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The Fragmented World of Djuna Barnes: A Kohutian and Bakhtinian Perspective

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The Fragmented World of Djuna Barnes: A Kohutian and
Bakhtinian Perspective

by

Rita M. Thomson

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

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Vita

The author, Rita M. Thomson, received the degree of Bachelor of Science from Loyola University in Chicago in June 1961, graduating cum laude. In January, 1964, she received the degree of Master of Arts in English from the same institution.

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Introduction

Noted for the enigmatic novel Nightwood, published in 1936, Djuna Barnes is an established but little studied writer. Until recently, criticism of Barnes has been sparse and she often has been ignored or completely omitted from standard literary histories. Contemporaries such as Joyce, Hemingway, and Stein have overshadowed her accomplishments, yet she is praised by other writers as a writer of a great American novel.

Such criticism as has treated Barnes has generally seen her as a minor figure who produced one substantial work, Nightwood, which is seen as obscure and confusing, albeit a masterpiece. Even the limited criticism she has received has not always been positive. Some is negative, such as that of Walter Allen, who dismissed Nightwood as "American Gothic engrafted on French decadence" (180), while some is equivocal, affirming the importance of her work, yet declining to discuss it. For instance, the title of Melvin Friedman's Stream of Consciousness: A Study in Literary Method would seem to demand some discussion of Barnes, and she is indeed mentioned in the last pages; however, at this point Friedman says, "As to the future of the novel itself, we should not be surprised if Djuna Barnes' Nightwood (1936)

becomes an increasingly more important book, one which may usurp the enviable position shared by Proust and Joyce in the first half of the 20th century as the inevitable model for all new fiction" (261).

Barnes, then, is positioned in the center of importance and relegated to the fringe. Until recently, such sleight of hand has been the hallmark of critical comment, for critics both claim her importance and condemn her by their silence. The critical split surrounding her works is curious. The reasons often used to explain this critical split are Barnes' use of controversial topics such as sexual deviance, her obscure style, and society's marginalization of women writers. Other reasons were Barnes' own inability to cooperate with the exigencies of the publishing world and her aversion to the personal exposure necessary to forward her own reputation. Whatever the reason, Barnes diminished in reputation while many of her contemporaries in modernism grew in stature and she is only just now beginning to receive critical attention. However, before we explore this attention and suggest a critical structure with which to view Barnes' work, some background is essential.

Barnes' life was as unconventional as her books. Barnes was born in 1892 in Cornwall-On-Hudson, New York, to a family dominated by the father's individualistic philosophy. The children were educated at home to avoid the conformism of public education. Barnes' father used his

belief in free love to justify his sexually promiscuous behavior. Not only did he engage in numerous affairs, he also kept a mistress and a second family. When all of his free love philosophy and high ideals collapsed in the face of the law, he divorced his wife to marry his mistress. This complex family situation, coupled with Barnes' disillusionment with and anger towards her father, furnish much of the fuel for Ryder and The Antiphon.

Although usually considered a one-book author, Barnes was prolific. She spent her early career in Greenwich Village as a successful journalist and artist, making one foray into avant garde drama produced by the Provincetown Players. A chapbook, The Book of Repulsive Women, a book of poetry and sketches, was published in the Village in 1915. Subsequently, she joined the many expatriates in Paris. An early work, A Book, published in 1923, was a collection of short stories, plays, poems, and sketches, most of which had previously appeared in various magazines. Many of the short stories were reprinted again in her later collections. This early work, published thirteen years before Nightwood, shows a stark, unromantic world very similar to that found in Nightwood. In 1928 she published Ryder, an experimental work in its mixture of literary styles--poetry, prose, a one act-play, and illustrations-- which became a best seller. In it Barnes parodies the Bible, Chaucer, Elizabethan English, Restoration comedy, and more, in a comic family

story of sexuality, blame, and guilt. Ryder is autobiographical in its story of the promiscuous father, warring wife and mistress, domineering grandmother, and assorted children. In the same year Barnes published Ladies' Almanack, a satire about the Parisian literary salon of Natalie Barney. Also, in 1928 many of the pieces from A Book, plus three other stories, were reprinted in A Night Among the Horses.

Nightwood was published in 1936, with a glowing introduction by T.S. Eliot, and has always been accorded the status of a minor masterpiece. But Nightwood seemed to end Barnes' productivity. The years of reclusive living and literary silence following Nightwood were broken only by the appearance, in 1958, of The Antiphon, a poetic drama which treated as tragedy much the same story as the comic Ryder; it received only one staged reading in this country and one stage production based on a translation by Dag Hammarskjold in Sweden. In 1962, a collection of her short stories, most of which had been previously printed in A Night Among the Horses, was published as Spillway. Also in 1962, Nightwood, The Antiphon, and Spillway were published as her collected works. Ryder was reissued in 1979. Creatures in an Alphabet, which contains short poems and illustrations of the letters, was published in 1982. Recently, two posthumous collections have appeared. In 1982 her early short stories were collected and published under the title

Smoke; in 1985 a collection of interviews of the newsworthy and famous, which she did as a newspaper writer, was published under the title Interviews. Barnes died in 1982.

Although Barnes received little critical attention until the late fifties, her work has never been out of print, unlike many women writers whose unavailable works are now being reissued by feminist presses, and her work has always been treated as a serious and important literary endeavor.

In 1975 Douglas Messerli published an authoritative bibliography of works by and about Barnes which runs to an impressive 735 entries. But this total is misleading, since more than a third of these entries are works by her, a substantial number of which are single newspaper and magazine articles, stories, and poems, and, although Messerli's bibliography lists a substantial number of book entries about Barnes, a large number of these references to Barnes refer to her only in passing, or as part of a larger story. She is simply mentioned as a member of the expatriate group, or her presence or activities are noted in a line or a paragraph without elaboration. Even the books which do contain criticism of her work often have only a few paragraphs on her. In a like manner, she has been given little attention in standard histories of American literature and is not even mentioned in many. About twenty books deal with her at length.

The same is true of articles included in Messerli's bibliography, most of which mention Barnes only briefly. If one looks at critical articles by date, there is some early attention, later decline, and a gradual increase in interest. This pattern reflects her prominent and active life before 1930, her relative obscurity and reclusive life style in the thirties and forties, and a gradual critical upsurge in interest in her works, beginning in the very late fifties. The exception is a large number of book reviews which establish the contemporary importance of her work other than Nightwood. Messerli found thirty-seven reviews which concern Nightwood, but her earlier work, A Book, elicited twenty-two reviews, many of which recognized both her unique gifts of language and the difficulty of her work, and Ryder, which also preceeded Nightwood, was a best seller and had garnered thirty-nine reviews. A scattering of foreign reviews indicate some interest abroad as does the fact that Nightwood was translated into seven languages, A Night Among the Horses was translated into German and Swedish, and The Antiphon was translated into Swedish by Dag Hammarskjold. Her mention in books and articles and in languages other than English signals a small but significant world-wide reputation.

The most famous critical comment on Barnes is T. S. Eliot's introduction to Nightwood. His comments guaranteed Nightwood's status as an important work of literature.

Nightwood, in Eliot's words, "is so good a novel that only sensibilities trained on poetry can wholly appreciate it" (228). He says the reader will find "the great achievement of a style, the beauty of phrasing, the brilliance of wit and characterisation, and a quality of horror and doom very nearly related to that of Elizabethan tragedy" (231). His critical comments also set the approach for subsequent criticism, slanting it towards style and language, although his comments ranged far more deeply into philosophical questions involving character and meaning which he called "the deeper design of human misery and bondage" (230).

Only in the late 1970's did the first full-length books begin to appear. More are now in the planning stages. The first was James Scott's Djuna Barnes, published in 1976. It analyzed all of Barnes' works and provided biographical detail. In 1977 Louis Kannestine's The Art of Djuna Barnes: Duality and Damnation appeared. Kannestine makes a case for viewing all of her writing as a continuum rather than seeing Nightwood as the unexpected aberration of a conventional writer. Both books are comprehensive in treating her literary production from the earliest newspaper work to her final play and trace the connecting links between her work, which varied wildly in genre and tone, and included poetry, plays, newspaper work, short fiction, a comic novel, satire, the experimental novel form used in Nightwood, and the poetic drama, The Antiphon. The third full-length work is

Andrew Field's Djuna: The Formidable Miss Barnes, which was published in 1983. This is both a biographical and critical study with much new information available because he was the first to gain access to her private papers. Most recently, a collection of critical essays, entitled Silence and Power: A Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes edited by Mary Lynn Broe, was published in 1991 and a significant number of very recent dissertations and articles have begun to explore the congruence between Barnes, feminism, and post-structuralism.

While the latest works have begun to explore her work in relation to recent critical theory, major gaps still exist. There are psychological and critical theories as yet unexplored in relation to Barnes which allow us new insights. Recent psychological studies of narcissistic disorders, for example, offer a way of analyzing her fictional characters, who seem resistant to usual methods of analyzing character, and recent investigations into the grotesque illuminate her obsession with the "night," that is with images of death, disease, excrement, sexuality, and the nightmare of history and time. To examine these obsessions is to examine the structure of language and of human perception, anchored as they are in time and space. Barnes wrote in a time of tremendous dislocation of traditions of social class, economic stability, moral values, and a time which saw the emergence of disquieting psychological and philosophical ideas with implications for human behavior.

The theories of narcissism and the grotesque explain much of what has been formerly inexplicable in Barnes' work.

The uses the psychological theories of narcissism have for literary criticism have only just begun to be apparent. Lynn Layton and Barbara Schapiro's Narcissism and the Text, J. Brooks Bouson's The Empathic Reader, Judith Kegan Gardiner's Rhys, Stead, Lessing and the Politics of Empathy, and Jeffrey Berman's Narcissism and the Novel are forerunners in what promises to be a valuable new approach to literary analysis based on theories of narcissism. Such works have begun to recognize the abundance of narcissistic characters in modern literature and the unique insights available when they are approached from a Kohutian perspective.

To treat Barnes' work in its relationship to narcissism is to deal mainly with characters and their interrelationships; however, to understand her characters' struggles to make sense of their lives, we also need to focus on Barnes' style. Thus, we need to examine her use of parody, the non-linear plot, the absurd, and the ideology implicit in her obsession with the "night," that is, with a pattern of imagery which seeks to make conscious what has been repressed. Such a focus leads to both the grotesque and the unconscious.

While Barnes may not belong as obviously to the category of the grotesque writer as some, such as Kafka or

Dostoyevsky, there is a consistent use of both grotesque imagery and action in all her work. In Ryder, there is the description of Kate Careless's introduction to the household and the battle between wife and mistress. In Nightwood there is the description of the circus personages, the description of Dr. Mathew O'Connor's room, his grotesque stories, and his descriptions of the night. In The Antiphon there is the bizarre setting and the sons' attack upon the mother and the final death scene.

My aim in this dissertation is to examine Barnes' work through the theory of narcissism, as developed by Heinz Kohut, and the theories of the grotesque, particularly as developed by Mikhail Bakhtin in his work on Rabelais. Barnes' writing is peopled with fragmented characters for which the psychology of Heinz Kohut gives a satisfying explanation, and her use of a grotesque which focuses on images of debasement is illuminated by Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque and, in turn, suggests further implications for the modern grotesque which are undeveloped by Bakhtin. Because Barnes' work struggles with questions of self and other and individual fragmentation, this gives a particular urgency to her attempt to grapple with ultimate questions of truth in a world of shattered religious and community ties. That Barnes' unorthodox handling of language and conventions results in works which are particularly open to multiple and often contradictory

interpretations is apparent in the critical conversation surrounding her work. The use of Kohut and Bakhtin offers a satisfying alternative way of viewing the texts and understanding some of these contradictions. In order to explore how Kohut's and Bakhtin's theoretical structures can give us insights into Barnes' work, a more detailed explanation of both Kohutian narcissism and Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque is necessary.

While narcissism is the term used by Freud to describe a self-involved, unanalyzable personality, the concept of narcissism was relatively undeveloped by Freud and the narcissistic disorder seemed to pose a less widespread problem than the neuroses with which he primarily dealt. The recent, widespread psychoanalytical interest in narcissism is said to reflect the fact that the number of people suffering from narcissistic character defects and character disorders has increased while the more traditional complaints on which Freud concentrated have decreased. And because more recent theory is less pessimistic about the prognosis for the narcissist than was Freud, psychoanalytic investigations into the narcissistic disorder have become more common; moreover, with the recognition that such people can form a transference relationship with a therapist, a fact denied by Freud, they are being treated by psychoanalysts. While narcissism is often a term which is used loosely, the narcissistic disorder is generally held to

be preoedipal in origin and is reflective of a disturbance in the sense of self, characterized by a fragile self-cohesion. The two major theorists on narcissism are Heinz Kohut and Otto Kernberg. Kernberg is more pessimistic about the progress of the narcissist in therapy and the strains such clients put on the therapeutic process. Kohut is more optimistic in his belief that the narcissistically deficient individual can build missing self-structure. He posits a dual bi-polar formation of the self which conceptualizes the process into two clearly differentiated avenues of development.

Kohut sees the formation of the self as an achievement which is attained through the actions and responses of others in two different and special ways. In Kohutian terms, this sense of self is attained through two avenues in an ongoing process, thus allowing each person a built-in double chance to achieve the cohesive sense of self necessary for joyous, affirmative living. Kohut evolved the term "selfobject" to describe an intimate relationship in which an "object"--that is, a person--seems only vaguely to be external to the self. The term "object," which Kohut adopts from object relations theory, refers not to a relationship to a material object but to another person--an object other than self--and implies an ability to differentiate between self and others. The "selfobject," in contrast, is a person experienced as part of the self or as

a need-fulfilling object.

Kohut's term "selfobject" indicates the ambiguous position of the early love objects of the child, usually parents, who are perceived as both within and as separate from, and thus uncontrollable by, the self. "Selfobjects are objects which we experience as parts of our self; the expected control over them is, therefore, closer to the concept of the control which the grown-up expects to have over his own body and mind than to the concept of the control which he expects to have over any other" (Kohut and Wolf 414). This term, "selfobject," was specifically devised by Kohut to describe the unique position of those others whose relationship to us is so indescribably intimate that no term like "other" does it justice. It is telling that the term evolved through Kohut's writing from "self object" to a hyphenated "self-object" and, finally in his last works, to "selfobject," linguistically mirroring Kohut's struggle to describe the nature of this intermingling of self and other. For Kohut, the self does not just passively accumulate through a process of taking bits and pieces from the other but actively internalizes and changes what is taken. What accumulates through the relationships with selfobjects is transmuted into a unique self-structure by the individual. Kohut uses the term "transmuting internalization" to explain this process. Miriam Elson defines this as "the process through which a

function formerly provided by another (selfobject) is taken into the self through optimal mirroring, interaction, and frustration" and then the "healthy functioning self" is not a replica of selfobjects but a unique self" (252).

Relationships with selfobjects establish a coherent self through two avenues of development: the mirroring selfobject performs a confirming function and the idealizable selfobject allows for a merging with the parental imago. This affirmative mirroring is accomplished in early childhood by a parent who, by responding to and mirroring the child's grandiosity, helps the child consolidate a resilient sense of self. In early childhood, too, the parent will provide an idealizable selfobject which will allow the child to merge with parental strength and soothe its anxiety. For the growing child, the idealizable selfobject represents larger-than-life aspirations, virtues, and ideals which provide a source of values and inspiration. This twofold development allows a double chance at the formation of a healthy sense of self. Even with traumatic failure on the part of the mirroring selfobject who fails to reflect and affirm the child's grandiosity, an idealizable selfobject can be utilized to create a sense of inner strength. After early childhood, such selfobject utilization continues and a more mature use of sustaining selfobjects occurs. Kohut extends the implications of the selfobject process to include selfobject use throughout life

even in relatively healthy people with a firm sense of self. These mature sustaining selfobjects--that is, the mirroring of identity and idealized role models--have social implications, since Kohut suggests that aspects of class, culture, and history can function as sustaining selfobjects. These are considerations which Bakhtin would consider primary.

The failure of the parental selfobjects comes in two varieties. On the one hand, the failure may be with the mirroring parental figure who, fragmented and unable to respond appropriately to the child's prideful accomplishments, does not allow the child to see himself or herself as a person of accomplishment and competence. Parents who are narcissistic themselves will be impaired in offering this early mirroring whereas parents with a firm sense of self will engender a healthy sense of self because their responsiveness to the child's first endeavors enables primitive grandiosity to eventually become the self confidence needed to meet life's challenges. If these archaic grandiose needs are not met in childhood, the unmirrored self of the adult will continue to seek mirroring responses from others: such individuals are impelled to seek the admiration of others. On the other hand, the child who is failed by the idealizable selfobject has not been allowed to merge with the seemingly omnipotent adult who alleviated the child's anxiety by his or her competence and

calm strength. This seemingly super powerful adult allows the child to internalize the ability to do some self-soothing and develop a sense of inner strength. A parent who is too anxious or too fragmented to allow a merger may leave a child endlessly searching for an idealizable figure in adulthood or may overburden the child with overstimulation and anxiety.

If either a satisfactory mirroring or idealizable selfobject is available, some coherent sense of self is produced, but, when the process is severely derailed, a person is stuck somewhere far behind in the development of a coherent self, searching for innumerable ways to fabricate a sense of authenticity and wholeness. The narcissistic disorder, then, can be defined "by the fact that the self has not been solidly established . . . its cohesion and firmness depend on the presence of a self-object (on the development of a self-object transference), and that it responds to the loss of the self-object with simple enfeeblement, various regressions, and fragmentation" (Kohut, Restoration 137). The narcissistically defective person lacks a firm sense of self because the process of self-formation has been derailed by the failures of the parental selfobjects. Such an individual feels fragmented, is prone to feelings of emptiness, of lifelessness, disequilibrium, depression, and depletion. If a firm sense of self is not attained in childhood, the individual as an

adult will attempt to fill in missing self-structure as he or she forever grapples with a sense of fragmentation and inauthenticity.

Because not all parental selfobjects fail to the same degree, the narcissistically injured person can be left with varying degrees of disability. There are the psychoses in which detachment from the self is severe and permanent. There are the borderlines in which the sense of self is severely disarranged but in which there is enough sense of self to keep the permanent breakdown of psychosis at bay. Then there are those whom Kohut finds that analysis might help: individuals who, though they are deemed to have behavior disorders or personality disorders, have a sufficient sense of self so that they may, through the therapeutic situation, acquire the missing self-structure. Kohutian theory, which focuses on the formation of the self, shows how the failure of that process leads to problems which plague the adult. Narcissistically defective individuals, such as we see in Nightwood, continue a torturing search for confirmation or sustaining relationships with idealizable others because of the failure of early selfobjects. As Bouson remarks in The Empathic Reader, the narcissistically damaged individual "spends his life attempting to repair his defective self, to discover, in an empathic, self-supportive, and self-enhancing milieu, the glue that mends, that binds into a cohesive whole, his

broken self" (13).

Of course, just as no one is perfectly healthy, no one has achieved a perfectly cohesive self; furthermore, each person's self is deficient in a unique way. Then, too, even the reasonably cohesive self is vulnerable to the misfortunes which occur during a lifetime. Events such as ill health or loss of prestige can severely stress even the strongest individual, and a person, who may have seemed to have sufficient self-structure in stable times, may be seen to be narcissistically vulnerable in more difficult times. Such concepts as the narcissistically deficient self or the cohesive self with its healthy narcissism are generalizations which mask these endless individual varieties. Sufficient self-structure acquired in early childhood from "archaic selfobjects" is necessary for the individual to make use of others for mature mirroring and idealizable needs in later life. Kohut calls these mature selfobjects "sustaining" to distinguish them from those of early childhood. Since the need for sustaining selfobjects continues throughout life, the lover, teacher, friend, or mentor in adulthood may all provide the type of mature mirroring or idealizable selfobject functions which sustain the self. "I have no hesitation," remarks Kohut in The Restoration of the Self, "in claiming that there is no mature love in which the love object is not also a self-object. . . . There is no love relationship without

mutual (self-esteem enhancing) mirroring and idealization" (122).

The person who reaches adulthood without a healthy sense of self is always vulnerable to severe fragmentation and will spend life operating from an agenda which seeks "the aspirations of the nuclear self--the need to confirm the reality of the self through the appropriate responses of the idealized self-object" (Kohut, Restoration 136). For such a person, compulsive sexuality expresses narcissistic needs: an attempt to restore a beleaguered self, a need for sensation to counteract inner deadness and fragmentation. Sexual desire, then, cannot be satisfied because it masks the real need for a sense of authentic self. Another scenario is that a narcissistically vulnerable person may be extremely grandiose, but the grandiosity can deflate suddenly, leaving the person devastatingly lacking in self-esteem. Also, the understimulated child may, as an adult, lack vitality and a sense of aliveness and may use any stimuli to create a sense of excitement and mask depression. Stimuli such as sexual activities and perversions, drugs, alcohol, gambling, or hypersociability are common.

Although working within the Freudian tradition, Kohut eventually came to view his theory as providing unique insight into the Freudian psychoanalytic premises of the primacy of the Oedipal involvement in the maturational

process, the psychology of drives, and our mastery of them. In Kohut's view, "The pathogenic Oedipus complex is embedded in an oedipal self-selfobject disturbance." In his view "beneath lust and hostility there is a layer of depression and of diffuse narcissistic rage" (How 5). Those individuals who develop a firm cohesive self can tolerate the Oedipal crisis without destructiveness. From Kohut's point of view, destructive, uncontrollable behaviors are disintegration products of the fragmented self, not innate drives. He takes issue with Freudian drive-oriented psychology by explaining that narcissistic needs must be met to establish a sense of self before the individual is equipped for the further oedipal development traced by Freud.

Another way of clarifying Kohut's ideas on the self is to set them in relation to Lacan's. Like Lacan, Kohut is concerned with the sense of self developed in early years. Unlike Lacan, Kohut assumes that a sense of the authenticity of the self can be established, although this self always remains in flux. Lacan argues the impossibility of an authentic self and posits the individual's escape into symbolic language as the key to the construction of a sense of self which he sees as a fiction. While the similar language of Kohut's "mirroring selfobject" and Lacan's "mirror stage" suggest possible parallels, Lacan's sense of the essential inevitable inauthenticity of the self is not

Kohut's concern. What concerns Kohut is the question of how much self-cohesiveness is necessary to allow a person to experience a healthy sense of wholeness, with the resultant ability to be the center of his own initiative and participate in life with enthusiasm and joy. For Lacan, the subject emerges from the intervention of the Law of the Father, which corresponds to the Oedipal period, as a phallic or castrated individual. In other words, in Lacan's theory, the Oedipal crisis remains most important, and the Freudian construction of sexuality is retained. In Kohut, the destructiveness of the Oedipal period is a disintegration product which results from unempathic selfobjects, and the construction of a sexual self is the product of the responsiveness of the archaic selfobjects to the sex of a particular child based on their own experiences of the meaning of sexuality.

While the meaning of "self" shifts through several nuances in Kohut's work, he ultimately defines the "nuclear self" as the propensity for growth and the capacity for "transmuting internalization." The nuclear self allows the individual to transform in a unique way what is external experience into internal structure. Mario Jacoby finds that Kohut seems to maintain both the idea of an original self at birth and the later formation of the self through internalization of selfobject functions as the baby constructs the self (65). Although concerned with this

question, Kohut also states that the idea of a unitary self is "made by choice in order to fashion a rounded and cohesive theory of thought, perception and action," but he nevertheless recognizes the "simultaneous existence of different and even contradictory selves in the same person" (Self Psy 10).

Kohut's theoretical construct of the bipolar formation of the self through selfobjects acquired a sociological dimension when he expanded the use of his term "selfobject" to include other possibilities for sustaining the self. Many elements of a society provide both the possibility of performing mature mirroring and idealizable selfobject functions. Thus, group and national identification, history, literature, religion, and heroic figures can also be used by the self as sustaining selfobjects. Such a broadening of the nature of the selfobject suggests the way we are sustained by aspects of our culture.

This suggests a reading of Kohut which helps explain the truly devastating individual effects of racism or sexism. These cultural distortions can be internalized through all the artifacts of the society, or, already internalized by the parental selfobjects, can be passed on by them to the children directly. Mirroring and idealizable selfobjects who have been the object of sexism or racism and internalized it will mirror back a distorted, devalued self to a child and value ideals which are unattainable because

they are available only to the privileged group. For a woman, it may be that a paternal idealizable selfobject cannot be the focus of aspirations because her femininity excludes her from masculine accomplishments. Also, if the mirroring selfobject is a mother who has internalized society's devaluation of the feminine and thus responds negatively to the daughter's grandiosity, the daughter will absorb this negative image from the mother, and then the sexism of the society will interfere with the formation of a healthy sense of self.

An example of an historical use of a national idol as a widespread selfobject is cited by Kohut in his examination of Hitler. Kohut feels that Hitler functioned as an idealizable sustaining selfobject for a broad spectrum of Germans who used him in an attempt to heal the narcissistic wounds which occurred through the nationally destructive end of World War I (Self Psy 55-66). Hitler allowed the German people to merge with his grandiosity during the ruinous aftermath of World War I. Thus, fragmentation can occur on a national level through historical forces and its repair can have massive and politically catastrophic outcomes.

