he is officially his own audience, but it is also quite evident in a later chapter, "Three Great Moments of History," when he bewails his anonymity to Wendell Ryder:

> "...what you see," said he, wiping away a bright tear that threatened to wend its way into his mustache, "is one of those creatures who have their bottom up instead of their head...It is a rare case...Its another mystery of man...I can lament as I run. (Ryder, p. 312-313)

In Nightwood we witness him brought to a final maturity when he is forced out of his insulated reveries by abrupt contact with the other characters. He complains of this to Nora: "I was doing well enough...until you kicked my stone over, and out I came, all moss and eyes; and here I sit, as naked as only those things can be whose houses have been torn away from them to make a holiday." (p. 153)

The Doctor is introduced early in Nightwood at a party which the Baron Felix is attending. Important here is the manner in which he is presented: "He was taking the part of host, the Count not yet having made his appearance, and was telling of himself, for he considered himself the most unusual predicament." (p. 13) His role as "host" has a double meaning, for although he presides at this minor party, he is also an amiable guide through most of the novel. We have mentioned earlier that his pose resembles that of Tiresias; it must be added here that he manages with expertise every situation but his own, and this will be his nemesis.

As "host" for the novel he creates proper apprehensions by making well-timed and informative asides: "There's something missing and whole about the Baron Felix"; "Fate and

entanglement have begun again"; "To Robin Vote, she can't be more than twenty."; "There goes the dismantled,"; and "Love of woman for woman, what insane passion for unmitigated anguish and motherhood brought that into the world?" (p. 75) We sometimes witness these asides extending themselves into analogous vignettes - usually grotesque - which float away facilely from the original source and offer a betraying glimpse of the Doctor's many-sided sentiments. Such is the case with the tongue-in-cheek digression about the legless Mademoiselle Basquette. (p. 26) Occasionally, within those digressions there is a strain of black humor, as in the last stand of the Tuppenny Uprights under London Bridge (p. 130) -"ladies of the <u>haute</u> taking their last stroll," explains the Doctor - and sometimes, as in his encounter in church with Tiny O'Toole, the humor is plainly laughable: "'Have I been simple like an animal, God,' he asks, 'or have I been thinking?'" (p. 133)

The Doctor can also be observed setting the scenery of the novel. He shuffles characters in and out of his favorite café - a setting for probing discussions and more asides - and he makes ominous predictions for future scenes - "Nora will leave that girl some day...one dog will find them both." (p. 106) In one place he even commands a carriage loaded with the characters of the novel to invade the principal metaphor upon which the book is based: "Then waving his

hand in a gesture of abandon, he added: 'Where to but the woods, the sweet woods of Paris! Fais le tour du Bois!" (p. 72)[4]

We have mentioned earlier the rapid shift of scene - closely related to the cinema - which he supervises with ease; he is equally enterprising and skillful in his method of staging. "Stagetricks have been taken from life," (p. 142) he announces, and in the remarkable scene where Robin is first presented awakening from her fainting spell we can observe this in operation - through the eyes of the Baron Felix, who is hiding behind a potted plant:

> Experiencing a double confusion, Felix now saw the Doctor, partially hidden by the screen beside the bed, make the movements common to the "dumbfounder," or man of magic; the gesture of one who, in preparing the audience for a miracle, must pretend that there is nothing to hide; the whole purpose that of making the back and elbows move in a series of "honesties," while in reality the most flagrant part of the hoax is being prepared. (pp. 35-36)

His performance here reflects the two aspects of his role in the novel, and both are of some consequence. As a character the Doctor's actions are quite revealing: "Felix saw that this was for the purpose of snatching a few drops from a perfume bottle picked up from the night table; of

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[4]The Doctor's signal here is close to the gesture of the mounted policeman - seen in the closing lines of The Sun Also Rises (p. 247) - who raises his baton to prepare us for Jacob Barnes' loaded last line.

dusting his darkly bristled chin...drawing a line of rouge across his lips...in order to have it seem that their sudden embellishment was a visitation of nature." (p. 36)[5] In one sense the reader suspends - spatially - Felix's observations here until Nora enters the Doctor's squalid bedroom later and finds him in this particular shade of make-up. In this manner he is delicately equipping himself - and the reader - for that important later scene. Yet as a host and special kind of narrator his gestures point to other consequences which are equally notable. This is actually the scene where Robin is introduced to the reader, and out of necessity it is the Doctor who must sink backstage. He performs a minute pantomime back there, however, which mimics the earlier graphic entrance of Robin: he perfumes himself ("The perfume that her body exhaled..."); he paints his face ("Her flesh was the texture of plant life..."); and he anticipates a natural effect from this "sudden embellishment" ("About her head there was an effulgence as of phosphorus glowing..."). Thus the Doctor "prepares the audience" with his stagetricks. And from this scene both he and Robin will proceed to develop passively their own particular tragedies.