Literature can also be used as a selfobject, mirroring a specific historical society or setting forth specific ideals, and reading replicates the effects of more personal selfobjects. This process is developed in detail in Bouson's The Empathic Reader. Kohut himself develops a

specific way in which he feels tragedy serves a selfobject function. He suggests that the appeal of tragic literature may be through its availability as a selfobject to the audience. As the tragic character begins to feel more authentic in the face of tragic destiny, the readers or audience, who experience a momentary merging with the heroic character, similarly experience an increased sense of authenticity and wholeness (Self Psy 37-45).

That Kohut's theory has implications for tragedy gives it particular implications for Nightwood and The Antiphon. Nora and Felix, through their selfobject relationship with O'Connor, struggle to understand what has happened to them. The children in The Antiphon seek through a confrontation with the past to heal their depleted, fragile selves. All seek to attain some sense of authenticity which we, as readers, experience with them. Thus the novel and play serve the needs of individual readers who wish to heal their own fragmentation.

Such an explanation of Kohut's psychoanalytical theory is by necessity vastly abbreviated and simplified. It omits descriptions of diagnostic types of behavior and character disorders and the nature of the clinical transferences of narcissistic clients, but, even in this abbreviated form, its appropriateness as the vantage point from which to analyze the often fragmented characters of modern literature is apparent, and we will see how his concern with fragmented

individuals and societies which produce fragmentation, alongside his concern with self-other relationships and the way these relationships are used to shore up a sense of self, can be combined with Bakhtin's theories to explicate the tangled, unsatisfactory relationships in Barnes' work.

Kohut's description of mirroring and idealizable selfobject interactions provides insight into her characters. Indeed, when we look at Barnes' characters from the point of view of their acting out a need to shore up or fill in the structures of a defective self, much that is puzzling in her work is explained and Kohut's theories both seem to explain the texts and, in turn, to be validated by them. The fragmentation present in virtually all the characters in Nightwood, and the various ways in which such characters reach out to fill their unmet needs, is illuminated by Kohut's framework and it, in turn, provides a literary example which anticipates his theory. All of Barnes' characters exhibit the narcissistic disturbance of the fragmented self and search for the mirroring or idealizable figure who can help them attain a sense of authenticity and a coherent self. Ryder shows us the child caught in a family of unresponsive and narcissistic parents. Nightwood, while providing brief sketches of the childhood of its characters, focuses on the horrors of self-fragmentation and depicts the process whereby fragmented characters, in an attempted self-rescue,

perpetually seek to mend themselves through different love relationships. The Antiphon dramatizes the narcissistic rage which results when selfobject needs are not met.

Because Barnes creates a world of fragmented characters, Kohut's theory helps us understand them. But Barnes also situates these characters, often grotesque themselves, in a grotesque world. A theoretical perspective on the grotesque allows us to understand this aspect of her work.

There is substantial critical argument about the proper scope and the essential characteristics of the grotesque. Wolfgang Kayser, in The Grottesque in Art and Literature, defines the grotesque as a structure involving "the estranged world" which is "strange and ominous" (184). From his perspective, the grotesque delineates a hostile and uncontrollable world inhabited by characters dominated by fear and guilt. Arthur Clayborough, in The Grottesque in English Literature, points out Kayser's existential bias in presenting the grotesque as an experience of alienation and suggests the necessity, instead, of a psychological explanation which he finds in Jungian theory. Thus, he traces the relationship of the grotesque to the archetypal world of the dream, creating a typology which is based on the relationship of dream to logical thinking. Bakhtin's Rabelais and His World, published in 1965, the same year as Clayborough's book, but written in 1940, sees the grotesque

as evidence of the regenerating force of the masses liberating their world from the confines of the official culture through carnivalesque laughter. Philip Thomson's The Grotesque criticizes Bakhtin as dealing with only one part of the grotesque--the comic regenerative aspect and offers his definition of the grotesque as "the unresolved clash of incompatibles in work and response" or "the ambivalently abnormal" (27). In On the Grotesque, Geoffrey Harpham elaborates a post-structuralist approach. He claims the grotesque is the confusion that results in our confrontation with what is both known and unknown, that which is nameless and resists clarification. The grotesque, in his view, "is a word for this paralysis of language" (6). An important aspect of the grotesque is "the unmediated presence of mythic or primitive elements in a nonmythic or modern context" (51). And, finally, Bernard McElroy links the grotesque to the Freudian notion of the uncanny, "the reassertion of the primitive, magical view of the world" and links it to "the impulse to commit aggression and . . . the fear of being its victim" (4). He argues that Kayser's emphasis on fear and Bakhtin's emphasis on laughter both "commit the same essential error: mistaking the part for the whole" (15). McElroy says grotesque art results from "an intuition of the world as monstrous" (16). He categorizes several types of grotesque works: those which use a paranoid point of view, those which use insanity as a

point of view, those which attack the decadence of society through the use of the grotesque, and, finally, those which use the grotesque as Joyce does in Ulysses, as an explication "of the gross physicality of the human body, its participation in the animal world" (70).

The pervasiveness of the grotesque in the modern novel suggests its modern relevance. As Philip Thomson points out, "It is no accident that the grotesque mode in art and literature tends to be prevalent in societies and eras marked by strife, radical change or disorientation" and he notes that the present is such a time (11).

While Barnes' work is not as strikingly grotesque as the work of some other contemporary writers, viewing her work through the lens of the grotesque allows us to see elements otherwise unnoticed. Specifically, the grotesque as rooted in the physicality of the body, a grotesque described by both Bakhtin in Rabelais and His World and by McElroy in his discussion of Ulysses, is the type of grotesque that Barnes is involved with here. The unavoidable physicality of body is the grotesque of urine and blood: those things both in and out. As Harpham observes, what is neither self nor other is always looked upon with loathing (4). These uncontrollable aspects of the body subvert the rational, logical world. Barnes invokes the grotesque to reveal undeniable aspects of reality: its imperfection, decay, physicality, and death.

In Barnes, as in other writers of the grotesque, this confrontation with the grotesque is at once traumatic for us and beneficial. Theorists of the grotesque explain this positive effect in various ways. According to Kayser, the grotesque is a way of liberation which can "subdue the demonic aspects of the world" (188). Bakhtin finds it liberating for it produces the revolutionary laughter of the masses. Clayborough asserts it heals through the power of the unconscious. McElroy sees the modern grotesque as an assertion of selfhood in the face of the world's rejection. All find some positive force in the grotesque. In Barnes' work the reader participates in the characters' struggles to heal their fragmentation. The fragmentation in the work is the disintegration product of the characters' lack of self-cohesiveness. As such, it is difficult to see any positive force in this grotesque. However, the artistry and theme of the commonality of shared suffering in Barnes' works allows an ameliorating positive force in even this distressing grotesque.

In Rabelais and His World Bakhtin traces a great folk tradition of festivals and parodic laughter, a counter-life which periodically usurped the status quo of the dominant culture, bringing with it a fragmentation of roles and hierarchies and thus breaking through established stratified order to bring a sense of renewal and revitalization. Such a tradition existed in the great festivals and in the

tradition of parodic literature prominent in medieval times. This grotesque and carnivalesque tradition involves death, dismemberment, animals, games, curses, carnival, feasting, scatology, genital imagery, monsters, masks, dolls, puppets, disguises, cross-dressing, and costumes. Exaggeration and multiplication are also part of it. The carnivalesque involves scandal and a preoccupation with thresholds or situations of imminent and catastrophic change. Time is foregrounded in carnival, with its implications of an always changing, yet recurring, reality. Bakhtin sees all these elements working to overwhelm and overturn official and authoritarian truths, and thus regenerate a new awareness of an uncontrollable and constantly changing reality. Undermining a superficial "official" or socially acceptable reality, the grotesque presents another reality of uncontrollable physicality and pain.

Bakhtin sees the erosion of the connectedness which graced human society before the Renaissance as a loss of the connections between birth and death, and between physicality and spirit, which Bakhtin believes was enriching and healing and which he finds in the carnivalesque and grotesque tradition. The Pre-Renaissance metaphorical trip to the belly and the genitals, with its concomitant overturning of hierarchies and rules, had been an enriching and liberating journey for society. But, then, in the privatizing and atomizing of experience which occurred when such an

experience was lost, social classes became rigid, and, rather than the cyclical flow of life and death, parts of life became cut off from each other. What was lost was the carnivalesque, dialogic relationship of official to unofficial life necessary for a healthy and renewing vitality.

Bakhtin's project is to contrast this rigid modern world to the early carnivalesque grotesque literature as illustrated by Rabelais in order to underline how the positive force of the carnivalesque has been lost. While grotesque realism never disappeared, Bakhtin feels that the split which divorced communal from individual man in the Renaissance stripped from this grotesque realism its laughter, leaving it to depict the terrors of existence--death without rebirth, alienation rather than interconnectedness. Bakhtin's theory traces the grotesque through Romanticism, which he says shows a lack of the truly carnival. Shorn of revitalizing laughter, it makes do with cold critical irony and sarcasm (380). He unfavorably compares the Romantic grotesque with the Pre-Renaissance grotesque. Unlike the old pre-Renaissance folk festivals, which were the carnival counterpart of religious ceremony, and which involved springtime, gaiety, youth, and community, the romantic grotesque involved the nocturnal, individual, and private, delineating individual madness, alienation, and terror. Despite this, he contends that even in Romanticism

some elements of the recuperating power of the carnivalesque were retained. As Bakhtin says of the Romantic grotesque, "It leads men out of the confines of the apparent (false) unity, of the indomitable and stable [I]t always represents . . . the return of Saturn's golden age to earth, the living possibility of its return." The real world is made to seem alien precisely because there is the "potentiality of a friendly world, of the golden age, of carnival truth. Man returns unto himself." It is a "bodily awareness of another world" (48).

Unlike the Romantic grotesque, the modern grotesque does not retain even this recuperative power, according to Bakhtin. Although Bakhtin criticizes Kayser for his description of the grotesque as an experience of alienation, Bakhtin's view of the modern grotesque is similar. He thinks that the modern grotesque, shorn of its great comic wholeness, can only depict a world of terror, retaining only a modicum of healing power from the tradition of regenerative laughter. Thus, for Bakhtin and for Kayser, the revival of the grotesque in the twentieth century creates in an existential form a world with little redeeming or healing regeneration. What is absent from all these analyses is the recognition of the varying relationships of the characters, author, and reader to the grotesque within a literary work. The depiction of the fragmented, grotesque world in a structured work of art may enact the need for cohesive

selfhood. By dramatizing the fragmentation of the self, the literary work can induce and control anxiety about the loss of self. Despite the painful degradation and fragmentation of Barnes' characters and the fact that they seem to find little healing through their experiences, Barnes' works, through their careful artistry, can have a positive effect on the reader.

Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque has been criticized as omitting aspects of the grotesque: it has been argued that by overconcentrating on laughter and earthiness to undermine the establishment, Bakhtin undervalues the more somber side of the grotesque (McElroy 15). Bakhtin's view of the carnival as always revolutionary, as an "untamable, rebellious, and regenerative force," also has been criticized as an idealization which suited his freedom-affirming and anti-authoritarian agenda in Stalinist Russia (Clark, Holquist 310-311), and, indeed, Bakhtin emphasizes carnival's capacity for instituting social change. In his view, official life is always undermined by the eruption of the carnivalesque and, in a tumultuous period when an orderly official life is disrupted, the carnivalesque is nearer the surface, oozing through the cracks in official life. Writing under the oppression of Soviet Russia, Bakhtin focused on the possibility of revolution through carnival. A major implication of Bakhtin's work, and one which made writing his works

tantamount to treason, is the political nature of carnival. He argued the great festivals subverted political and social order, therefore achieving a subversion of official authority. The upside-down, inside-out world of the festival provided a subterranean challenge to official authority. Carnival makes us all other--other than the established, official rule-elaborated element of society. However, the modern carnivalesque no longer resides in the great festivals coupled with religious feast days, through which the cyclical passage of time was evoked. The modern grotesque in literature has lost that great communal aspect of the feast. What substitutes for it is the commonality of physical existence. Barnes' work is exemplary in this regard. The carnivalesque here is a grotesque of private but universal emotional experiences occurring in a degraded and fragmented world.

Bakhtin sees the carnivalesque as a way in which a society frees itself from the encrustations of usage, such as the hardening of rank and ritual and the monologism of official truth which stifles the spirit. The carnivalesque does this by downward movement. It affirms physicality in order to root itself in the reality of human existence and it affirms the ability of that physical, individual reality to join together into an unfragmented communal whole. It is this aspect of carnival in which we find the connecting link between the modern carnival and the carnival of Rabelais.

The physical body as emblematic of this connecting link between the two carnivals is a permeable and ever-changing body, taking in food, eliminating, creating, and decaying. Bakhtin's image of pregnant, dancing hags as symbol of the carnivalesque evokes its anchoring in the grotesque body and its commingling of sex and decay, birth and death, and of carnival's ultimate anchor in a human perception of time. Such a gendered, if sexist, symbol locates the carnivalesque in the physical body as a symbol of our common existence. This physicality, as McElroy shows in his discussion of Joyce's Ulysses as a novel of the grotesque, physical body, is a unifying force, and, thus, a positive aspect of the grotesque. If we examine Barnes' work from the perspective of the grotesque evocation of the physical body, we can see that her images of degradation act both to evoke fragmentation and to attempt to unify that fragmentation through this unity with our common humanity. Within the framework of Kohutian theory, her characters remain fragmented, but the unifying force of the carnivalesque provides an artistic recuperation of a common humanity.

Bakhtin wrote before the advent of recent feminist theory, and thus he was unaware of the many of the implications of gender. Feminist critics have seen this lack in his works and have responded both by exploring the ways in which Bakhtin's insights can further develop feminist thought, as Dale Bauer does in Feminist Dialogics:

A Theory of Failed Community, and by attacking his theory of carnival as omitting the feminine experience, as Sheryl Stevenson does in "Writing the Grotesque Body: Djuna Barnes' Carnival Parody." As we examine Barnes' work, we will see that she writes a carnival that critiques patriarchal society and offers a specifically feminine experience of carnival. And because Barnes writes about individual experiences of fragmentation, her characters endure painful and demeaning experiences.

Bakhtin's other theories are also relevant to Barnes' work. His theory of the dialogic nature of the novel can be applied to Barnes' work. Bakhtin's hegemony of voices in a novel (The Dialogic Imagination) or his notion of the play of ideology (Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics) or his discussion of the carnivalesque (Rabelais and His World), all help illuminate Barnes' work. The intertextual nature of Ryder, the dialogic nature of communication exposed in Nightwood, and the carnivalesque nature of all three major works are clarified when looked at through the perspective of Bakhtin's theories.

Bakhtin theorizes that the dialogic nature of the novel operates in the same way as the grotesque in the sense that it breaks down a dogmatic unity, a conventional and accepted authoritative version of truth. In The Dialogic Imagination Bakhtin explores how the novel is shot through with the voices and the languages of the different social classes;

how it is inhabited by various other genres such as the letter, essay, and poem; and how it is invaded by images, ideas, and influences of past writers. No text could be a better example of this than Ryder which is invaded by multiple genres and literary styles. To catalog only a few of its genres, it uses poetry, the Bible, the letter, the will, and the picaresque novel. Nightwood, which is subtler than Ryder, incorporates echoes of various literary styles. The Antiphon is infiltrated by archaic words which Barnes uses to mask the content and distance its emotional trauma. In Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, Bakhtin is concerned with novels which contain a dialogic interchange among sharply different characters, thus producing a truly unresolvable ideological multiplicity instead of a monolithic or monologic world-view. In Nightwood the dialogic base of the novel resides in three characters: two displaced Americans (O'Connor and Nora) and one displaced Jew (Felix) set in a world shattered by World War I. The conversations between Felix and O'Connor and between Nora and O'Connor illustrate, through disconnectedness and fragmentation, the dialogic way in which some sort of truth emerges in fleetingly glimpsed bits and pieces, never quite adding up to a static, logical whole.

In The Dialogic Imagination Bakhtin develops the idea of the "threshold dialogue" of the man facing death who is thereby stripped of his usual illusions and habits of life.

This occurs in a novel and in a person's life when the threat of death is so real that it casts all of his usual preoccupations in a new light (128). However, it is not only the threat of death which brings us to this psychological state. The deliberate clash with the grotesque also forces this threshold dialogue. The confrontation forced by the grotesque, thus, has in it the potential to cause shifts in understanding and, thus, in values. The confrontation with the grotesque allows further development.

The essentially dialogic and carnivalesque nature of the novel, which stems from the essential multiplicity of novelistic voices, accounts for the way that the novel approaches truth, undermining singular authoritative truth. The qualities of the carnivalesque--the bizarre, the grotesque, and the uncommon--are to some extent the marks of a novel submerged in a dialogic quest for truth. Bakhtin's theories of the dialogic nature of the novel have come to be seen as offering an important structure for explaining the way a novel, with its dialogic mix and its inevitable reflection of the stratifications and interrelationships of class, necessarily both reflects and critiques the culture from which it arises.

While Bakhtin's theories affirm human interconnectedness and our relationship to the history and culture, they omit the psychological construction of the

individual. That Bakhtin himself struggled with this omission can be seen by looking at his critique of Freud. Among the disputed texts now generally attributed to Bakhtin is Freudianism: A Marxist Critique, published under the name of V. N. Volosinov in 1927. The book is heavily critical of the way in which Freud overlooks considerations of class and history by assuming a development which is universal and ahistorical. Bakhtin sees missing from Freud a realization of the dialogical development of man. Yet, while aware of this limitation in Freudian theory, Bakhtin does not construct an alternative psychology which would trace individual psychological development as grounded in the dialogic. Such a theory would move away from Freud's emphasis on drives and explore the impact of others on the development of the individual's self situated in specific historical circumstances. It is in Kohut's theories that we find such a psychology, and, thus, Kohut supplements Bakhtin and, by providing a psychological theory which seems to mesh with Bakhtin's exploration of the dialogical nature of the novel, suggests a way that the social, the ideological, and the psychological delineation of character can be discussed.

When we examine some of the plot elements in Nightwood, the relationship of these concerns and Barnes' work becomes clear. Nightwood begins with Felix Volkbein's birth, his mother's death in childbirth, and his father's previous death. It backtracks to the history, personalities, and

tensions of his parents and then leaps forward to begin the story with Felix at the age of thirty, thus foregrounding how the interaction of history and social forces have gone into producing Felix. Carnavalesque concerns with blood, circuses, sexuality, and the bowels evoke the grotesque. The death of Felix's parents has left him with a fragile identity. He has been bereft of the selfobjects so needed for coherent self development. Felix's concealment of his Jewish identity, and his preoccupation with history and the aristocracy, suggest his need to bolster his deficient self. His infatuation with the circus suggests the carnivalesque.

Dr. O'Connor, a bogus doctor of gynecology, who is emphatic in his preference for myth over history, raises issues analyzable in both Bakhtinian and Kohutian terms. He is called to help Robin Vote, a character who, in her identification with animals, decay, death, and history, conjures up the grotesque, while her lack of a firm sense of identity reveals how the fragmented, fragile self described by Kohut is unable to meet another's needs. Felix, smitten with Robin, marries her, only to lose her after the birth of their son Guido, because she is unable, in her own neediness, to care for the needs of another.

Robin repeats her quest for someone who will provide her with some selfobject structure. Nora Flood, Robin's new love, is an American who provides a home for Robin in Paris. Robin soon is taken up by another lover who sees in the

Robin-Nora relationship an authentic emotionality which she, as a deadened self described in grotesque terms, covets and thus seeks to acquire by acquiring Robin. She is a deadened self seeking some vitality through appropriating the emotional life of another.

Nora, in seeking an explanation for her pain, goes to Dr. O'Connor for an explanation of the "night." O'Connor engages in a monologue on history, identity, dirt, death, sleep, dreams, sex, national differences, sorrow, and, finally, tells the story of the same night which ends two chapters in the disarranged chronology of this novel, the night when Nora discovered Robin's betrayal. His empathic participation in Nora's pain reveals a deeply flawed self which masks its inauthenticity by obsessively using words in an attempt to shore up his fragmented self.

After a lapse of years, the novel again takes up the story of Felix who seeks O'Connor's help. Felix is now preoccupied with his strange son Guido but still haunted by his failed relationship with the inexplicable Robin. Obsessed with concerns of social class and aristocracy, he bows to imagined aristocrats as he hovers in loving care over his son. The only stabilizing force in his life, his son, gives him a sense of self-structure.

The novel returns to Nora and Dr. O'Connor, taking up their story at a time which we assume to be shortly after O'Connor's conversation with Felix. The dialogic

relationship here involves a search for healing on the part of a fragmented Nora and an attempt to heal on the part of O'Connor, which traps him into an experience of his own fragmentation and pain. Nora's insistence on her connectedness to Robin incites O'Connor to tell various grotesque stories which unexpectedly reveal his impotence and his anguish. As Nora works through her experiences, recognizing Robin's use of her as an idealized selfobject, O'Connor is reduced in the process to silence. He joins a former priest in drunken bout, grandiosely identifying with great people through hundreds of years, and, recognizing that his attempt to solve human pain and shore up his own self identity through language has failed, concludes "nothing but wrath and weeping" (362).

Despite this seeming ending, the book continues for one final short four page chapter entitled "The Possessed" in which Robin returns like an animal to Nora's chapel seeking to find, in this combined image of Nora and religion, the madonna-like idealized selfobject which she has sought in Nora from the start. She is found by Nora playing in bizarre mimickry with Nora's dog, as she retreats to a sub-human identification with animals. This tableau--the collapsed Robin and dog overseen by Nora--ends the novel.

Felix has sought a mirroring selfobject in Robin, marrying her to provide himself with the identity which his fraudulent and orphaned past have not provided, and he has

sought an idealizable selfobject in his adulation of the aristocracy. His project fails at both ends. Robin's own fragmentation and lack of self negate any mirroring while her inability to share his attempt to idealize the past saps his confidence in that project. Robin has sought an idealizable selfobject in Nora, who provides her with a stable sense of continuity as she is calmed and stabilized by the other's sense of self. Nora, however less fragmented, is caught in her own need for mirroring which she has sought to fulfill in Robin. Jenny tries to fill her mirroring and idealizable needs through her husbands and in her greedy need for the love which she sees between Nora and Robin. O'Connor reveals unfulfilled mirroring needs as he uses a torrent of words to defensively mask his emptiness and lack of cohesion while his fraudulent medical professionalism implies the preoccupation with the body of the carnival. Robin's disintegration at the end of the novel represents both a final disintegration and fragmentation of self. Its intense carnivalization has social implications about the end of the stabilizing forces of religion and history. Thus, the theories of Kohut and Bakhtin allow us to explore what critics have found both troubling and yet central: questions of character and of how the grotesque in the novel facilitates the psychological work of the novel. Both Ryder and The Antiphon, which we will look at in later chapters, show a similar

susceptability to this kind of explication.

In summary, the skeleton of Kohut's theory is simple. He suggests a bipolar development of the self in response to a mirroring and an idealizable selfobject. In a mirroring interaction a reflected image of the greatness of the self allows a positive sense of self to be internalized. The self can say, "This is what I am." In an idealizable interaction the self finds admirable qualities in another which can be emulated. The self can say, "This is what I want to be." In many ways, Kohut's theory is not new and it resonates because it meshes with our belief that we are what we are because of the attention and love of those around us and that our ambitions and values have been transmitted to us through the people we love best. Too, such a process resonates with our best experiences of parenting. We recognize in it an affirmation of the pleasure and pride we feel in a child's accomplishments and of the empowerment we feel when our child admires us. Therefore, Kohut's formulation of these ideas as an elegant construction of our common experiences gives us an intellectual structure which both explains them as process and validates them.

Bakhtin's theories, too, resonate on a level of practical lived experience. Bakhtin is describing the eruption of the disowned and unacknowledged, which both threatens established order and cuts through social fiction to force us into physical reality. New-Age efforts to

recreate ritual, the interest in esoteric religions more integrated with the body, the popularity of the grotesque in modern literature, and the perennial appeal of horror movies are evidence of a need for a grounding in the physical body and absorption in some larger communal whole which Bakhtin's theories speak to.

Such concerns, therefore, are not merely academic. They are lived realities. As such, we can also look for them in the biographical data on Barnes. We see how her family situation led to self-fragmentation and narcissistic rages: the fragmentation caused by the failure of the family to provide the selfobjects needed by the child to achieve a cohesive self, dramatized in Ryder, and the anger resulting from this predicament, described in The Antiphon. Both works portray the grandiosity of her father, who indulged in bizarre and inappropriate behavior. Both texts take their energy from Barnes' bitter disillusionment with him. In Nightwood Barnes dramatizes the failure of adults without a firm sense of self as they struggle to meet their selfobject needs and achieve a sense of wholeness and joy in their lives. In Bakhtinian terms, her family lived a carnivalesque life, the polygamous nature of which was deeply threatening to the social order because it called into question issues of conformity, hypocrisy, and mediocrity. But this potentially positive critique of society based on high-minded ideals of freedom and art was

undercut by the deeply destructive dynamics of the family. In Barnes' young adulthood she lived in a world of unending carnival. The Bohemian life style between World War I and World War II available to Barnes in Greenwich Village, Paris, and in her travels, particularly in Berlin, meant that most of her works were written in a world of sexual freedom, intellectual openness, and crumbling social mores. Her writing attests to the liberating artistic potential of carnival, and her bouts with alcoholism and reclusive living attest to the destructive potential of its individual, family-based personal fragmentation. In tracing these patterns, which are deeply engrained in her works, we will begin with the first of these works, Ryder.