Structurally the character-narrator can serve as a kind of stage manager, making various comments to his audience -

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[5]The Doctor also pockets a hundred franc note lying on the table.

the reader - and the characters of the novel's action. In Nightwood this situation is made considerably complex by Miss Barnes' permitting circumstances to control the fate of her actor. As a character the Doctor becomes entangled in the crossed relationships of Felix, Robin, Nora, and Jenny; this is altogether ironic, for it is he, to a large degree, who warns the reader of the fate of these liaisons. Disguised as this cautious narrator, however, his asides, pantomimes, and digressions become an object lesson in betrayal.

This is accomplished in two stages. At first, in "Watchman, What of the Night?" the Doctor uses Nora's concern for Robin as a pretext for lamentation on the night.[6] With confidence he becomes the actor-prophet, invoking his muse - "Ah, good Mother mine, Notre Dame de bonne Garde! Intercede for me now." (p. 82) - and talking glibly of his favorite subject - "So, I say, what of the night, the terrible night..." (p. 89) But it is also here that the Doctor-as-character and the Doctor-as-commentator are blended by Miss Barnes into a remarkable *ethos* which is poetic.

> I'm an angel on all fours, with a child's feet behind me, seeking my people that have never been made, going down face foremost, drinking the waters of night at the water hole of the

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[6]Kenneth Burke, "Version, Con-, Per-, and In-," *Southern Review*, II (Spring, 1966), p. 346.

> damned, and I go into the waters, up to my heart, the terrible waters! (p. 95)

In "Go Down, Matthew," the Doctor's betrayal is complete. As we suggested earlier he fails to assist those who come to him for advice, and this, in turn, strains his remarkable talent as a character to bear wounds. He finally asks Nora, "Do you think there is no lament in this world but your own? Is there not a forebearing saint somewhere?" (p. 154) The question is rhetorical, intentionally so, for what he desires is recongition from Nora - and his readers - that he might at least survive the novel as its forebearing saint, its benevolent commentator. Her silence commands, however, and his lamentations begin. His earlier pretext for lament - Nora's concern for Robin - is replaced with the lamentable and familiar theme of aloneness and subsequent decay. He becomes, truly, "the other woman that God forgot." (p. 143)

Conclusion

Dr. Matthew O'Connor, then, can be observed as the darling of a great deal of Djuna Barnes' works. In her early stories there are essential themes of his which are noticeable even though his existence as a character may not have been contemplated. We have noted, for example, a child's ominous exclamation - "O nuit effroyable!" - and a mother's foreshadowing remarks to her which befit the architecture of his

later oratory. In Ryder he is a veritable character. We can amass not only many of his peculiar characteristics here, but we can also come to know Miss Barnes' great respect for him and his structural possibilities. His soliloquies in Ryder underline his faculty for penetrating observation which will be exploited in her later writings.[7]

In Nightwood the Doctor participates as a waggish host as well as a character of tragic dimension. As a narrator he gives punning asides, spins fabulous stories, directs the staging, and provides pretexts for lamentation. In a formalistic sense his position is complementary to the requirements of spatial form, for he can regulate much of the imagery into spatial patterns, and he can deposit apprehensions at the author's will.[8] As a character, however, he embraces tragedy with the others, and he contributes to a collective theme of lament which pervades the entire novel. In his

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[7]The Doctor's similarities to Jack Blow, the "coachman" in The Antiphon (1958) reflect a continuation of the author's interest in him. Jack plays to the hilt the role of the Elizabethan wise fool, yet in the last scene his real identity as an unfortunate son is disclosed. The entire play is not unlike the "Mousetrap" scene in Hamlet; Jack baits his trap just as shrewdly as the young Hamlet.

[8]In John Hawkes' The Lime Twig (New York: New Directions, 1961), Sidney Slyter's gossip column, "Sidney Slyter Says," opens each of the novel's chapters with information pertinent to the plot. At times Sidney will even gossip about the book's characters. In his first column, which opens Chapter One, he tells the reader: "So keep a lookout for me. Because Sidney Slyter will be looking out for you..." (p. 3)

introduction to Nightwood T. S. Eliot comes very close to defining this condition:

> ...the characters are all knotted together, as people are in real life, by what we call chance or destiny, rather than by deliberate choice of each other's company...We come to know them through their effect on each other and what they say to each other about the others...The miseries that people suffer through their particular abnormalities of temperament are visible on the surface: the deeper design is that of human misery and bondage which is universal. (xv)

Since Nightwood is usually ignored by the scholars and critics of American literature, the novel is rarely brought into a classroom for discussion. Nevertheless students manage to read it, and young writers continue to praise its poetic qualities. Hopefully someone in the near future may prepare the long overdue work which will give her and her writings the proper position they deserve in twentieth-century American literature. The book remains to be written.

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