Ryder

Ostensibly, Ryder chronicles the life of a promiscuous, clever, and undisciplined man, Wendell, and his family. The novel begins with his grandmother's marriage, her death after fourteen children, his mother's unchurched pregnancy, his eventual marriage to Amelia, his acquisition of a mistress and second family, and the eventual disintegration of his lawful family. Yet such a description does not begin to describe the eccentricity of the novel, the parts of which are connected only sporadically by plot, loosely by character, and not at all by style. Abrupt shifts in time, genre, and the parodic source force continual shifts in the reader's expectations. To tell the story, Barnes parodies, among other things, the Bible, Chaucer, and Elizabethan English, and shifts among poetry, drama, and letter, as well as using traditional narrative. Characters are abruptly introduced and dropped, only to reappear chapters later. And some chapters seem related to the plot only through their physical presence. Each of Ryder's fifty chapters dislocates traditional expectations of genre, history, plot, and theme. What unity the novel has is achieved by the recurring loop of the family story, and, as in Nightwood, by a pattern of the carnivalesque: birth, death, childbirth,

sex, dreams, animals, excretion, history, and time, which form a pattern of recurring grotesque imagery and ideas in the novel.

Ryder, published in New York in 1928, was a best seller, helped by its salacious content. It was subjected to a censorship much deplored by Djuna Barnes who used rows of asterisks to indicate the deleted parts (Kannestine 39). However, no censor could eliminate the subtle double entendres so stylistically intrinsic and so profuse that they sensitize the reader to expect and, indeed, generate an indecent sub-text. The illustrations which Barnes herself drew were also censored. One illustration of a urinating opera singer was deleted, as was another of a male angel peeking up a female angel's gown (Field 127). Other illustrations with scatological and sexual overtones escaped the censor because their implications were not obvious except through careful reading, such as one of a man on horseback with a sponge dangling from a ribbon on the saddle. The main character's experiences prompted a need for cleanliness since "great carelessness behind / And great frivolity in front" (76) dirties a shirt tail.

While Nightwood has always been the subject of some critical interest, Ryder, after its original reviews, was ignored for many years. The first discussion of Ryder was in Jack Hirschman's 1961 dissertation, The Orchestrated Novel, on the organizing principles used by modern

non-traditional writers, including Barnes. James Scott, Louis Kannestine, and Andrew Field also discuss Ryder and agree that parallels in characterization and specific events imply autobiographical content and that the family ghosts exorcized here through laughter are treated tragically in The Antiphon. They agree on its unorthodox and problematic structure but seek different ways to order its fragmentation and have wildly varying judgments on the novel, disagreeing about the nature of the characters and the novel's theme. Juxtaposed, their reactions allow us to see that this text is more than usually ambiguous, yet even the critical diversity shown by these three overlooks other possible interpretations which are foregrounded by recent critical theory. Two recent articles, Sheryl Stevenson's "Writing the Grotesque Body: Djuna Barnes' Carnival Parody" and Marie Ponsot's "A Reader's Ryder," both in Silence and Power, begin post-structuralist and feminist readings of Ryder that foreground overlooked elements. Stevenson recognizes the appropriateness of applying Bakhtin's theory to Ryder, emphasizing the carnivalesque uncrowning of the king in the deflation of the father figure, Wendell, and the role of the women in deflating men. Ponsot organizes her interpretation around Julie, whom others have treated as a minor character even though they have recognized her as the autobiographical Djuna in this family story. I intend to continue this feminist analysis as I read Ryder from the perspectives of

both Kohut and Bakhtin.

Reading from the perspective of Kohut's theories allows us to resolve much that is puzzling, incomprehensible, or ambiguous about the characters. Massive critical disagreements by critics on the nature of the main characters, particularly Sophia and Wendell, vanish when these characters are seen as examples of grandiose characters who, because of their deficiencies, are inadequate selfobjects for their children, and, so, in turn, become the objects of the children's profound disillusionment. While Bakhtinian elements of the carnivalesque in the imagery, characterization, and action are profuse in this text, another element in Bakhtin's theory, parody, is important in Ryder. Reading from a Bakhtinian perspective lets us see how the parodic in the book subverts the patriarchal literary tradition to write a feminist perspective of universal concerns of time, family, sex, life, and death.

Ryder is laced with parodies which disrupt traditional narrative order by intruding upon the main story line through shifts in genre and style. Since parody is a central issue, it would seem to be the first critical problem to be addressed, yet critics have seen it as a somewhat peripheral problem. While all critics comment on Barnes' virtuosity in her use of parody and her knowledge of literary styles as evidenced in her skill, only the most

recent criticism has begun to interrogate what her parodic choices might have to say about time, history, philosophy, religion, and feminism, and only Sheryl Stevenson raises the question of her choosing to use parody in the first place.

Nor is parody the only disruptive technique which Barnes uses. Changes in point of view from chapter to chapter are common. Diction changes as Barnes uses shifts of speakers, unexpected wit, double entendre, censored material, diction both "studded with abstractions" and yet often "extraordinarily concrete" (Ponsot 93).

The first critics solved the problem of the destabilized text by discovering unity despite its apparent chaotic structure and so emphasized what they found to be the thread of coherence. Jack Hirschman saw Ryder as influenced by Joyce and structured by a pattern of recurring images. James Scott's Djuna Barnes, published in 1976, thought Ryder marked the beginning of Barnes' move away from conventional form and style, but, despite his plot summary which illustrated an obvious lack of unity, said it was "originally and artistically whole and thematically unified, while at times it appears mystifyingly incoherent to readers looking for a solidly linked plot-theme construct" (63). Even though Scott asserted that the theme provided unity for the book, he found the theme unstated until Chapter Thirty where it became clear to him that the theme was the "conflict between social 'propriety' and Wendell's

unorthodox life style" (63). By affirming Wendell, Scott argued, the novel celebrated nature and freedom. Despite carnivalesque disunity, artistic unity and coherence was achieved because seemingly unrelated parts related to this theme.

Louis F. Kannestine, in The Art of Djuna Barnes: Duality and Damnation published in 1977, made less of an attempt to impose a unity upon Ryder, but did find in the novel a unifying theme of chaotic evil in the world. He said that "The forward movement of the novel is blocked at nearly every turn of event by passages or entire chapters which relate only tangentially to plot, or, as the plot works out, to the static situation" (36). The disunity produced by Barnes' parody of the domestic novel of generations, the epistolary novel, and the picaresque tradition, as well as the Bible, Chaucer, the Renaissance, Elizabethan language, and Stern, prompted Kannestine to say that "by inserting poems, illustrations, and even at one point dialogue in the form of a one-act play, Miss Barnes is attempting to give the novel a new breadth of scope." He felt that the novel "aims ostentatiously to shock and bewilder. One even wonders at times if it is not also part of the author's program to bore the reader" (38-39).

Such critical comments, treating the novel as both thematically unified and stylistically chaotic, alternately structured by images and strictly structured by different

and contradictory themes, show the troublesome way Ryder resists traditional methods of interpretation and the way in which critics resisted dealing with its problems of parody and non-traditional structure. If we look at Ryder from the perspective of Bakhtin's theory of parody in his Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, we can explain the dynamics of Barnes' parody, its intertextual and carnivalesque nature, and its purpose.

Bakhtin sees the nature of parody as carnivalesque because, by mimicking the form and content of a given genre, its truth is called into question. Parody calls into question both its literary source and its own integrity, undercutting authority by making fun of its source and calling into question the seriousness of its own content by the fact that it is parody. Bakhtin claims that parody is "inseparably linked to a carnival sense of the world. Parody is the creation of the decrowning double; it is that same world turned inside out." It is this which makes parody ambivalent. "Everything has its parody, that is, its laughing aspect for everything is reborn and renewed through death" (127). The force of parody lies in the fact that it is an echo of and a response to the discourse of another. Therefore, it is essentially and necessarily dialogic. It disrupts a monologic world view and carnivalizes truth by its two voices: its own and the voice of its source. These two voices, or, to use Bakhtin's term, this "double

voicedness," always involve historical time because parody answers a prior original discourse. Bakhtin states that "the author again speaks in someone else's discourse, but in contrast to stylization parody introduces into that discourse a semantic intention that is directly opposed to the original one." This second voice, because it is a parody, is necessarily opposed to the first voice. "The second voice, once having made its home in the other's discourse, clashes hostilely with its primordial host and forces him to serve directly opposing aims. Discourse becomes an arena of battle between two voices" (193).

Barnes' parodies all participate in this double voicedness and all both mock their parodied originals, and, in turn, call into question their own content, but they do this in ways which defy attempts to devise a schema which would enclose them. Some are obvious parodies of specific forms, such as a chapter written in Chaucerian couplets or an Old Testament parody, while others are traceable to a time but not to a single author. They are not only varied in literary genre and historical era but in their relationship to plot and characters. Some involve main characters, some are about main characters, some introduce new minor characters, some are unconnected to characters but tenuously connected to plot, and some are totally unconnected to either plot or character, but resonate thematically. Such diversity has engendered the critical

diversity mentioned above and has led Marie Ponsot, in "A Reader's Ryder," to discuss Ryder from a perspective of six different assumptions which order the story in a way analogous to the layers of an onion. Such an analogy suggests the complexity of discussing how the parodies work in and through the story. However, all of the parodies eventually serve two functions: they work to cast doubt on male prerogatives and debunk male myths of femininity and they serve to carnivalize and deflate characters. For example, plot-appropriate letters from Amelia's sister, in a parody of the eighteenth century epistolary novel, serve to both parody traditional female modesty and debunk Wendell's grandiose sexuality. A parody of a lullaby in the mouth of Amelia, the mother, is appropriate to the plot but celebrates a mother's drowning of a baby, uncovering a hidden fury and suggesting a feminist revision of contented motherhood. A battle between major characters which echoes Tom Jones adds comedy, suggests a feminist devaluation of patriarchy, and moves the plot by forging a surprising alliance between mistress and wife. In all of these, the "double voicedness" of the parodies is a feminist voice working against the male original.

Many of the parodies revolve around descriptions of women in bizarre and grotesque terms. Underlying them often is an insurrectionary questioning of female nature, sexuality, and social roles that undercuts the standard

cliches of the time. They deromanticize women, deflate men, and call into question the nature of motherhood and the choices offered by society to women. The feminist nature of these stories is overlooked by all but the most recent critics, one of whom, Sheryl Stevenson, notes that Barnes' use of these parodies highlights the patriarchal basis of literature and shows how "each parodied discourse is saturated with conceptions of sexuality and gender" (81).

Along with its parodic questioning of the social order, Ryder is a book of family relationships, and, if we examine these family relationships in Kohutian terms, with their source in selfobject relationships, as well as examine the way parody and other carnivalesque elements both distance and illuminate the emotional life of these characters, we read a new Ryder, which assimilates many of the divergent elements of the novel.

Ryder begins with a parody of the Bible. It is minimally connected to the plot in terms of action and yet it is appropriate and important in thematic content and mood. In this Biblical parody, "Jesus Mundane," the dialogic double voicedness both calls into question the authority and the efficacy of the Bible and uses the Biblical pattern to demand the acknowledgement of the disappointing and limited real. Such a reversal from Jesus to the mundane captures the traumatic toppling of the ideal.

The reader is urged not to "fanatics" but to "lesser

men, who have for all things unfinished and uncertain, a great capacity, for these shall not repulse thee, thy physical body and thy temporal agony" (1). This brings us down into the world of the physical and of time, two basic themes in the Bakhtinian downward movement of the carnivalesque. We are admonished: "Thy rendezvous is not with the Last Station, but with small comforts, like to apples in the hand . . . and gossip at the gates of thy insufficient agony" (1). The parody of the Bible puts in God's mouth words that argue for mediocrity. "Neither shalt thou have gossip with martyrs and saints and cherubim, nor with them lilies and their lambs and their up goings Bargain not in unknown figures. Let thy lips choose no prayer that is not on the lips of thy congregation" (2). This is a call of the carnival, leveling all men, mocking human aspirations to be special, to be great, to rise above the other. Such language puts man in his place because it says to him "For thou knowest nothing of the mighty rains of Heaven" (3). While this introductory chapter might be read as a call upon the reader to deflate spiritual pride, it also serves to introduce how the book will deflate a patriarchal father figure, Wendell, whose philosophical pretensions have allowed him to claim a god-like stature in the family. Parody devalues Wendell, making him grandiose rather than grand, and mocks him in a way which allows us to see that he is a ruined idol.

Such an introduction suggests the appropriateness of a Kohutian view of the character of Wendell. He seductively makes claims of greatness but is a fraud. A child faced with this type of idealizable selfobject will eventually face anger and disillusionment. Such an interpretation also recognizes much of his seeming ambiguity, which allowed earlier critics, such as James Scott, to read the text as an affirmation of Wendell's values, while today it allows feminists to read the text as an indictment of patriarchy. However, even feminists readings, such as that of Sheryl Stevenson's, which analyses Ryder in Bakhtinian terms as the defeat of the father-king at the hands of the women, do not deal with all facets of his character. While Scott's reading of Wendell as hero mistakes the nostalgic residue of the lost idealization for the whole, Stevenson's reading, while recognizing the novel's disillusionment with Wendell, misreads his defeat as a victory for women instead of seeing it as a crushing disappointment. In Kohutian terms, for the women, an idealized selfobject, Wendell, has been found to be devastatingly and traumatically insufficient. His narcissistic grandiosity, rather than the women, defeats him. The women are victims since their lives are curtailed by Wendell's failures, and his last failure which destroys the family spells bitter, devastating disillusionment for them.

Another early parody, which disrupts the narrative

sequence and disjoins any sense of coherence and unity in the novel, raises the carnivalized, pervasive, and ambiguous issue of women's sexuality. "Rape and Repining!" was sufficiently nonspecific to have been published separately in transition (Kannestine 37). Again, like "Jesus Mundane," it has allowed multiple interpretations and, indeed, is so ambiguous that it has been seen to refer to various female characters in the text. This parody seems to be a lament for a girl's rape cast in Jacobean English, but it is questionably a lament, and questionably about rape, since the girl's loss of innocence seems to be also celebrated and some collusion in the matter is insinuated. James Scott notes that "While the text is against fornication, the chapter's theme is visibly a celebration of sexual activity" (66). A totally different interpretation is that it exposes the cruelty of conventional society when faced with sexual immorality since unidentified speakers heap guilt upon the victim whose innocence is suspected. This parodies traditional censorious "good" women who relentlessly persecute the fallen woman. Meryl Altman, in "The Antiphon: 'No Audience at All'?", says that it is an example of "how a woman could be destroyed verbally" (283). Frances Doughty notes two passages where she feels that "the venom of the gossips" overcomes the sense of parody and we respond "with direct and powerful emotion" only to "feel foolish" when our sense of the work as parody returns.

Thus, there is an "uneasy" distance and a "lack of congruence" which leaves us unable to be certain as to how we are expected to respond (145). The final section of the parody presents other problems of interpretation as its language escalates to an ominous level of threat focusing on the bastard child who shakes the patriarchal structure of society. "[H]e is whirled about in an Uncertainty, and his People shall inherit him for a Birthright." In such lines as "Who sets the Child backward upon the Beast of Time?" (35) Andrew Field finds a riddle, the answer to which is incest, the family secret which fuels Barnes' anger (43). Again, such diversity of opinion shows the ambiguity of the text. In Bakhtinian terminology, the parodic structure "decrowns" the content, seemingly using the rich hyperbole of the Renaissance language to call into question the patriarchal values of female virginity and the idealized innocent woman. Yet eruptions of emotions, which strike us as true and telling, interrupt, disrupting the parodic message, and a sense of hidden messages both told and untold further disrupt the parody. The critical distress evident in dealing with this one chapter is indicative of the general disagreement as to the meaning of the novel.

We have seen that previous criticism struggled with the discontinuity of the novel by suggesting a unifying theme. However, these critics proposed radically different and contradictory themes, and wildly contradictory evaluations

of the characters. Jack Hirschman thinks that the theme of Ryder is sympathy with the problems faced by women: men's fickleness and their infidelity, and the problems of raising children. They are "man's attraction for waywardness outside the bounds of marriage, . . . the physical pangs and the emotional duress suffered by the mother when the children prove themselves as wanton and faithless as the father"

(58). James Scott believes that Ryder sympathizes with the father. He feels that the book "want[s] readers to favorably regard its central character, despite his weakness, and to look with distaste upon the organized, machinelike, prudish society which condemns him." Thus, the book celebrates Wendell and values his life as "more spontaneous, more joyous, and far more productive of beauty" than conventional life (76).

While James Scott believes Wendell to be an admirable, if faulty, hero, Louis Kannestine feels that he is "not of the super-males he has conceived himself to be, but of androgenous man" (41) who contains within himself many womanish virtues but yet betrays women to the pain of childbirth. Ryder, in this view, is a "tragedy of women" who are stronger and smarter than Wendell. Kannestine sees as central to the novel the nobility that is in Wendell's mother, Sophia, who must maintain the stability of the family and, through elaborate clandestine begging, work industriously against the dwindling family fortune.

Kannestine says that "At her death, Wendell is left . . . to his inevitable fall without the support of women. 'Whom should he disappoint now' is the novel's final question" (35). On the other hand, Andrew Field is most interested in the autobiographical content of Ryder, reading it in Freudian terms as a reenactment of Barnes' complex relationship with her father. He believes the novel encodes a love-hate relationship with the father fueled by her incestuous longings (30).

Marie Ponsot, in "A Reader's Ryder," claims that there is no main character and that Sophia, Amelia, Kate, and Wendell all in turn occupy the space of the main character, but that they are presented in such multiple roles that the final effect confounds any narrative expectations. Ponsot says, "In place of a hero are persons who, isolated in their mental lives, perform the haunting dance of family generation unto generation, dynamic, thick-booted, insubstantial" (96). For her, the innermost and most important story revolves around the unspoken in Julie's story, a gap in which the father, poised at the bed of the child, is interrupted by the grandmother. It is this gap, with its sexual implications, which inverts Field's analysis of incestuous longings and opens up the unanswered question of the nature of the father's aggressions against the girl.

The contradictions between these critics are obvious. Ryder has been described variously: as a dramatization of

the plight of women in the face of both man's and children's abuse; as a celebration of a man's independence and authenticity in the face of social resistance; as a championing of strong women who carry the burden that men do not; as a reenactment of patricidal hate and incestuous desires; and as a deconstruction of both narrative conventions and patriarchal society. Clearly, such critics are not going to agree.

Using Kohut's analysis of self-formation as dependent on the interplay between self and selfobject relationships as a basis to understand the characters and their relationships in Ryder allows us to make sense of the positive and negative aspects of Wendell and Sophia, characters towards whom Barnes exhibits ambiguous feelings. It also leads us to an understanding of the text as neither an affirmation of hedonism, as Scott sees it, nor an affirmation of the splendor of strong womanhood, as Kannestine sees it, but, instead, as an evocation of the singular pain wrought by both sexes in family relationships. In Ryder that pain is manipulated and distanced through parody and other aspects of the carnivalesque.

Since it seems to be Barnes' pain which is encoded in the novel, the relationship of the story to her life is important. Scott and Kannestine and Field agree on the autobiographical basis of many of the characters in Ryder. Kannestine is the most conservative in imposing an

autobiographical grid on the novel. He simply notes that specific skills and life styles are identical between the characters and their real-life counterparts, but he concludes that one cannot assume that "Ryder is an 'autobiographical novel.' Correspondence of details is rough or nonexistent beyond the above particulars." But he also finds it "striking that a similar familial configuration is also present in The Antiphon" (174). Scott believes that Barnes "turned . . . to her own childhood years" not only for characters and themes but also "to a certain extent, [for] plot" (63), but he also claims that her family situation was relatively benign. "The life of the family," writes Scott, "was close, and each of the family's varied interests contributed its own educational dimensions; the explicitly literary and artistic activities, the formal lessons, and even the daily processes of gathering a living from the land" In his view, Barnes' father was "a gifted man and one of vision" (16).

This bland evaluation of Barnes' father is not shared by Andrew Field who details many of the eccentricities of both Barnes' ancestors and her family life (178-179). Field recognizes that many of Wendell's weaknesses and his scandalous behavior are based on Barnes' father. Noting Barnes' admiration for Synge who, in Playboy of the Western World, wrote of those who live in a world of fantasies and of patricide, Field makes this connection: Barnes had strong

incestuous feelings towards her father and hated him. Barnes was "replete not only with anger unto patricide but also with guilt over murderous and incestuous desire" (30). He says that this is "the subject of the daughter's steel-hammer pronouns. She hated him as he had hated his father" (28). He concludes that "Wald Barnes was a rarified example of the Spoiled Savage. He had 'experiments' with Nature." Field feels that all of Barnes' emotional life followed from her sexual feelings for and her hatred of her father. "The Village affairs, the de facto marriage to Courtney Lemon, her relationship with Thelma Wood, most of her friendships, all followed from this" (31). James Scott also alludes to Barnes' problematic relationship with her father by finding that "a strong incestuous undercurrent existed between the father and the daughter in The Antiphon" (127). Recent feminist criticism complicates this evaluation. Anne B. Dalton asserts on the basis of family letters that there was incest between both Barnes and her father and Barnes and her grandmother (MLA 1990).

The possibility of actual incest raises interpretive questions, and problematizes a Freudian Oedipal interpretation, implying the feminist critique of Freud's abandonment of his original evidence of actual seduction of his analysands in childhood. A Kohutian interpretation based on Barnes' possible incestuous relationship to her father would explain her catastrophic disillusionment with

her father, who had been an idealizable selfobject, and her ambivalent feelings towards a weak, unprotective mother. An erotic involvement with the grandmother also would explain a similar, if less drastic and more gradual, disillusionment with her, and the consequent ambivalence towards these characters in the text. Such an analysis fits well with the corresponding figures of Wendell, Amelia, and Sophia in the novel. However, for a Kohutian analysis of this work, we need not speculate about the possibility of incest. What matters is the catastrophic disillusionment itself.

Sophia, Wendell's mother, seems initially to be the main character and hero, and, indeed, Kannestine believes her to be so and finds the theme of the novel to be the strength of the women, especially personified in the noble Sophia, but this view overlooks the carnivalized disillusionment implied by much of the description of Sophia and by Sophia's shared guilt in the family misfortunes. These facets are as sharply delineated as her role of hero. The ambivalence which encloses Sophia is most understandable when seen from a Kohutian perspective of the inevitable disillusionment of a child with an admired adult. The disillusionment felt towards Sophia seems to have been more gradual and appropriate than that involving the traumatically disappointing Wendell, and, thus, while Sophia's pretensions are seen through, they are treated sympathetically. She is honored for her idealized value but

parodied for her human failures which are considerable. Her strength in caring for her family is undercut by her selfish interest in keeping them dependent on her. Her artistic talent is undercut by its use in her confidence games. Her fabled sexual attractiveness is undercut by physical grossness. Most ambiguously, she is "humorous," which is defined as the "ability to round out the inevitable ever-recurring meanness of life, to push the ridiculous into the very arms of the sublime" (10).

Her earthiness is made manifest by her five chamber pots inscribed with "Needs there are many, / Comforts are few, / Do what you will / 'Tis no more than I do" (11). The fifth, her own, is emblazoned "Amen," which she explains to her second husband, "He marketh the sparrows' fall!" (12). These chamber pots show the multiplicity which Barnes could bestow upon a single image. They memorialize Sophia's childhood observation of her father's use of one for masturbation at the time of his wife's parturition, and her use of them to judge her lovers' sense of humor. They serve to puncture the Victorian ideal of refined womanhood.

Her sexuality, which had brought her attention from many men, including royalty, is undercut through a carnivalization of her bodily functions. In one of the intermittent letters, used in the narrative to parody the epistolary novel, Amelia's sister reminds her that when Sophia "is in the way of wind, would one think to see her

(and I have your word for it, it is no unusual thing) placing upon that end a modulating finger, that she toot in unison and with design (all the while the King of Sweden's ring upon that digit)" (199).

Her pretensions to importance are also undercut. She claims social importance because she once had a salon patronized by well-known artists and the politically powerful, but, in truth, she was only a peripheral figure of scant importance. Her power is reduced to clipping pictures of the events of the day from the newspapers. Pictures are not removed but concealed by new ones so that the walls become archeological digs "two inches thick" (Scott, 65) of events and interests, beginning with both the wonderful and the horrible and ending with the trivial. This vulgarizes history, leaving us with, Kannestine says, "folklore in a diminished, cheapened present" (43).

Barnes parodies the extensive wills favored by characters in eighteenth century novels through Sophia's will. Assuming the simultaneous passing of Sophia and her husband, the will details their coupled entombment in blatantly sexual terms. These passages were excised by the censors and replaced by Barnes' asteriks. In a feminist critique of marriage, Sophia's wedding ring is described as a "worn, thin gold band of bondage" (195). Because this chapter mocks Sophia's egotism and narcissism in a much gentler way than the novel's caustic critique of Wendell, it

seems to reflect, in Kohutian terms, a more gradual and appropriate disillusionment with a selfobject. Her pieces of jewelry are to be buried with her because "they'll never look so well on another" (96), but the well-loved handicrafts of her children and grandchildren, which reflect a positive capacity for love and emotional support, are to be buried with her as well.

Sophia's role in the family is to provide the financial support so contemptuously neglected by her son. Field says she is "a schemer and a mendicant who takes tribute from former lovers whose rash letters she possesses, but all the same is heroic in her absurdity and worthy of love and forgiveness" (175). However, rather than the elegant blackmail which Field suggests, Sophia's role is that she "wrote in elegant script those nobly phrased, those superbly conceived letters of begging that had for the last ten years kept her family from ruin" (16). Her energy and creativity go into this writing project as she attempts to support her son, his wife, mistress and assorted children by begging from the rich and famous. Helped by the ruse of asking every man she begs from to call her "mother," she is a secret success. Thus the woman who had been ardently pursued by men has been reduced to begging from them.

Sophia enjoys a self-aggrandizing relationship with her granddaughter, Julie, but Julie sees through her grandmother's pretensions. Field says that "it is Julie

(Djuna) who sees her grandmother as she really is" (175). Sophia is, after all, instrumental in the family disaster. She both introduces her son's future mistress, Kate, to the household and counsels his legitimate family's abandonment. Also, Barnes makes it clear that she has contributed to her son's weaknesses of character and his squandering of talent. Her strength in keeping the family together and supporting the extensive family produced by her ne'r-do-well son insures his dependency. Her son's weakness, his dilettante artistic productions devised amid the wretchedness of his ever-hungry children, is, Julie recognizes, in her best interests. She was "Beggar at the gates, to be queen at home." We are told that "obeissance she did exact; she loved, but she would be obeyed. She was the law. She gave herself to be devoured, but in the devouring they must acclaim her, saying 'this is the body of Sophia, and she is greater than we!'" The religious parody here punctures the grandmother's grandiosity in a particularly vicious way since the Christ imagery accentuates and carnivalizes Sophia's fall from Julie's grace. "It was Julie who gave this queen her mortal hurt, for that she loved her best. Sophia offering her heart for food, Julie spewed it out on a time, and said, 'I taste a lie!' And Sophia hearing, cried in agony, but Julie went apart" (19).

In actual fact, Barnes' grandmother, on whom Sophia is based, was a writer and published journalistic pieces,

biography, novels, poetry, and a so-called spiritual piece with her second husband. Field calls her "an active journalist with a leaning towards feminist problems and themes" (174). That Barnes recognized her grandmother's collusion in her own father's weakness is attested to by Field. He says that "Barnes' lover of her English period, S--, told me that Djuna very clearly and strongly saw her father as the spoiled American son of a powerful mother." Field comments that her father, because of the overpowering mother, became involved in a "desperate searching for individuality" (179). Field also speculates about lesbian tendencies in Barnes' grandmother, although he says that "Evidence of lesbian disposition can, of course, only be inferred from nineteenth-century texts and letters" and cites as possible evidence one of Barnes' stories about a widow, twice married, who says that her husbands never caught on (173-174). Ann Dalton suggests that the grandmother's letters to Barnes contain sexual innuendos which may imply a sexual relationship between them (MLA 1990).

Whatever the historical, lived reality of the Barnes family, in the novel the figure of Sophia, the grandmother, is treated with more kindness and less anger than the father figure. This is particularly shown in a passage which reveals Sophia's role in the life of her granddaughter, Julie. She "would take her up on her knee, lying to her of

this and of this, calm, in the wisdom that realism is no food for a child." Sophia knew that "what she had been in truth would come upon Julie, and she said to herself, 'What I tell her in lie will stand there too, and the truth the prettier for it,' and so it was" (18). This evaluation is a good description of a selfobject with which a child has become gradually disillusioned, allowing the child a more realistic view of the person while retaining the ability to internalize some of the ideals which that selfobject incorporated.

A contrast to Sophia is the mother, Amelia. She is a weak woman whose role is usurped by the powerful grandmother who collaborates with her son, Wendell, in his self-aggrandizing schemes for sexual conquest. Amelia willingly puts up with a polygamous household and seemingly never stands up for herself. Her dependency and passivity make her unable to protect her children against the erratic whims of the stronger members of this family.

Her awareness of the fallacies of her husband's illusions is shown in a parody, "Kate and Amelia Go A-Dunging," a "once upon a time" story which suggests a "Just So" tale of origins (Allen 56). Kate, Wendell's mistress, and Amelia, his lawful wife, share the dirty task of cleaning out the pigeon coop, a degrading, carnivalesque assignment which is also rich in implications for a comparison of women's and men's roles. The women go "upon

their four feet to do up the dirty mess" each with "stomach crawling" (144). When Kate asks "And can you . . . tell me the reason that Wendell has fancies and we have the cleaning?" Amelia replies, "To man is the vision, to his wife the droppings!" (145). Amelia concludes, "Wendell has a dog at heel and a floor beneath his birds, so you can't expect but that we'll have the dunging when he has such faulty fancies" (147). The trained dog and floor beneath the birds are man's civilizing restrictions on nature. The women end up doing the dirty work because of Wendell's "faulty fancies," his grandiosity, and Amelia tells a revisionist story of jungle lushness and freedom in contrast to this patriarchal curtailment of the freedom of birds and dogs as well as women. Field says this chapter contains "a rare note of explicit feminism" (30), which indicates how much a traditional literary and Freudian interpretation differs from feminist readings. However, despite the disillusionment shown by Amelia in this scene, she has a need to believe in Wendell's fantasy of superiority. Her own narcissistic deficiencies have caused her need to participate in his seeming greatness.

A parody of Tom Jones is a rare instance where we see Amelia take an active assertive role because of a bloody battle between one of her children and one of Kate's. This is followed by Julie's attack on Kate. This parody is designed both to show us Wendell's coldblooded emotional

distance from the family and to deflate his sexual escapades. When Julie attacks Kate in her anger at her father, he keeps Amelia from interfering so he can enjoy the scene. "[L]iking a cock fight or dog fight, woman at woman, he had a liking for the outcome. So mildly he stood by and counted round for round" (182). After this battle, Amelia leaves home astride a horse and Kate leaves home astride a cow, unknown to each other. The mock heroic battle which follows is reminiscent of Tom Jones and, indeed, Barnes had mentioned that she was "writing the female Tom Jones" (Field 127). In that novel women are satirized, as they, piqued by upper class hand-me-downs, attack one of their own who is rescued by the generous, if guilty, Tom. The mock heroic parodies their attempt at and their obvious failure to attain the masculine glory of war; however, in Ryder, while it is the women who seem to be parodied, conventional ideas of the feminine are challenged. Their conflict is based, not on an aggrandizing jealousy over Wendell, but on mundane and petty issues of property, household tasks, and social propriety. They argue not about who will next enjoy his sexual favors but grotesquely about who will be buried in the "wife's" grave. It ends with a sisterly agreement on the part of Amelia to protect Kate from Wendell's "hot bottom" experiments to make her more sexually responsive.

Amelia's other important role is in that of childbirth. In general, multiple childbirths, and death in childbirth of

both mother and child, permeate the novel. Ryder begins with Sophia's attendance on her dying mother, who has been driven insane by fourteen childbirths; it continues with descriptions of multiple births and deaths, both in and out of wedlock; and it contains multiple references to the pains and dangers of childbirth throughout the parodies. Sheryl Stevenson notes that childbirth holds the characteristically carnivalesque qualities of ambivalence and borderline phenomena. When Amelia goes into labor, Julie, at the age of ten, is sent by her father to help her in childbirth while his mistress is also in labor in an adjacent room. Julie is instructed on the dangers of "being natural" which ends in "screaming oneself into a mother" (117) in this bloody, grotesque birth scene. Wendell grandiosely rejects the need for a doctor, insists that he himself is sufficient and then saddles the ten-year old child with the enormous responsibilities of the birth. Julie's terrified presence at the scene exposes her to her mother's "rage and pain." Amelia states that no woman would be a mother if she could change her mind midway in labor. She says to the baby, "Out, monster, this is love!" (120) who, at this moment, embodies the grotesque contradictions of love. However, in her rage, Amelia is less victim and more active, angry, and heroic. Her narcissistic deficiencies which usually make her cling to Wendell as an authority are temporarily ameliorated in the act of childbirth. While the childbirth

scene affirms a positive women's reality and their self-worth, in their function of giving life, it also reveals a grotesque world of blood, pain, and fear. Narrated from the position of the child watching the mother give birth, the text focuses on the anger, horror, and distress of the frightened child hiding in her mother's skirts and thus denies the life-affirming nature of childbirth.

Meanwhile, since Wendell has impregnated both his wife and mistress at the same time, Kate gives birth to a stillborn baby and there follows a grotesque biblical parody of Wendell's careful dressing of the dead baby. Sheryl Stevenson sees in this parody an exposing of the underlying patriarchal ideology of the Bible (83). It parodies traditional patriarchal genealogy and exposes illegitimacy. It deflates Wendell's grandiosity by assigning him a feminine role as he tenderly cares for the dead baby. This is followed by another parody of an Elizabethan lullaby of a mother drowning a young boy which again contradicts conventional ideas of motherhood.

Amelia's bloody birthing, at which Julie has assisted, and Kate's stillbirth, are followed by yet another biblical parody in which Wendell tells his first and second children about their births on the occasion of the birth of their brother: "and she was in labour, and her belly was emptied of him, and was delivered of him" (131). This male version

sharply contrasts with the preceding chapter of blood and horror, which undercut the male idealization of birth. After the stillbirth, Kate again finds herself pregnant as the result of one of Wendell's "experiments," as each woman lay on either side, "only a hate apart" (226), and, in a tirade against both Wendell and Sophia, Kate says, "I've become infatuated with motherhood . . . It makes me ill, and there's no pleasure at either end, but I'm addict" (224). Childbirth scenes in Ryder, then, are extremely ambivalent, as no doubt Barnes herself was ambivalent, but all of these incidents call into question romantic glorifications of motherhood through the use of the grotesque. As such, Barnes' childbearing scenes are a conflicted search for the feminine, through the multiple births in Ryder, and through the birth which begins Nightwood and the virgin image which ends it.

Overshadowed by a powerful mother-in-law whom she has come to resent, and depleted by the burdens of childbearing and providing the livelihood which Wendell's artistic nature prohibits him from pursuing, Amelia can offer little in the way of being either a mirroring or idealizable selfobject to her children. Wendell is also inadequate as a selfobject for he is a total failure, although critics have not always recognized his weaknesses.

James Scott thinks Wendell is an imperfect but valorized hero while Jack Hirschman and Louis Kannestine

recognize that he is no hero because the book sympathizes with women as opposed to men. Sheryl Stevenson suggests that Ryder is an example of the Bakhtinian idea of the crowning and decrowning of the king in that Wendell is set up as a patriarchal hero bent on his promiscuous mission of free love but then uncrowned in various ways by wife, mistress, and children. The range of these responses--from hero to parody--suggests both the ambiguity of the work and the ambiguous feelings which a disappointing selfobject in childhood may generate.

In Kohutian terms, Wendell functions as an idealizable selfobject who, when his imperfections are revealed, is abruptly and catastrophically devalued. The role of the idealizable selfobject is an attractive one for someone who needs this sustaining confirmation of his own greatness. Wendell not only loves the role of an idealized selfobject, he allows himself to be dangerously inflated by it. His grandiosity feeds on the family's idealization of him. While there is always an eventual disillusionment with an idealized selfobject, a basic Kohutian idea is the need for a gradual disillusionment. A gradual recognition of the limitations of the selfobject allows a child to begin the effort of internalizing and attempting to reach his or her own goals. If the idealizable selfobject is continually perceived as perfect, the child, who is less than perfect, has difficulty working towards his or her own success. If

an idealizable selfobject is suddenly found to be insufficient, the disillusionment of the child can be catastrophic. Ideally, a child would undergo a gradual recognition of the very real limits of a person he or she has formerly seen as perfect. What the novel develops on a grand scale is a traumatic and shattering disillusionment with an idealized selfobject who is limited and self-deluded and who has aggrandized himself, using the idealizing needs of his wife and children, to confirm his unrealistic concepts of his own greatness. Any abrupt disillusionment can be shattering and catastrophic. However, if an idealized selfobject is in reality a limited and markedly inferior person who pretends values and talents which he lacks, disillusionment can be terribly painful.

We can best understand the mocking disillusionment and anger of the novel through this Kohutian concept as it is played out through carnivalized images. Wendell's early history is mocked and carnivalized, including his succession of names from English history, his "girl's body," and his inability to make a living, all of which are introduced at the beginning of the story. The introduction of Wendell culminates in a story of a boy on stilts. This carnival character connects the arch he makes with his legs to the prostitute prone and equates all to man's accomplishments to this arch. This both sexualizes and trivializes human accomplishments. This is a bitter and angry view of the

father.

Wendell fails to acknowledge his limitations. The grandiosity of Wendell can be seen in the scene in which Sophia, Wendell's mother, brings Kate, who is to become his mistress, into the home inhabited by Wendell, his wife Amelia, and their children.

"And where is your father?" inquired Sophia, and came in, Kate following, breathing, smiling.

"That you may know your destiny!" said Wendell and they all looked up, Julia looked up, and Timothy looked up, and Sophia looked up, and Amelia looked up, and Kate looked up, and beheld Wendell standing as he was born, one foot on one side and the other foot on the other side of the trap door of the loft which was three feet by three feet, and the ladder drawn up, and he leaned a little over, and laughed, and the eyes of Timothy came down, and the eyes of Julia came down, and the eyes of Sophia came down, and the eyes of Kate came down, but the eyes of Amelia did not come down.

"My God!" she said, and her eyes came down. (107)

Wendell's mother, wife, and children all witness this grotesque display, and recognize it as inappropriate. His grandiose invocation of "destiny" elicits averted eyes and is deflated by Kate's reaction--"the feathers in her hat shaking, laughing and crying"--and disposed of in her comment "You have it very comfortable here" (107). The male

display is undercut with humor, the parody and grotesque comedy which masks the author's underlying anger and disillusionment at Wendell's betrayal of Amelia as he welcomes Kate into the house. Wendell's exhibitionism parallels the earlier scene of a man on stilts, a carnivalization that Bakhtin would call a double decrowning of both achievements and sexuality.

Many of the parodies debunk Wendell's grandiosity through feminist revisions of various genres. They act to show the traumatic disillusionment with Wendell by uncovering the women's assessments of his schemes and act to forward the carnivalesque in the novel by their concentration on physicality, sexuality, and behavior unrestrained by usual social mores. Parodies of the epistolary novel in the letters of Amelia's sister, Ann, ascribe avarice, bestiality, sodomy, and cuckoldry to Wendell and recount Ann's adventures with all kinds of unmannerly realities as she attempts to support herself as a woman's companion, the only respectable job available to her. She recounts stories of a mistress who converts to Protestantism because "she has bedded with dissension in the shape of a pair of heathen breeches, and I heard of the matter as she sat upon the commode" (90). Another employer is ladylike except on Friday when Ann and the maid have to sit on her legs as she shrieks bawdy stories after imbibing the port. These stories, combined with a running commentary

on the degeneracy of this modern world, convey her outrage that such a disreputable world could usurp the ladylike world she had been led to believe existed. The reader realizes that ladylike behavior is no defense against the reality of illness, sexual appetite, and poverty.

Another parody devalues Wendell and undercuts typical feminine accomplishments. In "Pro and Con, or the Sisters Louise," Barnes parodies the Victorian gentility of two "young lady pianists" who exist in a world of lace, embroidery, good books, and music. They are, we are told, discussing "the uses of adversity" (48) which, we begin gradually to realize, is a discussion of Wendell's claims for the pleasures he provides in a polygamous setting. The sisters play a duet and embroider as they discuss Wendell's activities in delicate, yet direct, terms. The sisters reject him by painting a picture of laughing, sensually entwined, and manless women. At the thought of Wendell, whose "thundering male parts hung like a terrible anvil, whereon are beat out the resurrection and the death," the female riot is turned to "[w]rithing, biting, tearing" at each other. Rather than pleasure, man brings disaster to a female paradise, and they comment that "Hell is not for ladies" (51). Sheryl Stevenson sees this story as a revisionist feminist creation myth uncovering patriarchal forces in traditional Western myths (87). Its inversion of resurrection and its transformation of edenic imagery to a

lesbian scene are carnivalesque elements. While it seems obvious that this chapter questions the heterosexual focus of female desire and suggests the destructiveness of patriarchal power, Field finds all of Barnes' psychic life in this story. He interprets her "potent rage" at the father which "quivers but manages to maintain a very quiet, contained surface" as guilt "over murderous and incestuous desires" (29-30) even though he is aware that Barnes' father brutally arranged her sexual initiation and may have participated in it (43). The rage displayed in this story against the father is narcissistic rage at a man who failed catastrophically in his function as a selfobject by callously sacrificing his frightened child to his narcissistic promiscuity.

The story of Molly Dance also undercuts Wendell's grandiose sexual mission. This chapter, a parody of an eighteenth century novel, questions the traditional patriarchal view of women's chastity. Molly raises pedigreed dogs to support herself and her diversely fathered children. She recognizes that the dogs' value is based on their purity but gives up the cause of imposing the same standards on her girls. She says "the bitches I sell to gentlemen then be blooded straight, for when a dog goes wrong, you can tell it in an instant." She is not worried about the girls. "[O]ften's the time that the more astray they go in the beginning, the more ribbons dangle from them in the end"

(251). In a grotesque feminist revision of the myth of Adam and Eve, Molly learns from a drinking, fit-taking midwife that original sin was not a woman's fault but a man's. "It was an apple, surely, but man it was who snapped it up, scattering the seeds, and these he uses to this day to get his sons by" (259). Wendell is troubled by her unconcern about paternity and seeks to right her thinking through efforts to make her next child unequivocally his, but Molly tells him that another man had the same plan two days before. Wrestled from masculine control, pregnancy here is a triumph of the feminine.

While Sheryl Stevenson notes that it is the women in the family--wife, mistress and Julie--whose interactions with Wendell continually deflate his grandiosity, her view does not stress the disappointment of the women and children who suffer from Wendell's unempathic arrogance. Wendell is a failure as a husband and a father. Wendell's description of his children's education conveys the damage done by his narcissistic inflation as he uses the children to satisfy his own needs. He says, "My daughter is simple and great, like a Greek horror, her large pale head, with its wide-set uncalculating eyes, is that of a child begotten in a massacre and nursed on the guillotine, in other words, she can live gently from now on" (165). He says of one of his sons, "It will take him, as it will take the others, all his life to unravel the tangle of his upbringing" (166), and

"I've taken my children round by the side path where the truth lies rotting with the refuse, and they already look down upon you from a height" (166). Wendell grandiosely feels that his child-rearing tactics have produced superior children. By shielding them from the contamination of public education and providing them with a literate and artistic upbringing, by shunning hypocritical conformity and exposing them to a free and unconventional lifestyle, he has, he assumes, produced children who have some freedom in life. Yet this elides a deeper ambiguity. A "Greek horror," a "massacre," and "guillotine" evoke parental violence against the children, and the admission that it will take them all their life to "unravel the tangle" of their childhood uncovers his recognition that he has instead damaged them by his grandiosity. He has sacrificed the children and their childhood needs to his so-called larger vision, but his vision is flawed both by self-serving principles and unrealistic self-aggrandizement.

Julie and the other children are neglected by the father's preoccupation with his own concerns and his exclusion of the children, save when he needs an audience. In "The Beast Thingumbob," an outing of father and children is a vehicle for Julie's disillusionment. Wendell takes the children fishing, sharply criticizing Julie for holding a whistle wrong, and tells them the fantastic story of the Thingumbob, for he is "never so well pleased as when idling

away his life and making his offspring wonder at his fancy" (149). The Beast is a grotesque and mythic figure of wings, feathers, and fur. His love has hooved feet, ten breasts, and a face which was "not yet" (150). The picture Barnes drew to accompany this chapter was so grotesquely sexual that it was not used. The story ends in the death in childbirth of the female Thingumbob and the male's sorrow because he "knows her gift to him was the useless gift of love." Julie asks her father "Is that all?" and is told by Wendell, who cannot understand what the story would mean to a girl, "Isn't it enough?" (153). Rather than a romantic valuing of the woman, the story illustrates a callous indifference to the female's death because Wendell values only the male emotions and idealizes love and children as romantic abstractions.

On the trip home they see a dead tramp, but Wendell ignores the real presence of death. Wendell's lack of compassion for a dead tramp is contrasted to his later sentimentality when he instructs Sophia to omit the death scenes in a novel she is reading aloud to the family. "Otherwise he would cry, the tears streaming like a woman's, as all men cry" (154). Sophie reads the omitted death scene with Julie after the rest of the family goes to bed, the child contemplating death and comparing it to the death of a cat when "mystery took away the ledges and the places of the world utterly, and the cat fell, down falling, surprised,

falling surprised forever, and no one to tell it to" (159). Her awareness of death leads to an awareness of her father's callousness and selfishness. The girl is disillusioned with her father and, like the cat, falls into an unending sense of loss of balance, losing that which kept her stable, a belief in the goodness and security of her father. All her ledges of dependability and sympathy disappear.

The next to the last chapter of the book contains an encounter of Dr. O'Connor, an early version of one of the main characters in Nightwood, with a child who turns out to be one of Wendell's bastard offsprings. The child, in detailing his parentage, notes his mother's regret at having him and says, "I came forth a little fellow from under her heart, for the heart seen from beneath is well enough, . . . a child loves it well, but when one is old and looks within at the top and sees what a moiling cauldron of evil it is, then is it that lads leave home" (313-14). He continues to say that he does not want to bring the disappointment of children upon any woman. O'Connor seizes on the opportunity for further talk and implied possible seduction. This story has been commented on at length as an example of the grotesque. Louis Kannestine, in noting this boy's description of the human heart as "a moiling cauldron of evil" (314), says that "Given its terrible nature, the progress of civilization becomes a grotesque illusion, and one might best look back to the submerged myths and

religions that once were created out of and for the sake of order. In Ryder, though, the parodic treatment of fable and scripture only points up the absurdity of civilized man's attempt to resuscitate them." According to Kannestine, "mystery, in essence, is the subject of Ryder, the ambiguity of suspension between nature and humanity, life and death, man and woman. The novel conceives of being as dichotomous, wherein there is no state that does not partake of its opposite" (45-46). Such statements echo various and radically different ideas on the grotesque. Geoffrey Harpham's definition that the grotesque "threatens the notion of a center by implying coherencies just out of reach, metaphors or analogies just beyond our grasp" (43) is implied, as is Philip Thomson's definition that the grotesque is "the unresolved clash of incompatibles in work and response" and "the ambivalently abnormal" (27). Kannestine's recognition of the mythic basis of Barnes' parodic material parallels Arthur Clayborough's Jungian analysis of the grotesque as that which appeals to the unconscious and seeks a transcendental, mystical experience through the uncertainties of the grotesque (81-83). However, Ryder's grotesque is shaped for specifically feminist purposes and, as such, it is unexplored in these explanations of the grotesque. The order created by myth is male myth; here, the feminist voice points out its absurdity. Such a scene can also be read in its Oedipal

implications of the boy's rejection of his mother as he leaves home. It can also be read from a feminist perspective as an implied critique of patriarchal values which sets out to destroy the illegitimacy which would destroy it. A Kohutian reading shows us how feminist and grotesque readings can contribute to a psychoanalytic analysis. It would recognize the child's traumatic disillusionment with the mirroring selfobject who failed him because the shame of his birth caused her disappointment and grief throughout her life. The absent father and socially devalued and shamed mother have failed to provide the selfobject needs of the child. Such a story shows a continuing subtext of the consequences of Wendell's womanizing, which, rather than leading to romanticized grandeur, produces individual tragedy.

The final chapter of the book's fifty chapters is called "Whom Shall He Disappoint Now?" Wendell is terrified because the authorities are attempting to take action against his polygamous household. When Wendell says, "I have lied to the law, and the law does not believe me," his mother replies "Because you have lied beautifully" (318). Sophia ignores his weaknesses and sees society's judgments as the result of the beauty of his ideational creativeness. His philosophical fantasies have been beautiful and this has garnered official wrath. At Sophia's insistence, he tells Amelia that he must leave her for Kate. Amelia's response

recognizes that Wendell has been an idealized sustaining selfobject for her. "I have thought of you as greater oftener than anything else. . . . Why then, did you not once shift your weight if you were, in the end, to be bloody mortal, that I might have known?" (321). The story depicts the traumatic disillusionment of the wife and of Julie in the father who, thought to be a God, becomes shatteringly human. Wendell does not understand the reason for Amelia's disillusion and anger. He says, "I am born, don't you understand, I am born and I must die, that is so, is it not? That is so of everyone, but I am born and must face everything and I must die and I cannot. You must not let me face this, don't you see?" (321).

Wendell has created a beautiful story but he cannot live with its consequences, and now, when the family faces disaster because of it, their disillusionment with him is inevitable. Wendell is not the free-thinking artist who, in Amelia's words is "nature in its other shape" and "a deed that must be committed" (321), a man of such vast genius that he must be allowed god-like powers and a god-like position above the laws. Instead he turns out to be a self-centered philanderer, a shallow thinker, and a frightened coward who runs to his mother for advice. The bitter anger which fills this story may well be patricidal, as Field suggests, but, rather than being fueled by incestuous desires, it is more likely the result of Barnes'

traumatic disillusionment with her father who, like Wendell, turned out to be a second-rate painter and a failure in all his clever endeavors in real life.

To argue, as James Scott does, that Wendell is a commendable, if imperfect, hero and that his life is superior to other lives lived less in tune with nature, is to take no notice of the pain and destruction that he brings on his women and children. It is to accept the misogyny of the Thingumbob story: that the love which the Thingumbob brings to his mate is so valuable it is worth the price of death in childbirth, but that her love is a relatively valueless gift. It is to ignore, not only the discord and jealousy and poverty that Wendell brings to all, but also the fact that Wendell is depicted not as a man but as a spoiled child. Thus, Scott's sense that the story holds Wendell up for our admiration avoids many elements of the novel while Jack Hirschman and Louis Kannestine's recognition of Ryder's theme as praising the women instead of Wendell is more compatible with the novel but undervalues its condemnation of Wendell and elides its ambiguous disillusionment with Sophia and Amelia. Andrew Field is correct in the anger he detects in Ryder, but to enlist only a Freudian type of motive on Barnes' part to explain the energy of the book is to neglect the narcissistic injury that underlies her feelings, as well as to undervalue the narrative's traumatic disillusionment with Wendell.

The feminist readings done by Sheryl Stevenson and Marie Ponsot take into account much of the complexity involved in the disillusionment with the male and the violence visited upon women in their traditional roles. Arguing that Barnes' work uncovers the patriarchy at the heart of Bakhtin's carnival, Stevenson feels that Barnes' work calls for a feminist revision of Bakhtin's ideas, because they ignore the destructiveness at the heart of the so-called liberating carnival for women. The novel's feminist presentation of frequent death in and after childbirth disrupts patriarchal sentimentality with an aspect of women's reality missing in Bakhtin's more political critique. Concentrating on childbearing, Stevenson feels that Barnes has performed a radical turn from the carnivalesque as seen in the tradition of Rabelais and Chaucer. She says "the novel flaunts, anatomizes, but does not necessarily celebrate the transient, mortal body" (91). Marie Ponsot's more mythic theory that birth and death come into a synthesis in childbirth and involve a resurrection theme says that childbirth acts as resurrection even though it is "life-threatening...especially as it may appear to an onlooker--agonizing, bloody, and invasive." Ponsot's mythic sense of resurrection in childbirth is not idealized: she sees it as "Women giving life and fearing death, women giving life and dying, women giving life and shamed by bastardy" (108). But to Ponsot it also reflects

the common delight felt in the birth of a child which may not have been shared by Barnes in her always childless psychic existence.

A Kohutian reading of the traumatic disillusionment with a cherished selfobject, rather than either traditional or feminist readings, reflects Barnes' real family situation. Her father's transgressions were exorbitant. He kept a mistress and her children with his legitimate family and indulged in frequent sexual adventures elsewhere. Recovered passages deleted from The Antiphon suggest that he may have arranged Barnes's sexual initiation and possibly participated in her sexual abuse (Curry 292). Eventually he abandoned his legitimate wife, Barnes' mother, divorcing her to marry his mistress. Barnes was traumatically disillusioned with a father who had basked in the idealization of wife and children as a philosopher and artist not subject to the rules which governed lesser men. He had been to her an idealized selfobject. Given that Barnes' father is autobiographically encased in the figure of Wendell--marked resemblances, such as his artistic inclinations, philosophical pretensions, and inability to work, as well as autobiographical incidents, make all critics agree on this--it seems clear that this character conveys Barnes' bitter disappointment in her father, who turned out to be none of the things that he set himself up to be. Too undisciplined to work, Wendell lives off his

wife and mother and devises schemes for feeding the children the same bran as the cattle. Absorbed in his self-proclaimed grandiose role as fertilizer of women, he philanders while his mother begs and his wife "charred the day out below in Wendell's brother's mansion" (106). A self-aggrandizing story teller, he is gradually recognized by Julie and by the reader as self-centered and second-rate. The philosopher of big ideals, he caves in when social pressure becomes confrontation and abandons his wife, children, and his philosophical ideals. Implications of his abuse of his children and his sexual abuse of Julie are subliminal in the novel. Wendell is the wreckage of Julie's lost idealization. The novel records the child's traumatic disillusionment with a former idealized selfobject.

That Julie occupies Barnes' position in the family and is therefore a self-representation is an interpretation agreed upon by both Louis Kannestine and Andrew Field and developed in detail by Marie Ponsot. This Barnes/Julie character, despite her fury at her father, has internalized some of the formerly idealized selfobject. She is inevitably her father's daughter. Sophia recognizes this when she sees Wendell in Julie.

"[S]he has always been you," Sophia answered; "I have seen you from the seed," she continued, "and I have seen her, and you are exactly alike, except"-- she made a period in the air with one of her Jesuitical

hands--"that she is unhung, and you are slung like a man; it will make the difference."

"To get back to me," said Wendell.

"To go beyond you," said Sophia. (223)

This is obviously a feminist statement, but it also reflects Barnes' psychological dilemma. Her father, the failed artist, produced a successful artist in his daughter. Barnes' life and work present the dilemma involved when the father is rejected because he is a reprehensible disappointment, but the philosophical and educational ideals which he instilled become the bedrock of character. While her artistic productions show the positive effects of her philosophical and creative upbringing, Barnes' episodes of fragmentation as an adult, evident in bouts of alcoholism and hospitalizations, reflect the inner chaos left by the massive failure of the parental selfobject.

What we have seen in Ryder is Barnes' attempted working through of the psychological devastation wreaked by her family upbringing, involving the various failures of her self-absorbed narcissistic father and the women in the family who implicated themselves in his grandiosity, by distancing the emotional pain through parodic comedy which merges the personal world of the private, grotesque family with the wider world of literary tradition. Ryder traces the massive failure of selfobject figures in early childhood through the vehicle of parody and comedy. In Nightwood

Barnes takes on another project, tracing the vicissitudes of archaic selfobject relationships in adult sexual involvements in those who have an insufficient sense of self laid down in childhood. The parodic and carnivalesque "going down" which Barnes employs here is used to an even greater extent in Nightwood but the parody in Ryder becomes subtle stylistic echo in Nightwood. Along with this subtle use of a residue of style rather than parody is a shift from the comic to the tragic, a shift which continues in The Antiphon when Barnes again attempts to work through the childhood traumas which so bedeviled her, to confront, not the father's failure, but the mother's complicity. Along with this shift to tragedy is an attempt, through a mixture of carnivalized images and philosophical statements, to create an overlay of the universal human problem: the failures of love, marriage, and family relations, the preoccupation with these failures, and the monstrously long and painful repetition compulsion that occurs in adult life. It is to Nightwood that we turn next.

Nightwood: The Lovers

In 1936 Barnes published Nightwood, the book which was to give her a lasting, if limited, fame. Eliot's introduction and early reviews indicate its immediate literary acceptance. Summing up the early reviews, Jane Marcus says, "The reviews were long, detailed, and serious" with Dylan Thomas calling it "one of the three great prose books ever written by a woman" ("Mousemeat" 195-200). Even with a general lack of interest in Barnes in subsequent years, it has been the steady recipient of critical interest. Thus, there is a more extensive background of commentary on Nightwood than on Ryder.

Early critical comment often linked Barnes to Joyce in struggling to understand her non-chronological narrative which foregrounded structure and the novel's treatment of time. This concern with time and its philosophical implications tended to displace concern with the novel's scandalous subject matter, sparing Barnes the kind of reaction which greeted Well of Loneliness. Such criticism collaborated with Barnes' own repression of the sexual content of the novel, which she distanced by the vertiginous plot, startling characters, grotesque imagery and brilliant language. It was the possibility of this critical evasion which allowed a novel about such a taboo subject to command

literary respect. This early criticism has recently been supplemented by feminist criticism which sees Nightwood's homosexual content as a scathing expose of a patriarchal society which distorts all sexuality by its heterosexual mores. Kohut's and Bakhtin's theories suggest another line of approach: confronting the crippling relationships entered upon by these characters from the viewpoint of their narcissistic and borderline characteristics in a carnivalesque world which echoes and reciprocates the fragmentation of the characters.

A major element in both the fragmentation of the characters and the carnivalesque in the novel is the treatment of time. Nightwood's non-chronological structure, which disrupts and unsettles our usual sense of time, reflects a fragmented world and appropriately introduces us to this nightmare world of desire, physicality, and dreams. Rather than Bakhtin's pre-Renaissance world of great common festivals, this is a carnival world of individual tortured emotions. This is a world of carnival time: time suspended or separated from ordinary reality. Such a world splinters our expectations of coherence and unity. Thus, it mirrors Nightwood's fragmented characters as they attempt to assuage their fragmentation through a relationship to time and history. Since chronological order is confused, structure in the novel is achieved, as in Joyce's work, by an interwoven set of repeated flamboyant images which give the

work a decadent, carnivalistic impact and what Donna Gerstenberger calls a "self-referential internal coherence" (10). This imagery is what made Eliot say that it was a novel that would appeal to readers of poetry. Kenneth Burke has traced the recurring imagery of blood, wood, animals, and variations of the word "turning" in Nightwood (332-339). These images, plus images of the circus, physicality, sexuality, suffering, depravity, dreams, and the night, are part of the carnivalesque downward movement foretold in the first chapter title, "Bow Down."

Early criticism of Nightwood concentrated on this repetitive grotesque imagery as a basis of structure in the novel. One of the earliest was Jack Hirschman who called the novel, based on Joseph Frank's concept of "spatialization of form," an example of the "orchestrated novel," which used a pattern "of verbal (imagic) leitmotif(s)" (46). Later, Joseph Frank would also say that Nightwood is "knit together, not by the progress of any action . . . but by the continual reference and cross reference of images and symbols that must be referred to each other spatially throughout the act of reading" (32). This web of repetitive, evocative, carnivalesque images displaces time in structuring the novel. Louis Kannestine, in The Art of Djuna Barnes, makes much the same comment about the verbal patterns in the novel, saying that "Nightwood's unity results in great measure from the

intricate interlacing of visual, musical, theatrical, and poetic motifs" (103). He feels that Nightwood achieves unity and artistic coherence by incorporating what he calls "associative resonance" (87), alluding to the reader's sense of literary echoes which pervade the work. In Nightwood parody has been submerged into an echo of historical precedence and influence. The parody of Ryder has been changed into traces of past literary style. Kannestine believes that Barnes in Nightwood has, in the subject matter of night and dreams, found a way of resolving the structural problems posed by her desire to fragment traditional narrative "reality" that she does not solve in Ryder with her abrupt changes in parody, character focus, and genre. For him, the disorderliness of the dream becomes in Nightwood a way of organizing and containing the disorder (87).

Bakhtin's work catalogs the different ways time is treated in the novel, organizing novels in different chronotopes on the basis of their treatment of time. What his efforts suggest is the way that all treatment of time in a novel is artificial and conventional. However, the chronological confusion of Nightwood makes time a particularly important element of the novel. Because time in the novel acts to disorient the reader, mirror the fragmentation of the characters, and plunge us into a world of the grotesque, the chronological sequence has preoccupied

critics. The distortion of time foregrounds it and thus invests it with importance. Both chronological time and historical time within the novel become philosophical and psychological concerns. The disruption of chronological time foregrounds its connection with mortality and human tragedy while the characters attempt to consolidate their identity and soothe their sense of fragmentation by their preoccupation with the culture and history which is time's story. A simple description of the time sequence of Nightwood will help to illuminate its chronological discontinuities. The interior time of the novel begins with the description of Felix's parents, then leaps forward thirty years. The chronological sequence of the novel turns upon itself to retrace events of betrayal from different perspectives. Thus, three of the middle chapters end with the same event, forcing the reader into retrospectively recognizing their chronological sequence. The chapter in which Nora quizzes O'Connor about the night occupies only a few hours of chronological time but a disproportionate number of pages and seems to function outside of time. Later chapters where Felix's son Guido is older indicate that unmentioned years have passed since the events of the novel began.

However, while critics agree about the importance of time in the novel, they disagree about how it functions. Joseph Frank says that Nightwood has no identifiable time

structure and that "the question of the relation of this vision to an extra-artistic 'objective' world has ceased to have any fundamental importance" (28). Nathan Scott comments that "the abolition of time . . . is taken more radically in . . . Nightwood" (53) than in other similar works, but Kannestine disagrees, saying that, despite the disassociation of the novel, "the central situation of the novel is built up in chronological time" (91). He comments that the time sense of the novel changes as the narrative progresses. "In Nightwood," he says, "time is marked with diminishing regularity up to the point of the separation of Robin and Nora, after which there is a descent into night and the unconscious, and ultimately the preconscious and ahistorical" (94). Walter Sutton insists that the time sequence is very clear and that the "chief burden" of the novel is the oppressive time "consciousness of a particular place and time in history" and "this movement . . . may be described as one of primitivist regression from a conscious existence burdened by an awareness of historical time in a decadent western society toward the pre-conscious animal level to which Robin finally descends" (120, 118). In his view, "all of the characters are suffering from the burden of time" (120).

While these critics disagree as to the role of time in the novel, they all agree on its disruptive role and, consequently, on the novel's foregrounding of and

preoccupation with time. Time saturates the novel, not as time passing or as a nostalgia for the past, but as a bitter sense of disconnection and disorientation. Time becomes problematic. The dislocation of chronological order, the spacity of internal time in which the novel is supposed to take place, and the uncertain time lapses between events all generate aspects of a disorientation of time. The internal time of the narrative, the historical echoes evoked by language and imagery, and the personal confrontations with time and history by the characters--all intertwine with the characters' struggles with their troubled and disordered sense of selfhood and their fragmentation. Rather than a carnival breakdown of official order, this disorganization of time reflects the individual breakdown of coherence. The characters struggle to come to some sort of terms with their relationship to time, their sense of selfhood, which is tethered uneasily to temporal reality. The characters' orientation to time becomes a touchstone of identity. It is through a relationship with both family history and national history that some of the characters try to shore up their weakened sense of self. Thus Jenny and Felix are both preoccupied with history. Robin is linked to a prehistorical past and her antique clothing heightens the sense that she is outside her own time. O'Connor grandiously traces his identity through centuries. His speeches connect history and myth and assert that the real

history of man is emotional and forgotten in our concentration on traditional, factual history. This disruption of time, this sense of discontinuity as these characters sort through their relationship to history to establish their identity, displays a lack of coherent selfhood. In the novel fragmentation of time exists as part of a fragmentation of self. The sense of a true authentic self, which, according to Kohut, is continuous over time, is weakened. Kohut feels that this disruption in continuity is particularly prevalent in our age. Unlike the Freudian sense of the past in its search for the psychic disturbance, Kohut feels this Proustian sense of the past shows a "need to establish a developmental continuity of his self. There is a break. The self is fragmented along the time axis." In discussing a client's feelings of wholeness when an analyst had recalled a remark the client had made previously, Kohut said, "You see, what I discovered I believe is the pathology of time perception in our time" (Self Psy 317, 220).

This distortion of a sense of time is also related to the group self, the confirmation of self attained through the sustaining mirroring and idealizable aspects of the cultural identity one is given as a member of society. The lack of idealizable selfobjects that shore up one's cultural identity creates additional problems for the individual. A country in defeat or a denigrated minority suffers the disruption of idealizable cultural selfobjects. In such a

situation, individuals may attempt to scaffold a sense of self-continuity about by looking to figures from the historical past to supply their needs. Such a person can thus identify with a religion, a culture, a national identity, or a heroic figure. Such identifications can be used in an attempt to shore up and sustain the sense of self. In the novel the way in which time constructs the sense of the real is foregrounded and concomitantly reveals the fragmentation and fragility of modern life. This foregrounds the threat of fragmentation which constantly looms over the narcissistic characters, who do not have the self-structure necessary to provide a sustaining sense of self-coherence as they progress through life.

Space, too, is also fragmented in the novel by a certain lack of specific detail. The geographical location is always clear, but foregrounded only by carnivalesque imagery. The lack of traditional structure also operates to undercut a sense of authority and, by fragmenting not only the narrative sequence but also the narrative's philosophical statements and dialogical exchanges, the novel resists a satisfying sense of authority and closure.

Thus, the disruption of time, space, and authority are carnivalesque techniques used by Barnes in the novel. These disruptions place us in the world of the carnivalesque, with its upside-down, inside-out description of our experience, foregrounding its textual reality as opposed to our lived

reality. Another carnivalesque technique is the dazzling and gritty language of the novel. This style becomes one with the theme. Nightwood foregrounds language as language and thus recognizes its distance from the real and its essential duplicity. Language reflects the fragmentation of the novel, creating uneasiness in the reader by its dislocations and substitutions. Language fragments in the narrative in subtle ways. Barnes dislocates words grammatically, substituting one part of speech for another, the resultant clash serving to accentuate the thus-opened memory. Non sequiturs, double entendres, and parody do the same.

Character, too, is carnivalesque, exaggerated through grotesque imagery and bizarre actions. Rather than inhabiting a world connected by Bakhtinian carnival festival, this carnivalesque diminishes character, restricting them to an isolated cafe world of dissolute living. Barnes does not introduce her characters through the usual devices of dialogue and plot. Each of the characters involved in the love relationships--Felix, Jenny, Nora, and Robin--is introduced imagistically in a separate chapter. Joseph Frank compares Barnes' method of character presentation to that of the Elizabethans where "the dramatic poet defined both physical and psychological aspects of character at one stroke, in an image or a series of images" (29-30). The method by which the private story is extended

to the universal through a philosophical overlay which distances private emotion is also carnivalesque in its discussion of night, sleep, sex, excrement, and blood. Part of what happens in the novel is that a private love story is overlaid with a philosophical commentary on time, history, and the "night" which both universalizes the story and distances the pain. Andrew Field talks of Barnes' "ability to distance, so that subjects of deep pain and emotion are rendered with a hard-edged yet comic beauty that produces a very strange effect" (458). O'Connor, a character who acts like a Greek chorus, is the tool of this distancing. Field notes that O'Connor, like a foregrounded part of a painting, is enlarged, and the story which forms the plot is diminished. He says, "The heat may be less, but the light which is shed on a whole range of matters beyond the particular lesbian love affair is considerably greater" (147).

These carnivalesque devices also have Kohutian implications. O'Connor's philosophizing can be viewed as a narcissistic defense, and the resulting distancing achieved by the philosophical universalizing and Barnes' heavily overwritten style can be seen as a symptom of Barnes' narcissistic disorder. The philosophical overlay which struggles to make universal sense out of private emotional pain also has Kohutian implications. Kohut, in extending the concept of the mature selfobject to ideas and culture,

allows us to see that when archaic selfobjects fail, the individual may attempt to use the larger society in their place to satisfy his or her need for self-structure through a national, philosophical, or artistic identity, although such an attempt would be doomed to failure without a core sense of self. Finally, the pathological narcissism of the individual characters can be traced as it impels them into the catastrophic emotional involvements with which they seek to shore up their fragile selves. All of these concerns will be evident in our discussion of the novel.

There is an essential relationship between the narcissism of the characters and the philosophical concerns of the novel, a way in which both Bakhtinian and Kohutian issues are at play here. Barnes' use of the grotesque in the novel places it in Bakhtin's tradition of the carnival, but she creates a private world of personal pain. The carnivalesque imagery connects the individual privatized experience to the common lot of humanity, and the characters, by identifying with the communal whole established by the universalizing of the human condition and human history, unsuccessfully attempt to shore up the self. Felix is the most obvious example of this in his endless preoccupation with history, but Jenny, Robin, and O'Connor also attempt to bolster the self by seeing the self as part of a communal whole.

Nightwood begins with the birth of Felix, backtracking

from that point to introduce his parents. While there is general agreement among critics about the identity of contemporaries upon whom Nightwood's characters are based, such agreement is not unanimous. Field tells us that Felix was based on the character of Guido Bruno, a Greenwich village character who published Barnes' first book, The Book of Repulsive Women, in 1915 (14) while Lynn DeVore believes him to be modeled on the common-law husband of Baroness Elsa von-Freytag Loringhoven, who used the name Baron Volkbein and eventually became Frederick Philip Grove, Canadian writer and scholar (81-84). Whatever Barnes' source, Felix's family history carnivalizes him and marks him as a fragmented character. Guido, Felix's father, is described as "small, rotund, and haughtily timid, his stomach protruding slightly in an upward jutting slope that brought into prominence the buttons of his waistcoat and trousers, marking the exact centre of his body with the obstetric line seen on fruits" (234). The carnivalesque elements of belly, childbirth, and the exaggeration of a typically anti-Semitic caricature plunge us into the grotesque. In Kohutian terms, Felix's father is characterized through his fragmented cultural identity. Hiding his Italian Jewish identity under the fraudulent title of an Austrian baron, he suffers from his knowledge of the history of ancient persecution where "the very Pope himself [was] shaken down from his hold on heaven with the laughter of a man who

forgoes his angels that he may recapture the beast" (234). He recollects the stories of barbarous persecution of the Jews "for the amusement of the Christian populace" (234). This recollection recognizes the fragility of the religious which cannot prevent an upsurge of primitive cruelty combining carnival and death.

Guido's self-fragility is implicit in his ambivalence toward his Jewish heritage and his fabrication of an aristocratic ancestry. To shore up his uncertain selfhood, he attempts to merge with his Christian wife with whom "He had tried to be one by adoring her, by imitating her goose-step of a stride" (235). Carnival pictures of an actor and actress masquerade as Guido's titled forbearers. The exaggeration and multiplication of furniture, such as three pianos, cast their house in terms of carnival and make-believe. We are told that "The whole conception might have been a Mardi Gras whim" (237). Guido and Hedvig's home is "peopled with Roman fragments" (236), dismembered pieces of statuary which indicate, at once, time and the past, fragmentation, and death. Guido accumulates artifacts--this cultured clutter accumulated to prove a bogus past--in his desire to provide himself with a sense of self-importance. He has fabricated a title and a bogus history, complete with family portraits which the next generation will accept uneasily as historical fact. Thus, this first chapter, "Bow Down," raises questions about cultural and personal identity

and about the essentially constructed nature of both the historical past and cultural truth.

Felix's mother is the forty-five year old Christian woman "of great strength and military beauty" (233) who dies in childbirth. Her military bearing is a carnivalesque inversion of the expected feminine characteristics and an ominous detail, a trace of the historical mood of Germany at this time. Jane Marcus comments that Hedvig embodies "German nationalism" and says that "Barnes breaks taboo by representing absent Aryan patriarchal power in the person of a woman" ("Laughing" 229). Hedvig, Felix's mother, believes in Guido's fabricated family history of a baronage, although "[s]omething in her sensory predicament--upon which she herself would have placed no value--had told her much better" (236). Under her cover of chic "there had been anxiety" (236). Thus, the supposedly established truth of the "chic" is undercut by an unnamed knowledge which she refuses to acknowledge. The death of Felix's parents deprives him of essential selfobjects and the child is rejected before and through the death of the mother: "She named him Felix, thrust him from her, and died" (233). The untimely death of Guido, Felix's father, six months previously has left him doubly abandoned.

In the abrupt, discontinuous narrative structure of the novel, Felix reappears at the age of thirty. He has learned his personal history through a verbal history, his identity

established by the narrative of a sole aunt. The death of his parents has cut him off from his family history but, in the same gesture, preserved it. Thus, it is despite of and through the death of his parents that Felix absorbs a family history of the fraudulent past. Because Felix's history is presented through the authority of a single voice, it is thus preserved from the fragmentation of multiple truths. This past is, inevitably, fabricated and its single truth is his suspect aristocratic heritage. The circus portraits acquired by Felix's father to shore up the story of a phony baronage become for Felix the authentic treasured portraits of his grandmother and grandfather. One generation's lie becomes the next generation's historical fact, but this fact is forever tainted by anxiety and doubt. The adult Felix is a character who has not established a sufficient sense of self and his narcissistic vulnerabilities leave him continually searching for a sustaining selfobject which will satisfy his needs. His father's phony baronage has focused his attention on the aristocracy and its history. Mysteriously successful with money, Felix has his father's ability to acquire the accoutrements of wealth and power. This results in a primitive grandiosity which, because it was not empathically mirrored and appropriately tamed, becomes grotesque. Thus, Felix is obsessed by class concerns. His obsequious snobbishness, his fawning and clumsy subservience to fashion, and his bizarre attraction

to a lower class milieu while hypnotized by upper class concerns, all present a singularly unadmirable character. He is a man who has been deprived of the vital selfobjects necessary to develop a cohesive, non-fragmenting self.

Because his father's and mother's death have resulted in the lack of mirroring and idealizable selfobjects, Felix, as an adult, attempts to fulfill these unmet selfobject needs. One such doomed attempt is through his preoccupation with the idealized aristocracy which Felix reveres, yet cannot become, and he compulsively seeks out the proof of the fraudulency of his heritage even as he haunts museums in an endless attempt to find historical evidence of his aristocratic--that is grandiose--selfhood. Adulation of the aristocracy determines all his decisions. We are told that "His rooms were taken because a Bourbon had been carried from them to death. He kept a valet and a cook; the one because he looked like Louis the Fourteenth, and the other because she resembled Queen Victoria" (240). He attempts to shore up his inadequate sense of self through an identification with the historical aristocracy which traditionally has rejected the Jew. Deprived of adequate parental selfobjects and shorn of his own history, he has thus been left rootless. We are told that "No matter where and when you meet him you feel that he has come from some place--no matter from what place he has come--some country that he has discovered rather than resided in, some secret

land that he has been nourished on but cannot inherit, for the Jew seems to be everywhere from no where" (238). Barnes' use of Jewishness in this text, which was written after a sojourn in Berlin and was both written and set between World War I and World War II, seems both historically overdetermined and anti-Semitic. And yet the image of a disowned yet suffered history, the obsequious behavior of the forever hunted, "the genuflexion the hunted body makes from muscular contraction," (234) and the fabricated proofs of the non-existent past in the character of Felix become images of the multiple convolutions and unknowability of truth. History is fabricated, concealed, yet guessed.

Because the Jew, as symbol of everyman, receives his own history through others, history is inevitably mediated through error and both owned and disowned in a piece-meal and second-hand fashion. Barnes says, "It takes a Christian, standing eternally in the Jews' salvation, to blame himself and to bring up from that depth charming and fantastic superstitions through which the slowly and tirelessly milling Jew once more becomes the 'collector of his own past'" (240). Cultural identity, which comes from the other, is extrinsic and fraudulent. Rather than a healthy, whole sense of self, this fabricated self is narcissistically vulnerable and must seize on an external cultural or historical tradition in a vain attempt to soothe

its fragmentation. Also, the second-hand nature of cultural identity suggests the fragmented and fabricated nature of history. On a personal level, the true, unaristocratic family origins, which would give Felix a sense of personal identity, have been lost. His rootlessness and sense of cultural displacement result from a displacement of the self--an internal lack of identity which is sensed by all who meet him.

Uncomfortably aware of his defective selfhood, Felix is self-conscious. "From the mingled passions that made up his past, out of a diversity of bloods, from the crux of a thousand impossible situations, Felix had become the accumulated and single--the embarrassed" (239). The weight of the sentence structure leads us to anticipate a single dignified or tragic attribute, but Felix's self-conscious awareness of his narcissistic shame is depicted through this comic anticlimax. His clothing also reflects his uncertain selfhood. Seeking the correct regalia that will make him acceptable, he is tailored for all occasions and thus for none. Because of his insatiable need to internalize a sense of greatness, he bolsters his defective grandiose self by focusing on his supposed aristocratic heritage. "He felt that the great past might mend a little if he bowed low enough and gave homage" (239).

And yet, despite Felix's infatuation with the aristocracy, he is most at peace with the opposite end of

the social spectrum: the carnival, the world of acrobats and sword swallowers who have assumed glittering titles and costumes. This world for Felix is a perfect match for his inner state because it projects a facade which is both satisfying and essentially inauthentic. The circus, particularly as used here, represents not only the carnivalesque but also narcissistic grandiosity, which is dramatized in the daring feats of the circus performers who receive the applause and admiration of the audience for their grandiose feats. Yet the circus world is also deflated behind the grandiose pretence. It is a world of imitation, tawdriness, and obvious illusion. Just as Felix's dubious title acts to "dazzle his own estrangement" (241) and satisfy his lack of identity because it covers over or "dazzles" with pseudo-identity, so the circus dazzles by both the exclusivity of its membership and its theatrical pseudo-titles like the mock kings and queens of carnival. The circus achieves its "emotional spiral . . . from the immense disqualification of the public" (241). The circus, which is "splendid and reeking falsification" (241), excludes the outsiders who find their identity in the class structure which the carnival mocks through their pseudo titles. Aware of his inauthentic place in the class structure, Felix finds in the circus world a "peace that formerly he had experienced only in museums" (241). As the chronic outsider, Felix is attracted to the inauthentic

world of the circus. Its pageantry speaks to the temporality and artificiality of all social structure. By flaunting aristocratic titles and thereby calling into question the identity assigned by society, it subverts all into the carnivalesque.

In the theatrical and artificial pageantry of the carnival, "something" in Felix is pacified. That this "something" is narcissistic rage is hinted at in the description of how Felix feels "something of the love of the lion for its tamer... [who] though curious and weak, had yet picked the precise fury from his brain" (241). Although Felix has defensively denied the narcissistic rage caused because his needs were not met by his parents, the circus permits the suppressed fury to dissipate by allowing him to participate in its archaic exhibitionism and grandiosity.

One of Felix's circus acquaintances is the Duchess of Broadback, who is in reality Frau Mann. A trapeze artist, Frau Mann is a carnivalesque figure for she is described as unsexed and doll-like and she has a crotch like polished wood. Sheri Benstock, linking this image of the stitched up woman to other images of doll and statue in the novel, calls these figures desexed "dummy women." Benstock says "Man loves not the living woman but her deadly image; he remakes the living in the image of the dead, taking away her life and breath, sewing up her sexuality" (260). Felix, with the Duchess of Mann, attends a party in Berlin given by someone

who may or may not be an important man, a possibly bogus count, this uncertainty again calling into question socially determined identity. What entices Felix to attend the party are both the host's apparent, yet questionable, aristocracy and a certain decadence indicated by living statues who may be featured. These statues imply the objectification and exploitation of the "statues," the decadence of the era, and the pre-World War II breakdown of social order.

However, the living statues never materialize at the party and we are introduced to another character, Dr. O'Connor, who provides psychological and philosophical insights concerning this fragmenting and fragmented social order. When O'Connor sees Frau Mann, the trapeze artist, in a costume the design of which "ran through her as the design runs through hard holiday candies" (242) he is reminded of another carnivalesque character, a circus performer who fought a bear. O'Connor tells a story of a tattooed man, "Nikka the nigger who used to fight the bear in the Cirque de Paris." Nikka's tattoos are either inappropriate and obscene or replicas of great art and literature. He is a hodge podge of bits and pieces. His penis is inscribed with Desdemona while other tattoos are a treatise in Gothic script about Paris before plumbing and an angel from Chartres. Nikka, the man who fights the beast, is a walking history of beauty, physicality, and bestiality. What the doctor considers barbarity, Nikka considers beauty. Nikka, then,

represents the inseparable nature of the two. Jane Marcus, in "Laughing at Leviticus," discusses the specific meaning of these tattoos showing how they project savage and violent desires onto the black man and break "the Leviticus taboo of writing on the body and the taboo on mixing objects, for text and drawings clash with each other, mixing the sacred and profane, the vulgar and the revered, the popular and the learned" ("Laughing" 224).

Felix, troubled by the doctor's assault on the clearly established sense of social order which sustains his fragile self, counters the doctor's outburst with historical facts about Vienna's "military superiority, its great names" (246). This is an effort to soothe himself by retreating into his established grandiose investment in his aristocratic heritage as a way of shoring up his now deficient sense of self, but it crumbles under the impact of O'Connor's cryptic comments. At this point Nora interrupts with the question "Are you both really saying what you mean or are you just talking?" Nora's question distinguishes between the use of language to reveal meaning and the use of language to serve other ends of power, aggrandizement, and manipulation. The doctor responds, "Nora suspects the cold incautious melody of time crawling." Felix's response is equally curious. When he hears the phrase "time crawling" he breaks "into uncontrollable laughter," and, although "this occurrence" troubles him the rest of his life, he is

"never able to explain it to himself" (246). This insistence that language can both reveal and conceal meaning and Felix's inexplicable laughter form a complex web of associations in which we sense the interconnection of time with the elusiveness of meaning. Felix's troubling laughter covers over a Rabelaisian reaction to the horror which is concealed in time: death.

After another monologue by the doctor on love and different religions, Felix tells of a condemned man who rises to be executed but marks his place in his book. The doctor replies, "That is not man living his moment, it is man living his miracle" (249). The idea of living in the moment is a recurring philosophical refrain in the novel and highlights the contrast between living in the present and Felix's obsession with the past. Such a living in the present should bring transcendence and authenticity beyond the props of the selfobjects. This living in the present implies a confrontation with death, and thus resembles Bakhtin's threshold dialogue where the recognition of the reality and closeness of death changes the perception of life. This confrontation strips away the illusions of both life and death, and, mourning both, leaves us standing in the present and at the threshold of being. Such ideas, in invoking transcendence, move us into the realm of religious thought and would seem, thus, to go beyond the concerns of Kohut's self psychology. Yet, Kohut, in talking about

courage, discusses those heroes and martyrs who seem to act out of a deeply grounded nuclear self. He talks about a "final equilibrium at the point when the central narcissistic structure achieves its total victory and a tranquil joy pervades the total personality" (Self Psy 27). The person who has reached such a state can even face death without loss of serenity.

After being dismissed from the pseudo-count's party, whose money-changing activities in Berlin illustrate the political chaos and human betrayal of the times and whose pseudo title calls all titles and all identities into question, O'Connor explains that the count, who had arrived with a young girl, "suspected that he had come upon his last erection" (252). This adds a sense of impending loss to the scene, which is later recognized as O'Connor's own loss. These images link in carnivalesque fashion social class, money, and sexuality to death and loss, which is then rendered comic by the trivialities of the group's efforts to find a new place to drink.

The sense of missing self-structure in Felix reminds the doctor of a side show figure: a woman born without legs built "like a medieval abuse" (252) who wheeled herself on a board. Abused and abandoned by a sailor, she must wheel herself back to town on her plank. She cries tears straight down, an image which both recalls the title of this first chapter, "Bow Down," and recurs later when the doctor

confesses his confrontation with his sexual impotence in a church. This story of the woman, half missing, recalls to him a snapshot of his parents on a roller coaster, his mother beautiful and his father lustful. This trace of memory, which is a reconstruction of the absent memory of parental sexuality, is associated with the legless woman, a story which masks O'Connor's as yet untold story of missing wholeness and which links sexuality, time passing, and carnival.

The second chapter, "La Somnambule," begins with a detailed description of O'Connor's lonely, impoverished circumstances in Paris as he "turns up" in Felix's life again. O'Connor's influence is compared to a rose thrust by a lover among more decorous funeral flowers which has the effect of "dragging time out of his bowels (for a lover knows two times, that which he is given, and that which he must make)" (256). Death, sexuality, and time are interwoven in this image. In Felix's struggle to understand life, O'Connor becomes unexpectedly important.

In Felix's presence the doctor is called upon to assist Robin Vote, who has fainted. There seems to be little doubt that Robin is based on Thelma Wood, Djuna Barnes's lover, but, again, Lynn DeVore is a dissenting voice, identifying Robin as Baroness Elsa von-Freytag Loringhoven, a friend of Barnes' and a notorious and tragic figure in Greenwich Village. Whatever the realistic basis of the character,

Robin is characterized in surrealist, grotesque terms. Three of the characters in the book suffer from a compulsive love relationship with her, yet we never see her in conventionally appealing terms. Rather, her appeal seems to be to the unconscious and thus it is nearly incomprehensible. She represents a descent into the animal, a pulling down into the depths of the body, and physical decay. Robin is the focus of desire in the book, yet she is described in terms of grotesque vegetative life and decay.

On a bed, surrounded by a confusion of potted plants, exotic palms and cut flowers, faintly over-sung by the notes of unseen birds, which seemed to have been forgotten--left without the usual silencing cover, which, like cloaks on funeral urns, are cast over their cages at night by good housewives-- . . . The perfume that her body exhaled was of the quality of that earth-flesh, fungi, which smells of captured dampness and yet is so dry, overcast with the odour of oil of amber, which is an inner malady of the sea, making her seem as if she had invaded a sleep incautious and entire. Her flesh was the texture of plant life, and beneath it one sensed a frame, broad, porous, and sleep-worn, as if sleep were a decay fishing her beneath the visible surface. (259-60)

These images are inimical to rationality, healthiness, and wholeness. Robin is one with the sea, vegetative life,

and decay. She is a symbol of an uncertain femininity. As a character, she is a catalyst to others who use her to fill the vacuum of unmet narcissistic needs but who confront in her the disorder, desire, and death of the monstrous female. The description is connected with death through the image of caged birds whose covers are likened to cloaks on funeral urns, and through the images of fungi, decay, some sort of sea-like luminescence, deterioration, sleep, and carnivorous flowers. All of these images of disintegration draw us down to a physical, carnival level of reality. Thus, Robin also represents a return to nature, to the physical world, and to life as well as death. She represents a connection with an elusive primitive wholeness, a private, individual carnivalesque which contrasts to Bakhtin's Rabelaisian carnival and which, in the end, is a mirage, because it conceals her own lack of a sense of self.

O'Connor, under the pretense of rendering medical aid, dons her make-up to conceal the theft of her money. The doctor's actions, which Felix witnesses, have the tone of a hoax or a magic show or an acrobat risking death. It is "as if the whole fabric of magic had begun to decompose, as if the mechanics of machination were indeed out of control and were simplifying themselves back to their origin" (261). All are carnival images of origins and magic which suggest the power and dangers of the unconscious and the illusory nature of what we think is reality.

Robin has the carnivalesque characteristics of indeterminacy and ambiguity. Her tall boyish figure hints at a confusion of the sexes and her childlike quality a confusion of age. Her clothes, literally remade from antique clothing, give her a flavor of the aristocratic past, and yet she carries "the quality of the 'way back' as animals do" (264). Robin seems old and is connected with death: "like an old statue" she is "formed in man's image" as a "figure of doom" (265). Later, Robin is described as having an odor of the past, "as if the past were a web about her, as there is a web of time about a very old building," and as having "an undefinable disorder, a sort of 'odour of memory' like a person who has come from some place we have forgotten and would give our life to recall" (325). This indefinable something, which is linked to disorder and decay--and to vegetative life and animals--entices others with an implied promise of an escape from time. She seems to offer a glimpse into some initial absence, lost memory, or primal scene. Such images suggest the primal force of the unconscious which drives Felix's desire.

When Felix meets Robin, her identification with the sea and with the earth speaks to his unconscious, awakening again the hope of encountering that maternal mirroring which he lacks and which he needs to establish his identity. It also prompts in him the desire to father a child in a further attempt to create a sense of coherent selfhood.

Felix, when asked by O'Connor who he would choose for a wife, replies, "The American. . . . With an American anything can be done" (263). The plasticity of the American in Robin would seem to make possible an identity not dependent on the unattainable, idealized aristocracy, and thus free Felix from the fraud of his baronage. But instead, Robin is almost totally empty of a sense of self. She readily agrees to marry Felix, illustrating a passivity which Felix perceives as a plasticity and as an American trait. "When he asked her to marry him it was with such an unplanned eagerness that he was taken aback to find himself accepted, as if Robin's life held no volition for refusal" (266). However, it is her lack of a cohesive sense of self which makes her seem infinitely pliable to others, as though her void could be filled in any way that the attracted person might wish. Arguing for a feminist reading of Robin, Benstock says

Rather than a "depraved nymphomaniac," Robin Vote is, as Jane Marcus has argued, "Our Lady of the Wild Things, savage Diana the huntress with her deer and dogs, the virgin Artemis roaming the woods with her band of women" ("Carnival of the Animals" 7). She stands outside society's definitions, and that is her salvation; Nora Flood, society's representative in this novel, tries to keep Robin within society's reach--in her life, in her bed--and that is her

damnation. (255)

Such a reading sees Robin in strong feminist terms as a mythological representation of a free woman enslaved by patriarchal forces. While such a reading presents her as a powerful and positive figure and provides a healthy antidote to a reading of her as depraved, it does not account for her loneliness and desperation, and it ignores her self-destructive life style. Viewed through the focus of Kohut's theories, Robin's poignant lack of self-structure is obvious. From her totally passive first appearance in the novel--her fainting is called a pose of "annihilation" (260)--to her life as a sleepwalker, "the born somnambule, who lives in two worlds--meet of child and desperado" (260), Robin is always acted upon by others and is never the center of her own initiative. Her unmotivated marriage, her relationship with Nora, her relationship with Jenny, and her life of dissipation point to her fragmented selfhood.

Robin is mostly silent and seemingly beast-like. As such, she seems to others to be the image of forgotten memory, the primal scene. In her submergence in nature, she is a lure to an always out-of-reach memory, a memory of some forgotten previous state of unity with the mother. She is further described as an animal dressed in bridal finery, an eland in a bridal veil, "an image of human hunger pressing its breast to its prey" (262). She is "the infected carrier of the past." She is "eaten death returning, for only then

do we put our face close to the blood of our forefathers" (262). Such a tangle of images portray both need, danger, and revulsion. Robin offers herself as a feast for the desire of Felix as she seeks to satisfy her own narcissistic hungers through him--her hunger for self-structure which Felix cannot satisfy. Robin, whose fragmentation is so severe that she is returning to the beast, cannot satisfy Felix's mirroring needs.

Intuitively recognizing this, Felix attempts to remediate it by the same path which he previously pursued. He takes Robin after their marriage on an endless round of museums and palaces to imbue her with his own sense of the past. He seeks to teach Robin her role, in the only way which he has found to supply the glue of his identity. But she is indifferent to his need for history and is unable to supply his needs for maternal mirroring because "her attention, somehow in spite of him, had already been taken by something not yet in history" (267). Felix realizes that his endless recital of historical facts does not give her what she needs. "[L]ooking at her, he knew he was not sufficient to make her what he had hoped; . . . it would require contact with persons exonerated of their earthly condition by some strong spiritual bias, someone of that old regime, some old lady of the past courts, who only remembered others while trying to think of herself" (267).

Felix, obsessed with the past, hopes to find in Robin

both the possibility of a validation of the past and a link to the future in the form of a child. Pregnancy, however, awakens Robin to an acute sense of her narcissistic vulnerability. Her "sleepwalking" is broken, and she becomes "strangely aware of some lost land in herself" and takes to wandering. She embraces Catholicism and haunts churches as though "seeking something monstrously unfulfilled" (268) to satisfy her grandiose and idealizing needs, replicating Felix's attraction to the Catholic Church as a grandiose power. Her self fragility is revealed during the birth of her son, her drinking and swearing a sign of self-disintegration. "Cursing like a sailor . . . in her bloody gown" she delivers "[a]mid loud and frantic cries of affirmation and despair" (270) and cries "like a child who has walked into the commencement of a horror" (270). The birth causes her to look "about her in the bed as if she had lost something" and a week after the birth she is "lost, as if this act had caught her attention for the first time" (270). Because pregnancy and childbirth have destroyed her fragile sense of self, she has become aware of her emptiness. The intact sense of self necessary to mother another is missing in Robin, and Felix catches her in the act of seeming to wish to dash the child to the ground. While the birth of a child might be used, with more or less pathological results, by a less fragmented young mother as a sustaining selfobject through which her own mirroring and

idealizable selfobject needs could be met, Robin is unable to do this and the birth thrusts upon her a sense of her lack of self, causing her to leave both Felix and the child. This is followed by her flight to America and to a new lover, Nora, with whom she eventually returns to Paris.

Robin meets Nora at a circus where the lioness seems to recognize a kindred soul in Robin, again casting Robin in carnivalesque beast imagery. Such a description recalls an earlier newspaper interview by Barnes about the circus where she said that she felt an intimacy with the animals and speculated about what the elephant must know about her (Kannestine 6). This third chapter, "Night Watch," evolves around Nora, the character who is assumed to occupy Barnes' place in this love quadrangle. In America, Nora presides over a salon which is a carnivalesque group of "radicals, beggars, artists, and people in love" who are "dabblers in black magic and medicine" (272). Despite her connection with people who live an intense emotional life, Nora is described in rational terms. She has "balance" and "equilibrium." She is a "Westerner." She is "an early Christian," who "believed the word" (272-73).

Despite this logical orientation, Nora is described as a person moving downward. "There is a gap in 'world pain' through which the singular falls continually and forever; a body falling in observable space, deprived of the privacy of disappearance. Such a singular was Nora." Downward

movement is part of the theme of debasement, and in Kohutian terms, experiential evidence of disintegration. Yet in a Bakhtinian sense, downward movement is also a regenerative healing trip to the center. "There was some derangement in her equilibrium that kept her immune from her own descent," and she "was one of those deviations by which man thinks to reconstruct himself" (273-74).

Whereas Felix attempts to fit Robin to his need, to fix for him an identity that he is forever retrieving in bits and pieces from the past, Nora offers Robin a temporary sense of self-stability. We are aware of Robin's fear of losing this stability. "[S]he kept repeating in one way or another her wish for a home, as if she were afraid she would be lost again, as if she were aware, without conscious knowledge, that she belonged to Nora, and that if Nora did not make it permanent by her own strength she would forget" (276). In Nora's strength, Robin has found what she needs and, thus, for a while, is able to cling to Nora and still her wanderings. Compared to the other characters' capacity to love, Nora seems, at first glance, relatively whole. Yet Nora, too, is fragmented, as her compulsive love for Robin reveals. A feminist reading, Jane Marcus suggests, would see Nora's love as possessive and rigid and, thus, as patriarchal ("Laughing" 234). Sheryl Benstock offers another description of the love between Nora and Robin. She feels that Nora, in loving Robin, recognizes in her a split-

off part of herself lost as a part of her American puritanical culture which "has robbed her of her sexuality which she sees reflected in Robin" (261). Both of these interpretations stress the way sexual desire is manipulated by culture. Added to this, however, I would suggest a Kohutian reading. Nora's description of same-sex love as self-love indicates an attempt to use the loved one as an archaic selfobject. Her love can be read as narcissistic in origin: that is, as a search for the love missing between mother and daughter. Her description of her loved one as fused with her self in a confused tangle of identity is a description of an archaic selfobject relationship. Nora explains her love for Robin by saying, "a woman is yourself, caught as you turn in panic; on her mouth you kiss your own. If she is taken you cry that you have been robbed of yourself" (344). Such a description suggests the narcissistic nature of the love relationship and the panicky sense of fragmentation at the loss of a love object which has been used in an attempt to repair early deficits in self-structure.

Nora's and Robin's apartment in Paris becomes a collection of items from their life together. Like the Barnes' apartment in Paris, it has a carnivalesque air with its "circus chairs, wooden horses bought from a ring of an old merry-go-round" (276) and other assorted theatrical and liturgical trappings. Their love acquires a history which is

physically replicated in their surroundings. The house, which is "the museum of their encounter" (276) and a tumultuous accumulation of their experience, becomes as symbolic of their life as Felix's parents' house is of his. Filled with fragmented statues, grandiose portraits, multiple furnishings, and blood-colored trappings, Felix's parents' house stands as "testimony of the age when his father had lived with his mother" (276). This external accumulation of things is used by Felix and by Nora and Robin to provide the sense of self-continuity, a method later employed by Jenny, Robin's subsequent lover. Nora intuits this and "became aware that her soft and careful movements were the actions of an unreasoning fear--that if she disarranged anything Robin might become confused--might lose the scent of home" (277).

Thus the past accumulates and becomes analogous to love enshrined in the human heart, which is analogous to archeological finds in a tomb where one finds not only the body, but the clothing and furnishings necessary for life, "so in the head of the lover will be traced, as an indelible shadow, that which he loves. In Nora's heart lay the fossil of Robin, intaglio of her identity, and about it for its maintenance ran Nora's blood" (277). Such a merging of identity shows the actual psychic experience of a child making use of an archaic selfobject, as something neither totally interior nor totally exterior. The relation of

these two is described in words which are reminiscent of the way the child perceives the selfobject as so essential and internal as to be only vaguely separate and external to the self, and, because the selfobject is so crucial, its external independent existence is recognized as a cruel threat to the precarious self. "Yet sometimes, going about the house, in passing each other, they would fall into an agonized embrace, looking into each other's face, their two heads in their four hands, so strained together that the space that divided them seemed to be thrusting them apart" (278). Although this separateness inevitably disrupts their unity, the self completion which they have temporarily found in their love has enabled them to experience a joyous appreciation of the rest of the world. Early in their relationship they are described as "apart from the world in their appreciation of the world" (277). Yet, ominously, an unknown debased community enters into Nora's life through the otherness of Robin in the songs which Robin sings and which Nora does not share. "Sometimes Italian, sometimes French or German songs of the people, debased and haunting" (277), they are "an echo of her unknown life more nearly tuned to its origins" which changes "from a renunciation to an expectation" (278). Ultimately, this unknown and unknowable world betrays Nora.

Robin's withdrawal from Nora causes Nora not only emotional pain but intense fear. That Robin's collapse into

drunken promiscuity is experienced by Nora as a loss of self is shown in Nora's projected fear that harm will befall Robin. This fear also stems from Nora's narcissistic rage which would be satisfied to see Robin punished. "Her mind became so transfixed that, by the agency of her fear, Robin seemed enormous and polarized all as catastrophes ran toward her, the magnetized predicament" (277). Because Robin seems to be a physical part of self, to be near Robin is to be "beside herself" (279), both in the sense of the turbulence of her emotions and in the emotional self-extension that Robin represents. "Robin's absence, as the night drew on, became a physical removal, insupportable and irreparable. As the amputated hand cannot be disowned because it is experiencing a futurity, of which the victim is its forbear, so Robin was an amputation that Nora could not renounce" (279). Nora recognizes that only outside of time in death will this separateness somehow cease. So strong is this need for oneness and the narcissistic rage engendered at its lack that Nora finds comfort in anticipating Robin's death. The dead Robin would belong to her. "Death went with them, together and alone; and with the torment and catastrophe, thoughts of resurrection, the second duel" (278).

Robin's ever increasing betrayals and Nora's anguish lead to the completion of Nora's recurring dream, with Robin's entry into it. The dream of the grandmother is saturated with grief, loss, and the sexuality of the past.

Her grandmother is "'drawn upon' as a prehistoric ruin is drawn upon, symbolizing her life out of her life, and which now appeared to Nora as something being done to Robin, Robin disfigured and eternalized by the hieroglyphics of sleep and pain" (282). Nora wakes from the dream to see "a double shadow fall from the statue" (282), physical evidence of Robin's betrayal under the shadow of the ambiguous femininity that this stone woman entails. This final witnessing of Robin's betrayal causes Nora's literal physical downward movement. "Unable to turn her eyes away, incapable of speech, experiencing a sensation of evil, complete and dismembering, Nora fell to her knees, so that her eyes were not withdrawn by her volition, but dropped from their orbit by the falling of her body" (283).

After the moment of betrayal, the chronological sequence of the novel is disrupted and a new chapter retells the betrayal sequence from a point of view that introduces Robin's other lover, Jenny, and the events which have led up to the garden embrace, ending at the same moment of betrayal in the garden as the last chapter. Incidents in this chapter allow us to reconstruct the chronological sequence of the story and recognize that Robin's involvement with Jenny has been ongoing for a year. An opera outing, where a chance encounter with O'Connor includes him in the subsequent events of the evening, is the pivotal betrayal scene of the book. It concluded the last chapter, is

returned to here, and is retold again in the following chapter.

Jenny is the most defective, the most inauthentic and the most reprehensible character in this book of fragmented characters. Jenny's defective selfhood is made clear in the following description: "She defiled the very meaning of personality in her passion to be a person". Like Robin, Jenny seems clearly to cross the line between human and beast, which is a constant preoccupation with Barnes in this novel. "[S]omewhere about her was the tension of the accident that made the beast the human endeavor" (286).

Because Jenny is so totally a narcissistically deficient character, she is incapable of even a rudimentary love. "No one could intrude upon her because there was no room for intrusion" (286). Her frantic search for importance has destroyed four husbands who had each "wasted away and died" because of her attempts "to make them historical; they could not survive it" (284). O'Connor, in a telling description, characterizes her as "Jenny, the bird, snatching the oats out of love's droppings" (311) and describes her as "a little, hurried, decaying comedy jester, the face on the fool's stick, and with a smell about her of mouse nests." She is a "looter" and "eternally nervous" (309).

Pointing to her inauthentic, fragmented selfhood, she is described as having "a beaked head and the body, small,

feeble, and ferocious, that somehow made one associate her with Judy; they did not go together. Only severed could any part of her have been called 'right'" (284). A contradictory character, she both desires and, because of the fear accumulated from old narcissistic injury, fears rejection. "But put out a hand to touch her, and her head moved imperceptibly with the broken arc of two instincts, recoil and advance, so that the head rocked timidly and aggressively at the same moment, giving her a slightly shuddering and expectant rhythm" (284). Her unattractiveness is directly related to her massive and frantic attempts to repair the deficits and fill the void left by unempathic selfobjects and suggests how unattractive and, since the narcissistic injuries result from the failures of others, tragically unlovable the fragmented person can be.

Jenny falls in love, not with Robin, but with the love between Nora and Robin. "When she fell in love it was with a perfect fury of accumulated dishonesty; she became instantly a dealer in second-hand and therefore incalculable emotions. As, from the solid archives of usage, she had stolen or appropriated the dignity of speech, so she appropriated the most passionate love she knew" (287). Groping for an authentic sense of self, Jenny's desire is displaced to the point where all that she can desire is desire itself, and only that which another invests with

desire is valuable to her. Girard's insights in Deceit, Desire, and the Novel that the value which an object or person has for another makes it valuable to a rival is useful here. Jenny has stolen Robin from Nora, not out of love for Robin but out of her desire for the love which she recognizes exists between Robin and Nora. She rapaciously plunders other people's lives and emotions in an unending search for authenticity. Although what she steals is emotionally valuable to others, her inner needs are not satisfied. And thus she continually and frantically attempts to fill her inner void by possessing second-hand objects which cannot satisfy her. O'Connor says of Jenny "She has a longing for other people's property but the moment she possesses it the property loses some of its value, for the owner's estimate is its worth" (309).

Jenny is unforgivingly rapacious in her acquisition of material possessions as well as people. "[H]er walls, her cupboards, her bureaux, were teeming with second-hand dealings with life" (285). Even a wedding ring has been acquired from someone else as she scrambles to provide herself with a sense of self-importance.

This hunger for an original authenticity leads Jenny to an appropriation, not only of an endless series of second-hand possessions and emotions, but also of information and language as well. Like Felix, who haunts museums and obsessively traces the lineages of the

aristocracy, Jenny is an endless collector of history. "She has a continual rapacity for other people's facts; absorbing time, she held herself responsible for historic characters" (286). While it is certainly true that all language is a second hand acquisition, Jenny's language reflects her deficient selfhood. "The words that fell from her mouth seemed to have been lent to her; had she been forced to invent a vocabulary for herself. it would have been a vocabulary of 'ah' and 'oh'" (285). She has the typical narcissist's lack of humor. She can tell second hand jokes but not laugh. She is comical only in her unconscious parody of authentic acts, such as in the pursuit and act of love.

The futility of Jenny's relationship with Robin is shown by a scene at dinner. "Jenny leaning far over the table, Robin far back. . . . they represented the two halves of a movement that had, as in sculpture, the beauty and absurdity of a desire that is in flower but that can have no burgeoning, unable to execute its destiny" (287). The tension implied in this image is in contrast to the physical description of Nora and Robin attempting to destroy the physical distance between them. However, both relationships are driven by narcissistic needs and it is these unfulfilled needs which eventually destroy both relationships.

Jenny's anxiety is so overwhelming that it suggests that the idealizing selfobject failed to allow the child to

merge with the powerful adult and so change anxiety to calmness and, instead, must have promoted what Kohut describes as "the noxious experiential sequence of mild anxiety changing into panic" (Restoration 89). When Robin attracts another woman, Jenny's jealousy triggers anxiety which mounts to a panic of frantic activity to draw from Robin reassuring responses. Robin is aware of Jenny's jealousy. "Now she is in a panic and we will have to do something" (289). Her lack of sympathy for Jenny's state is the result of her own defensive distancing and allows us to recognize the lack of congruence between them. Jenny suggests a carriage ride to distract Robin's new admirer, but this results in closer proximity. In a rage, Jenny strikes Robin repeatedly after which Robin follows her into the garden where Nora sees them embrace. Jenny's violent physical attack on Robin is an explosion of narcissistic rage directed towards Robin because her rejecting behavior threatens Jenny's fragile cohesiveness. Narcissistic rage, as Kohut describes it, is not "a bestial drive that has to be 'tamed'" (Restoration 124) but is caused by "the uncompromising insistence on the perfection of the idealized selfobject and on the limitlessness of the power and knowledge of a grandiose self." It is caused by a failure of a selfobject over whom the narcissistically vulnerable person had "expected to exercise full control" because the target of the rage is seen "not as an autonomous source of

impulsions, but as a flaw in a narcissistically perceived reality" (Search 664). Such a fragmentation results from the early pathological "deficiency in empathy from the side of the self-object" (Restoration 124). Jenny's rage is the rage of an individual who feels herself so beset with the danger of a loss of part of herself that her very existence seems to be in danger, and she feels her self shattering. The narcissistically needy person's rage against the disloyal part--the selfobject--is intense. The fact that Robin responds to Jenny's violence with an embrace allows us to sense Robin's emptiness and foreshadows a later story where Nora recounts Robin's similar reaction to Nora's violence. The intensity of the other's emotion allows some sense of self to be restored in Robin's depleted, deadened self.

Near the end of the novel we find out that Jenny has run into trouble in her relationship with Robin. Jenny molds herself on Robin, trying to think her thoughts and mimic her taste. She buys multiple plaster virgins because Robin has bought one. Caught in desire endlessly displaced into that of the other, Jenny searches "the world for the path back to what she wanted once and long ago" (331). The authentic path from which she has too long been detoured has disappeared, leaving her with fossilized, detached desire, which has been diverted to objects which are inauthentic and unsatisfying. Thus, Jenny endlessly lusts for her lost

desire and shapes herself endlessly in the desire of others, but finally rejects Robin whom she accuses of being in communication with unclean spirits. Like the typical narcissist, Jenny ultimately devalues the love object when she has finally severed Robin's connection to Nora. Ultimately, this devaluation will send Robin back to Nora in a final, catastrophically fragmented state.

Nightwood: O'Connor

After Robin betrays Nora, the action in the novel slows in an attempt to understand what has happened. Both Nora and Felix, wounded in their unrequited love for Robin, attempt to make sense of what they have lived through, and they attempt to do this with the help of Dr. O'Connor. O'Connor, the philosophical spokesman of the novel, explains it by fusing the specific love story to the story of all of the other human "nights" that people endure. The "night" is explained by O'Connor in all its endless variations. It is the specific night of betrayal in the novel, other nights of unromantic, degrading physicality, unruly emotions and drives, and the night of the unconscious and dreams. The word "night" slides through these significations throughout the novel. Because the "night" is all of these, we know it only in fragments and it calls into question our sense of a coherent, knowable reality. The night is "the Great Enigma which can't be thought of unless you turn the head the other way, and come upon thinking with the eye that you fear which is called the back of the head" (298). Clearly, the knowledge of the night cannot be achieved through a synthesizing and logical process.

The spokesman for the night, with all of its implications, is Dr. Mathew O'Connor, the character whom

Eliot said "gave the book its vitality," at least upon initial reading, although "other characters, on repeated readings, became alive for me" (228). O'Connor is identified by Andrew Field as Dan Mahoney, a legendary expatriate homosexual memorialized by several writers in addition to Barnes (137). Robert McAlmon complained that Barnes had taken an essentially comic character and burdened him with unnecessary and unbelievable philosophical profundities (Field 137). Certainly, however, Barnes enlarged Mahoney into a character of far greater depth than the original. As a homosexual and a doctor, he knows women through both his intense identification with them and through the secrets they share with him. He knows men as both a man himself and as a desirer of men. As a physician, he is closely connected to birth and death, sexuality and the physicality of digestion and excretion. As a gynecologist, he is specifically tied to sexuality and childbirth. His illegal status links him to an underworld status of venereal disease and abortion. All of these characteristics situate him in the world of the carnival. Multiplying the carnivalesque in his role, O'Connor denies, and, by his denial, admits the possibility of many identities, including specifically carnival identities: mountebank, tumbler, and dancing girl.

As the interpreter of the night, he is the voice of wisdom and of the secrets of the body which, in Bakhtin's

carnavalesque terms, by degradation and return to the lower strata, become a regenerative force. It is through a submission to the physicality of the body, a going down, and a rejection of the intellect that O'Connor says a great doctor heals. "He closes one eye, the eye that he studied with, and putting his fingers on the arteries of the body says: 'God, whose roadway this is, has given me permission to travel on it also,' which Heaven help the patient, is true; in this manner he comes on great cures" (257).

Other characters turn to him in desperate attempts to understand what has happened to them and to heal the pain of their fragmentation, but his attempts to heal others eventually unmask his own neediness. O'Connor uses language to control and elicit responsiveness from others and, thus, to fulfill his own narcissistic needs. O'Connor's torrential verbal hyperboles have a chaotic quality that both distracts and is obliquely insightful. Mixed in with the continuing flow of narrative is a mixture of mystical philosophical statements, arcane information, incongruous responses, and non sequiturs. Although he seems to be the philosophical center of a novel, he is no spokesman for a total philosophical system; instead, his commentary is tangential and fragmenting. There is a continuous surrealistic disjuncting of the normal connectedness of discourse. His attempts to heal his own fragmentation and achieve some sense of self-cohesion by

using language as a defensive structure fits the description noted by Kohut in one case study. Because such individuals tend to be "overly enthusiastic, dramatic, and intense in their responses to everyday events . . . it is not difficult to discern the defensive nature--a pseudo-vitality--of the overt excitement." Despite this seeming enthusiasm and energy, they are depressed. They have "a deep sense of uncared-for worthlessness and rejection, an incessant hunger for response, a yearning for reassurance." Their vitality is a defense against their low self-esteem. They "attempt to counteract through self-stimulation a feeling of deadness and depression" (Restoration 5). Despite his own fragmentation, O'Connor's torrential discourse serves to merge individual sorrow with common human suffering and draws together the themes of time, physicality, and the emotions. Moreover, many of his philosophical statements are congruent with Kohutian theory.

Confronting Felix, O'Connor says, "You know what man really desires? . . . One of two things: to find someone who is so stupid that he can lie to her, or to love someone so much that she can lie to him" (247). These crass and opportunistic words match Kohut's description of self-pathology. The stupid woman that one can lie to is, metaphorically, the needed selfobject who reflects back the self's grandiosity; the woman whom he loves so much that she can lie to him is, metaphorically, the idealizable

selfobject who does indeed "lie" in the sense that the individual has a need not to see the real limitations and imperfections of this idealized, and therefore seemingly perfect, human being.

Many times O'Connor's abstract philosophical statements display an eerie closeness to Kohut's ideas. His description of how an idealization confers power is an example of how congruent the text can seem to Kohutian theory. O'Connor says, "We say someone is pretty for instance, whereas, if the truth were known, they are probably as ugly as Smith going backward, but by our lie we have made that very party powerful, such is the power of the charlatan, the great strong! . . . that sort of thing makes the mystic in the end, and . . . the great doctor" (257). The lie gives power to the idealized person but can also bolster the individual who believes in the lie because he or she can assuage feelings of defectiveness and inadequacy through a participation in the idealized other.

Some of O'Connor's comments contain both Kohutian and Bakhtinian congruities. In response to Nora's comment that he takes sorrow too lightly, O'Connor says, "A man's sorrow runs uphill; true it is difficult for him to bear, but it is also difficult for him to keep. I, as a medical man, know in what pocket a man keeps his heart and soul, and in what jostle of the liver, kidney and genitalia these pockets are pilfered. There is no pure sorrow. Why? It is bedfellow to

lungs, lights, bones, guts, and gall! There are only confusions" (249). Real sorrow is difficult and fleeting because it depends on authentic sense of self. Pure sorrow is also an ideal which bows before the reality of the body's demands, the carnivalesque "going down."

Most of our introduction to O'Connor occurs at the beginning of the second chapter entitled "La Somnabule," the title of which refers to Robin. Barnes begins this chapter with a long description of O'Connor and of his personal world in Paris. When Felix runs into O'Connor in Paris, he recognizes O'Connor's role as a psychiatrist who attempts to heal others. "Felix thought to himself that undoubtedly the doctor was a great liar, but a valuable liar. His fabrication seemed to be the framework of a forgotten but imposing plan; some condition of life of which he was the sole surviving retainer" (256). A fraudulent physician, a lawbreaker, and a self-professed liar, O'Connor eventually attempts to use narrative to heal both Felix's and Nora's pain and, finally, his own. O'Connor will ceaselessly construct, contradict, distort, and reconstruct a narrative, even though he himself tells us that we will be hard put to trace it. His narrative makes us aware of the concealed, an unreachable origin which the process of constructing the narrative seeks to explain and fails, and which leaves us with the sense that this narrative, which is a convulsive crisscrossing of dialogic cross purposes, is, finally, all

that we get. The past as a construction which conceals "being" is central to this endeavor. The unknown structure fabricated by the doctor is like the reconstruction of the psychoanalyst. Although a lie, it is valuable because it allows an integration of the past and a reprieve from suffering, thus allowing the future to occur. Jane Marcus analyzes O'Connor as a psychoanalyst and finds Nightwood to be a brilliant parody of psychoanalysis which exposes "the collaboration of Freudian analysis with fascism in its desire to 'civilize' and make 'normal' the sexually abberant misfit" ("Laughing" 233). She further suggests that Nightwood's depiction of the uncanny--in which Nora has "dressed the unknowable in the garments of the known" (Nightwood 136)--critiques Freud's male, patriarchal definitions. Nightwood parodies "by exposing the erotics of the doctor-patient relationship, its voyeurism and quakery" ("Laughing" 245). Such an interpretation is seductive but a Kohutian explanation more adequately explains O'Connor's own fragmented character.

In Kohutian terms, O'Connor's part in an "imposing plan" hints at the possibility of rebuilding the narcissistically deficient individual through reactivating and fulfilling in a transference situation those selfobject needs which were not met, but the failure of this effort is implicit in O'Connor's own fragmentation and degradation. "His manner was that of a servant of a defunct noble family,

whose movements recall, though in a degraded form, those of a late master. Even the doctor's favourite gesture--plucking hairs out of his nostrils--seemed the "vulgarization" of what was once a thoughtful plucking of the beard" (256).

It will be to the doctor that Felix will turn to make some sense of the events through which he has tried and failed to sustain a sense of self: "the most touching flowers laid on the altar he had raised to his imagination were placed there by the people of the underworld and that the reddest was to be the rose of the doctor" (257). The doctor ultimately responds to Felix in two ways: by abstract philosophical statements which distance and universalize the emotional pain and by singular and bizarre stories, case studies of the grief of the crippled and outcast.

These initial glimpses of the doctor are secondary to the events unfolding: Robin and Felix's marriage, the birth of their child, Robin's abandonment of the child and Felix, Robin's love affair with Nora, and her betrayal of Nora with Jenny. All of these events occur before the doctor occupies a primary position in the story. However, with the fifth chapter, he becomes the central presence before which Nora and Felix struggle to construct a history of these events.

The story turns first to Nora, but interrupting this sequence, Felix, long missing from the book, reappears seeking an explanation for his son's defects, for Jenny's

despicable behavior, and Robin's incomprehensible nature. He invites O'Connor to dine, seeking the answers which will construct meaning from the events he has undergone. The famished and impoverished doctor, lured by the promise of food and drink, now attempts to provide for Felix his insufficient therapy. As before, Felix is preoccupied with history as a construction, and of language as an approximation of always unreachable meaning, and reality as essentially unknowable. Felix recognizes that his past is a construction. His past exists as it is "because I have it only from the memory of one single woman, my aunt; therefore, it is single, clear, and unalterable. In this I am fortunate; through this I have a sense of immortality" (320). The usual fragmented chaotic reality of the past has been tamed into a story. In talking to the doctor about Robin, Felix confesses, "the more we learn of a person, the less we know." He says that he never had a clear idea of her but only an image, "a stop the mind makes between uncertainties," a description of both language and reality. He also recognizes that what he took for security in Robin's character was really "the most formless loss" (321). Robin was an absence which implied opportunity. It was not what Robin was but what she wasn't that made her attractive.

Her lack of a sense of self seems to provide the opportunity to create anew, through a son, a firm sense of identity, but, instead, envelops him in an unfillable

vacuum. Later, he will say, "The Baronin had an undefinable disorder, a sort of 'odour of memory,' like a person who had come from some place that we have forgotten and would give our life to recall" (325). Robin is the absence of the sense of self which memory seeks to fill, the absence and presence of being. It is through his son that Felix seeks to establish his identity. Through a child he has sought to reaffirm his identity, to consolidate his history and to find in a child's need for a mirroring and idealizable selfobject the sustaining mirroring that will give him a temporary sense of cohesiveness.

Guido, this deficient son born of Felix and Robi7's strange union, now appears in the story. Felix relates to O'Connor a story of emotional violence on the part of Jenny who came to him on the pretense of buying art but, in reality, came to recount a tale of Robin's betrayal of a young girl whom she loved and then callously forgot. Jenny proves her own cruelty as she recounts how she deliberately used the young girl to prove Robin's inconstancy, and, in double cruelty, recounts this story in the presence of Guido, Felix and Robin's son who knows little of his mother and now learns abruptly of her callous nature. Felix's sensitivity to his son and his empathic suffering is obvious, but he is also concerned about the boy's future. O'Connor attempts to explain Guido's meaning to Felix. Guido's deficiency, we learn, fulfills O'Conner's prediction

that the last offspring of aristocracy is defective. His life, according to the doctor, is one which is "peculiarly one's own when one has invented it" (324), and it seems a throwback to the past. This being out of one's own time foregrounds time, heightening awareness of being in time and the ruin and destruction which follows from that. Guido and Robin are both seen as revealing being which is usually concealed by our relationship to time. Robin is the present, the illusion of true wholeness and absolute intimacy whom the doctor calls "the eternal momentary. Robin who was always the second person singular" (332), the intimate form of "you" reserved for family and close friends. O'Connor insists on acceptance, commenting "A man is whole only when he takes into account his shadow as well as himself--and what is a man's shadow but his prostrate astonishment? Guido is the shadow of your anxiety, and Guido's shadow is God's" (326). In Felix's case, this shadow is both his deficient self and his separateness from his son.

That Felix is still fragmented--that he is still obsessed with the idealized aristocratic members of his society--is clear at the end of the book. He is still seeking from others a sense of his own worth. He is totally dependent on external evaluations and he uses the same fixated behavior with which he has tried to repair his self defects in the past. One evening, with Guido, Felix sees in

a cafe a man whom he is sure is a member of the Russian aristocracy. At first he refuses to look but at length cannot resist the temptation. "Felix (with the abandon of what a mad man knows to be his one hope of escape, disproof of 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, his head in his confusion making a complete half-swing, as an animal will turn its head away from a human, as if in mortal shame" (328-29). Thus even the presence of and his concern for his child has not liberated Felix from his grandiose pretenses. Although, in the process of parenting the child, Guido, Felix has, in effect, attempted to provide himself with some of his selfobject needs, he still desperately seeks to ameliorate his defective grandiosity by attaching himself to the aristocracy.

However, before the reappearance of Felix, Nora, too, has gone to O'Connor in her search for relief from her obsessive fixation on Robin, groping for an explanation of Robin's actions. She goes to the doctor at night, seeking to understand the "night" because nothing in her rational day time world can explain the destructiveness of her relationship with Robin. The "night" she seeks to understand is the night of disintegration: unmediated aggression, humiliating fear, and pathological sexuality.

It is a world ruled by primitive and urgent emotions, disordered and lawless, which leave their mark on people, making night people easily identified. Nora attempts, in seeking to understand Robin's actions, to understand her own reactions. The night of which Nora seeks to be enlightened is that of those urges which have driven Robin to drink and promiscuity, and Nora to her own frantic emotional state at the loss of Robin since she, herself, has slipped from the rational, ordered, controlled life of normalcy to a world of wild emotions: love, frantic fear of loss, even delight in the thought of Robin's death.

Nora visits the doctor late at night in his room. It is a poor, small room of incredible disorder, a veritable archeological dig of human knowledge, passions, and animality. This scene expands the carnivalesque and the grotesque in the novel, drawing together a multitude of themes Bakhtin has described as part of the carnivalesque tradition but casting them in a private, almost claustrophobic, world. Carnavalesque themes of cross-dressing, excretion, sexuality, debasement are all part of the "night" introduced in this episode. The doctor's bedroom is a chaotic grave-sized room containing a rusty pair of forceps, a catheter, cosmetics, women's clothing, an abdominal brace; at the head of the bed is a "swill-pail . . . brimming with abominations" (295). The room is grotesque yet innocent, mingling childbirth and

masculinity. Bewigged and made up as a woman, the doctor is dressed in a nightgown and wears a blond wig, an outfit that relates him both to the expectation of a homosexual encounter and to some sense of the unknown.

The doctor's grave-like, poverty-stricken tiny room, indescribably disordered, and his female attire reflect his own inner chaos. Nora sees this confusion both as evidence of his authority and his narcissistic vulnerability. "'Is not the gown the natural raiment of extremity? What nation, what religion, what ghost, what dream, has not worn it--infants, angels, priests, the dead; why should not the doctor, in the grave dilemma of his alchemy, wear his dress?' She thought: 'He dresses to lie beside himself who is so constructed that love, for him, can be only something special; in a room that giving back evidence of his occupancy, is as mauled as the last agony?'" (295-96). The homosexual encounter is seen as an attempt to "lie beside himself" and in this self-coupling to heal some primal split, some lack of unity in the self. The physicality and sexuality of this scene, as opposed to Bakhtin's public, revitalizing carnival, is a private carnivalesque, closed off and experienced in intimate encounters.

The doctor is seen by Nora as the spokesman for the night, his favorite topic, and when he speaks of it he focuses on the philosophical aspects of time and the unknown as well as psychological aspects of the world of desire and

the unconscious. Night is both time and fear. It is "the peculiar polarity of times and times; and of sleep? the day and night are related by their division. The very constitution of twilight is a fabulous reconstruction of fear, fear bottom and wrong side up. Every day is thought upon and calculated, but the night is not premeditated. The Bible lies the one way, but the nightgown the other. The night, 'Beware of that dark door!'" (296). Most of all, night destroys the seeming unity of the daytime self. Nora says, "Now I see that the night does something to a person's identity, even when asleep." The night dissolves identity, returning the individual to a wild and anonymous outer kingdom. The doctor replies, "Let a man lay himself down in the Great Bed and his 'identity' is no longer his own, his 'trust' is not with him, and his 'willingness' is turned over and of another permission. His distress is wild and anonymous. He sleeps in a Town of Darkness, member of a secret brotherhood. He neither knows himself nor his outriders; he berserks a fearful dimension and dismounts, miraculously, in bed" (296).

Night in the novel refers also to the historically real. O'Connor reminds Nora of the passion and physicality of the nights of other times and places. The nights of old were filled with butchered animals, gutters, stench, wine, urine, and "blood-letting in side streets where some wild princess in a night shift of velvet howled under a leech"

(297). O'Connor tells bits and pieces of other peoples' tragedies. In Jane Marcus's words, Nightwood's "heteroglossia resides in the doctor's multivoiced stories of abjection" ("Laughing" 231). O'Connor uses the preoccupation with the night and the grotesque images connected to it to force Nora towards a confrontation with the realities of her mortality. His speech, then, is a threshold dialogue, for it forces recognition of the reality of death and thus changes Nora's perceptions of life.

Robin's driven promiscuity is unfamiliar to the rational "Western" Nora. She says, "I never thought of the night as a life at all--I've never lived it--why did she?" (297). Marcus says that "Nora's problem is the body/mind split" and that O'Connor wants "Nora to recognize her animality, to face her desire for Robin as physical, and to stop seeing herself as 'saving a lost soul'" ("Laughing" 235). Such an interpretation which attributes physical desire as the most important element in the relationship fails to recognize that Nora's pain and fear are the result of the loss of a selfobject whose responsiveness had eased her fragmentation.

O'Connor goes on to discuss the inevitable failure of lovers--their unavoidable separateness. Lovers can never succeed in replacing those early archaic selfobjects and so true, mature love is only possible when enough self-structure has been laid down by the individual to

tolerate the disappointment of separateness. In Kohutian terms, the inevitable, necessary, and phase-appropriate, if painful, failure of selfobjects allows the child to develop an inner sense of self-worth and strength and thus makes independent, adult emotional life possible. None of the characters in Nightwood seem capable of this mature love. O'Connor, in recognizing this inevitable separateness of lovers, couches it in the language of sleep. Every lover is unfaithful in sleep. "He lies down with his Nelly and drops off into the arms of his Gretchen. Thousands unbidden come to his bed. Yet how can one tell truth when it's never in the company?" (301) This painful reality is acceptable to the mature lover, but to the narcissistically vulnerable for whom the independent existence of the selfobject is offensive, it is not. For such individuals, "'it is the night into which his beloved goes,' he said, 'that destroys his heart . . . When she sleeps, is she not moving her leg aside for an unknown garrison? Or in a moment, that takes but a second, murdering us with an axe? . . . And what of our own sleep? We go to it no better--and betray her with the very virtue of our days'" (301-02).

O'Connor insists that the unconscious and the non-rational drives of the night must be dealt with. "So I, Dr. Mathew Mighty O'Connor, ask you to think of the night the day long, and of the day the night through, or at some reprieve of the brain it will come upon you heavily" (299).

What is repressed will return. The night lies in wait for the person who refuses to acknowledge its reality. It is a world of emotions and thus of pain and feeling. "Our bones ache only while the flesh is on them and in like manner the night is a skin pulled over the head of day that the day may be in a torment. We will find no comfort until the night melts away" (299-300). The clear intellectual perception of things is changed by the world of the night. O'Connor connects the dead, sleep, and love to the "evil of the night" (301). In such a world there can be no principles. All are guilty, all betray. "Night people do not bury their dead, but on the neck of you, their beloved and waking, sling the creature, husked of its gestures. And where you go it goes, the two of you, your living and her dead, that will not die; to daylight, to life, to grief, until both are carrion" (302). In sleep the virtuous are unfaithful or even murderous, the drives dociled by day unleashed in dreams. The bed sheets and the newspaper both record the struggle. The "beast" of night, this world of drives and dreams of all that is not the rational and intellectualized life, must be dealt with. "Each race to its wrestling!" (303).

Night is also a code for the physical nature of humanity, for unavoidable human filth and our necessary relationship to it. Despite society's euphemistic denial, "excrement, blood, and and flowers" are "the essential

oils." It is within this physicality that we must live and which inevitably reveals both being and its absence.

O'Connor says that life is "the permission to know death" (298).

It is against the chaos of this reality that we structure a narrative with which we can live. "Man makes his history with the one hand and 'holds it up' with the other" (303). Narrative is a way of creating meaning out of the jumbled, unsifted and unintellectualized realities of the flow of time. Memory is established through an intellectual effort which creates narrative by establishing causality and coherence and eliminating the extraneous and the meaningless. The narrative creates both an identity and a history for the individual and the country even though such a narrative is obviously a construction and, in a sense, a lie. And, once that history and identity have been constructed, we are dependent upon them for the relief of meaning and of closure. Yet O'Connor will not allow this closure which is essentially a fabrication. He makes us aware of another narrative, a hidden narrative that is not easy to understand. He says, "I have a narrative but you will be put to it to find it" (308). It is the story which is not being told but which we sense below the flow of the written story in clues and fragments.

Finally, the doctor comes to the recreation of the scene which Nora seeks, the night which culminated in

Robin's betrayal of Nora with Jenny. He feels himself guilty for introducing Jenny to Robin and actively involving himself in the evening. "God help me, I went! For who will not betray a friend, or, for that matter, himself for a whisky and soda, caviare and a warm fire--" (313). After the doctor's reconstruction of the night of the betrayal, Nora is silent. Again, he returns to philosophical abstractions that universalize the problem. He says, "And everything we do is decent when the mind begins to forget--the design of life; and good when we have forgotten the design of death. I began to wail for all the little beasts in their mothers, who would have to step down and begin going decent in the one fur that would last them their time" (315). Our sense of individuality is also a consciousness of an original unity with the maternal, a loss of a sense of oneness. In separateness and the recognition of incompleteness there is pain. Goodness and decency reside in the forgetting, a forgetting of both the design of life and of death. As he recalls the scene of betrayal, he remembers trees, grass, animals, and birds, which are opposed to the image of a duplication of black wagons with turning wheels. All of this places us in a single moment in time which can be decent and good, according to the doctor, only if time and death are simultaneously mourned and forgotten. This repeats the doctor's preoccupation with the necessity of living in the present which brings a sense of

authenticity, but which is only possible for those deeply grounded in the nuclear self. O'Connor, in discussing the violent, bloody fight between Robin and Jenny, is attempting to reach a state of serenity and peace. He says "The trees are better, and the grass is better, and the animals are all right and the birds in the air are fine" (315). However, such a state is impossible for him.

After the final experience of Felix's failure to abandon his obsessions, we return to Nora's struggle to put her pain into words. Paradoxically, narration is both necessary and absurd. She says, "I'm so miserable, Mathew, I don't know how to talk, and I've got to. I've got to talk to somebody. I can't live this way" (334). The doctor points out that Nora idealized Robin. O'Connor says, "You've made her a legend and set before her head the Eternal Light" (331). Nora has idealized not only Robin but also her love for Robin which she sees as helping Robin, while the doctor has seen her as the "mother of mischief, running about, trying to get the world home" (280). However self-serving O'Connor sees Nora's love to be, he recognizes its authentic pain. He generalizes that she is "experiencing the inbreeding of pain. Most of us do not dare it" (334-335).

Nora's suffering is staved off by the doctor through a series of stories. The first is of Tupenny Uprights, aging prostitutes who work "waiting for something that they had

been promised when they were little girls" (335). Time is the great tragedy: "Time is a great conference planning our end, and youth is only the past putting a leg forward. Ah, to be able to hold on to suffering, but let the spirit loose!" (335). But the pressure of Nora's pain leads him into a confrontation with his own personal pain, and he tells a story about himself in a church.

Kneeling in a dark corner, bending my head over and down I spoke to Tiny O'Toole because it was his turn; I had tried everything else. There was nothing for it this time but to make him face the mystery so it could see him clear as it saw me....And there I was holding Tiny, bending over and crying, asking the question until I forgot and went on crying, and I put Tiny away then, like a ruined bird, and went out of the place and walked looking at the stars that were twinkling, and I said, "Have I been simple like an animal God, or have I been thinking?" (337)

A third story O'Connor tells involves a tenor who leaves a dying son to carouse with sailors. All these stories reflect the impotence of sex to heal the primary fragmentation of the self. Disappointments, age, impotence, and death all surface in a play of suffering which can be only fleetingly ameliorated by appetite. Nor will logic suffice to heal the defective self.

When O'Connor rambles on to a story about horns and

Nora complains, "Every hour is my last" O'Connor responds, "Even the contemplative life is only an effort, Nora my dear, to hide the body so the feet won't show" (338). The underlying connectedness here in this seeming non sequitur is that Nora's pain, her feeling that every moment is her last, is the common human condition of a split between body and mind. Even a life seemingly devoted solely to the spiritual only masks the physical, the life of the passions and emotion. Because of the deep pain of our lives, an animal innocence is to be envied. Our need for a sense of self is unknown to animals. An animal is to be envied: "to be an animal, born at the opening of the eye, going only forward, and, at the end of day, shutting out memory with the dropping of the lid" (338). Robin somehow shares this mysterious innocence of time with animals and it makes her different. " Yes, Oh God, Robin was beautiful. I don't like her, but I have to admit that much: Sort of a fluid blue under her skin, as if the hide of time had been stripped from her, and with it, all transactions with knowledge, a face that will age only under the blows of perpetual childhood" (338). Robin, like a beast, avoids the tragedy of time because she has avoided the identity which occasions the pain of time and memory. Later Nora says, "Robin can go anywhere, do anything because she forgets, and I nowhere because I remember" (351). Although this means that Robin has no sense of self, it appears to give Robin constant new

beginnings. "She couldn't do anything because she was a long way off and waiting to begin. It's for that reason that she hates everyone near her" (354). This appearance of new beginnings, however, masks her continuing desperate efforts to assuage her fragmentation, while her hatred is the result of her failure to stabilize her fragmented self and her anger at the perceived failure, and subsequent devaluation, of those whom she has sought to use as selfobjects.

The doctor attempts to use words to distract and to temporarily relieve pain. He is the psychoanalyst constructing the narrative, the acceptance of which will provide enough relief for life to continue. This "liar" which the doctor has become is the analyst in the transference situation who attempts to soothe the person in agony--trying to construct in words a narrative that will cover over deficits in self-structure. He says, "Do you know what has made me the greatest liar this side of the moon? Telling my stories to people like you, to take the mortal agony out of their guts. . . . And me talking away like mad. Well, that, and nothing else, has made me the liar I am" (339). O'Connor uses words to create a story and to provide temporary relief, but he realizes that his words are only a fragment of the truth, if not outright lies. He continues, "There is no truth, and you have set it between you" (339). This story, which attempts to produce truth, is doomed to failure because there is no simple relationship

which roots language in reality. An attempt at meaning is always an attempt to "dress the unknowable in the garments of the known" (339).

As the psychoanalyst, O'Connor tries to explain the homosexual love between Nora and Robin. "Very well--what is this love we have for the invert, boy or girl? It was they who were spoken of in every romance that we ever read. The girl lost, what is she but the prince found? The Prince on the white horse that we have always been seeking. And the pretty lad who is a girl, what but the prince-princess in point lace--neither one and half the other, the painting on the fan!" (340). This Jungian explanation of the fairy tale is strikingly similar to Carolyn Heilbrun's reading of fairy tales in Reinventing Womanhood. She says, "Suppose . . . that the prince in Cinderella stood, not for the girl's need to love a man, transferred in proper Freudian fashion from papa to husband, but for her other self, that "masculine" part of herself, externalized in the story, to which she must be awakened to achieve adulthood" (145). Thus, Nora's love is rooted not only in erotic drives but also in a need for some missing aspect of the self. The love relationship has been set in motion to fulfill narcissistic needs. Thus Nora seeks herself in Robin. Nora admits that loving Robin is, in a sense, loving herself. She says, "I thought I loved her for her sake and I find it was for my own" and "have you ever loved someone and it became yourself?" (351).

Thus, this particular homosexual love relates to the deficient selfobjects of early childhood, to the absent mother whose love must not have been appropriately mirroring and to the idealizable selfobject who would have allowed an active, energetic development of goals. But, while Nora's love of Robin is an attempt to merge with the archaic selfobjects, Nora has become painfully aware of Robin's separateness. She seeks unsuccessfully to understand by copying Robin's experiences of the night. Finally, Nora recognizes that to Robin she was not Nora but a projection of what Robin sought: an idealizable selfobject. Nora sees a young girl in a bedroom decorated with a picture of a madonna. A flash of insight makes her realize that Robin had seen her in that image. "In one room that lay open to the alley, before a bed covered with a cheap heavy satin comforter, in the semi-darkness, a young girl sat on a chair, . . . Looking from her to the Madonna behind the candles, I knew that the image to her was what I had been to Robin" (355). This is not the adult love relationship of inevitable difference but an attempt to get back to the experience of the sustaining merger with the archaic idealizable selfobject. However, this image of the Madonna is undone by its further description. For Robin, Nora was "not a saint at all, but a fixed dismay, the space between the human and the whole head, the arena of the 'indecent' eternal. At that moment I stood in the centre of eroticism

and death" (355-56).) Nora also perceives the devaluation of the selfobject implicit in Robin's fragmentation.

In a healthy childhood experience, the archaic relationship would have been phase-appropriately weakened by the inevitable disruptions of life. The child would have been able to internalize the functions of the selfobject and to begin, through the small disappointments of not having needs perfectly met, to build his or her own sense of self. The perfect selfobject who met all the needs of the child would be monstrous, because it is only through the small failures of the selfobject that the child can grow.

Maturity understands and tolerates imperfection. O'Connor says, "The evil and the good know themselves only by giving up their secret face to face. The true good who meets the true evil (Holy Mother of Mercy! are there any such?) learns for the first time how to accept neither; the face of the one tells the face of the other the half of the story that both forgot" (341). It is only through eventual disillusionment with the idealized figure--in recognition of "evil," that is imperfection of the idealized selfobject--that reality is confronted and independence and authenticity are gained. O'Connor continues: "To be utterly innocent would be to be utterly unknown, particularly to oneself!" (341). It is only with disappointment and the disillusionment with perfection--the acknowledgement and understanding of imperfection or "evil"--that adult life

becomes possible. The eventual disillusion with the idealized selfobject allows some self-structure to be internalized and then independent action with internalized ideals becomes possible.

However, Robin does not have the self-structure necessary to tolerate this recognition of the real limits of an idealized selfobject, nor does she have the sense of self necessary to do without Nora's constant mirroring. "[W]hat did she have? Only your faith in her--then you took that faith away! You should have kept it always, seeing that it was a myth; no myth is safely broken" (342-43). When Nora loses her faith in Robin, she deprives Robin of the mirroring response she so desperately needs, responses which unrealistically give her a sense of wholeness she does not possess.

O'Connor explains Robin's love for Nora in terms which show Robin's inability to achieve any kind of adult relationship. "She knows she is innocent because she can't do anything in relation to anyone but herself. You almost caught hold of her, but she put you cleverly away by making you the Madonna" (347). By idealizing Nora, Robin makes Nora into a recreation of that childhood idealizable selfobject which she can then love, and thus temporarily avoids coming to terms with the kind of imperfect, difference-laden emotional relationship which is at least partially possible for the healthy narcissistic self.

O'Connor also talks of Robin's use of Nora as a mirroring selfobject. "[B]ecause you forget Robin the best, it's to you she turns. She comes trembling, and defiant, and belligerent, all right--that you may give her back to herself again as you have forgotten her" (352). Nora's love, despite Robin's drunken rampages, affirms a sense of self in Robin. What is "forgotten" is Robin's shortcomings and defects. This "forgetting" temporarily sustains Robin in that this mirroring gives back to her the image of a non-fragmented self.

Adult love is tragic because it makes obvious the inevitable otherness the love object and the tragedy of time. O'Connor talks about this inevitable otherness. "I know no one loves, I, least of all, and that no one loves me, that's what makes most people so passionate and bright, because they want to love and be loved, when there is only a bit of lying in the ear to make the ear forget what time is compelling" (347). A recognition of the nature of time is a confrontation with death, a threshold dialogue. Love is a dangerous subterfuge, a dangerous lie, to keep the individual from being aware of an intolerable reality: time's process. Lovers always fall short of perfection. However, no matter how seemingly satisfying love is, the lover must still deal with the emotional pain of loss. The real tragedy is that one or the other lover always dies. As O'Connor says, "the lesson we learn is always by giving

death and a sword to our lover" (347). Nora's need for Robin's realistic love is something Robin must always fight against because of her strong need to idealize Nora. "[I]n the end Robin will wish you in a nunnery where what she loved is, by surroundings, made safe, because as you are you keep 'bringing her up' as cannons bring up the dead from deep water" (350). Realistic love would make Robin vulnerable to this awful human sadness.

In the end, in the face of Nora's pain, the doctor is silent. His attempts to handle his own fragmentation through a verbal chain that keeps the pain at bay fail in the face of Nora's pain and his own implication in it. "[H]e stood in confused and unhappy silence--he moved toward the door. Holding the knob in his hand he turned toward her. Then he went out" (356). After the doctor leaves Nora, he gets drunk, awash in the misery of others as he acts out his own fragmented self. In the company of a defrocked priest, the doctor drunkenly tells grandiose stories linking magic, sex, blood, religion, and time. All elements of the grotesque are devaluated here in O'Connor's impotent, private failure as he tells the bartender that "to think is to be sick" (356). When he is very drunk he says, "Talking to me--all of them--sitting on me as heavy as a truck horse talking!" (361). He continues, "I've not only lived my life for nothing, but I've told it for nothing" and ends "Now . . . the end--mark my words--not nothing but wrath and weeping"

(362). O'Connor's manic drunken grandiosity crashes into depression and he recognizes the futility of language in the face of human pain. Only anger and sorrow are possible responses.

The last chapter, only four pages long, is a disquieting and ambiguous chapter which undercuts the seeming thematic unity of the novel achieved by O'Connor's last words "nothing but wrath and weeping." Such an ending would have been powerful, highlighting O'Connor's story of man's impotence in the face of the tragedy of time and of the inability of language, finally, to create a story which can deal with that tragedy. But Barnes unsettles the apparent ending with a chapter, almost an addendum, which traces the disintegration of the Jenny-Robin relationship and describes a bizarre reuniting of Nora and Robin. The unsettling, unexpected quality of this ending is shown in Eliot's comment that he thought the final chapter unnecessary but that on subsequent readings, he became convinced that it was essential "both dramatically and musically" (228).

Jenny's attempt to absorb Robin into herself cannot work. Neither Jenny nor Robin has been able to get what they need from their relationship, and Robin's deficiencies combine with Jenny's to force their final separation. Robin's relationship with Jenny ends when Jenny accuses Robin, who is preoccupied with churches and animals as she

searches for missing self-structure and meaning, of "'sensuous communion with unclean spirits' and in putting her wickedness into words she struck herself down" (364). Jenny's total narcissism has left her unable to be even slightly empathic, and has inclined her towards an abrupt devaluation of the once-loved selfobject. This, with what we suspect is second-hand language, brings about the end of the love affair.

Robin's identification with animals as she talks to them and acts like them forms a final carnivalesque image. "Robin walked the open country in the same manner, pulling at the flowers, speaking in a low voice to the animals. Those that came near, she grasped, straining their fur back until their eyes were narrowed and their teeth bare, her own teeth showing as if her hand were upon her own neck" (364). Like an animal, Robin moves nearer Nora's house, sleeping in the woods and in chapels until Nora's dog leads Nora to witness an ambiguous confrontation between the dog and Robin. The final scene links many carnivalesque images: the madonna, religion, cross-dressing, animals, and downward movement in the private world of this individual tragedy. The peculiar effect of the ending, shattering the conventional closure of the final chapter, is difficult to summarize. I will quote it at some length.

On a contrived altar, before a Madonna, two candles were burning. Their light fell across the floor and

the dusty benches. Before the image lay flowers and toys. Standing before them in her boy's trousers was Robin. Her pose, startled and broken, was caught at the point where her hand had reached almost to the shoulder, and at the moment Nora's body struck the wood, Robin began going down, her hair swinging, her arms out. The dog stood rearing back, his forelegs slanting, his paws trembling under the trembling of his rump, his hackles standing, his mouth open, the tongue slung sideways over his sharp bright teeth, whining and waiting. And down she went until her head swung against his, on all fours now, dragging her knees. The veins stood out in her neck, under her ears, swelled in her arms, and wide and throbbing, rose up on her hands as she moved forward.

The dog, quivering in every muscle, sprang back, as she came on, whimpering too, coming forward, her head turned completely sideways, grinning and whimpering. Backed into the farthest corner, the dog reared as if to avoid something that troubled him to such agony that he seemed to be rising from the floor; then he stopped, clawing sideways at the wall, his forepaws lifted and sliding. Then head down, dragging her forelocks in the dust, she struck against his side. He let loose one howl of misery and bit at her, dashing about her, barking, and as he sprang on either side of

her he always kept his head toward her, dashing his rump now this side, now that, of the wall.

Then she began to bark also, crawling after him--barking in a fit of laughter, obscene and touching. Crouching, the dog began to run with her, head-on with her head, as if to circumvent her; soft and slow his feet went padding. He ran this way and that, low down in his throat crying, and she grinning and crying with him; crying in shorter and shorter spaces, moving head to head, until she gave up, lying out, her hands beside her, her face turned and weeping; and the dog too gave up then, and lay down, his eyes bloodshot, his head flat along her knees. (366)

The sense of closure left by the previous chapter has been destroyed and we are left, mid-scene, with ambiguity as the book ends. This scene has troubled critics who have generated confusing and conflicting interpretations. Alan Williamson says that Robin's act is "a disintegration into total animality and a masochistic atonement for her guilt towards Nora" as she "attempts intercourse with Nora's dog" (74) . Ulrich Weisstein thinks the dog's reaction recognizes Robin as "belonging to his own race" (7). Others such as Walter Sutton, Louis Kannestine and Joseph Frank simply say that Robin returns to an animal level. (Sutton 118, Kannestine 117, Frank 49) while Carolyn Allen calls it a return to a "preverbal world" (117). James Scott says

that the dog, Nora, and Robin represent three parts of our selves (119). Andrew Field notes the troubling implications of the scene by mentioning that Eliot urged Barnes to accept an offer to print Nightwood in French without the final scene, which he thought the French would find offensive (220). These varying interpretations attest to the grotesque power of the scene. Despite their differences all the critics recognize how the text signals a transgression of boundaries and reminds us that Robin, an almost mute character in a text of constant dialogue about her, has been described as a beast turning human. In this scene the sympathetic understanding, which has seemed to underlie Robin's connectedness to the animal world, is undercut by the terrified exhaustion of both Robin and the dog and thus, despite the sympathy with which critics try to read the scene, Robin's distance from a human selfhood and her consequent separation from human emotion finally destroy her. Robin here enacts the fear often present in the narcissistically vulnerable person that the loss of an empathic selfobject will lead to psychosis and the "losing of own's human self" (Kohut, How 21).

This ending was even more of an ending than could have been anticipated at the time, because Barnes was to write no more until years later when she returned to the family story she had used in Ryder. This return was marked by radical changes. Instead of the burlesque and laughter of Ryder in

its parodic, loosely connected novel form, we have poetic tragedy. We will turn now to The Antiphon.

The Antiphon

After the critical acclaim of Nightwood, it might have been expected that Barnes would continue her career with another poetic novel. However, her published writing stopped. Her life was disrupted by war and the resulting destruction of the expatriate community, and in 1940 she returned to the United States. For a time she lived with her mother, finally settling into a one room apartment by herself where she was to live for the next forty years. No books appeared and gradually she became more and more reclusive.

Twenty-two years after Nightwood, she published The Antiphon. With this play, she returned to a form which she had used and then abandoned in her youth. Her early plays had been produced by the Provincetown Players. One play, Three from the Earth, had opened the 1919 season (Field 89). Barnes was thus in the forefront of the experimental theater movement in the United States. The incomprehensibility, the use of the grotesque and the surrealistic, as well as a nonlinear plot which mark The Antiphon and which became famous in the hands of such writers as Albee, had already been used by Barnes years before in her early plays. Now, almost forty years after her involvement with Provincetown, she returned to this form with The Antiphon, using

surrealistic techniques which she had employed in her youth and which were still contemporaneous with the American dramatic scene of the late fifties and sixties. For instance, the major surrealistic device in The Antiphon, a magical doll house which replicates the past, is a device used in Albee's Tiny Alice in 1964. In The Antiphon Barnes returned again to the events used in Ryder. Used as a source of comedy in Ryder, here her family drama became a source of grotesque tragedy. The father's grandiosity and the mother's passivity cause laughter in Ryder but fury in The Antiphon. And in the latter, as in Eliot's The Family Reunion, it is unspoken family secrets with which we are concerned. We are here again in the world of the carnivalesque, but it is the world of private individual emotions rather than the public world of Bakhtin's carnival.

The Antiphon represented years of work for Barnes. When she completed it, she sent it to Eliot. His reaction to it was less than enthusiastic, and he cited its incomprehensibility and length as the basis of his reservations about it. He, in turn, passed it on to Edwin Muir who was very enthusiastic about it. In an attempt to persuade Eliot of its value, Muir arranged a staged reading, but it was a failure. However, Muir had great admiration for the work and later told Barnes, "I wish I wrote poetry like that" (Field 227). Although Eliot still had reservations about the play, The Antiphon was finally published through

his influence in both England and America in 1958, although, as Lynda Curry has shown in "'Tom, Take Mercy': Djuna Barnes' Drafts of The Antiphon," Eliot's demands for extensive cuts in the play caused Barnes to omit so much background information that the play was rendered almost incomprehensible and therefore destined for critical failure (287). Eliot's reservations about the play can be seen in the blurb that he wrote for the book jacket. "[N]ever has so much genius been combined with so little talent" (Field 222).

All in all, despite Barnes' previous reputation, the play sold little and evoked little commentary. The years of effort on the play were not rewarded with either prestige or money. Barnes' career had started with journalistic successes, and then encompassed a successful book, a best seller, and the artistic success of Nightwood, but she, through long years of silence, had drifted to a peripheral position in the literary world. She was still admired by some but she was personally obscure and, mainly, forgotten. She had been unable to sustain a prominent reputation and she was unable to capitalize on past success in order to secure a lasting prominence, as other writers had done. This inability to sustain success is a complaint leveled at the writer, Miranda, by her mother in The Antiphon.

There were few reviews of the play. A very few praised its strengths, particularly the power of its language, while

confessing to confusion in the face of its obscurity. Meanwhile, Edwin Muir's enthusiasm had influenced Dag Hammarskjöld, who became co-translator of the play into Swedish. The play was produced only once by the Royal Dramaten Theatre in Stockholm in 1961. This production, done with close attention to the difficult text, however, was a success (Field 222-28).

Because of the impenetrable language of the play, it was suggested by critics that Barnes did not intend The Antiphon to be a staged play. Meryl Altman, in "The Antiphon: 'No Audience at All'?", argues that the sophistication of the play's theatrical conventions, the stage directions, and the conscious use of the play-within-a-play technique, suggest that the opposite was true, and that, in a world where the plays of authors like Beckett were popular, Barnes could easily think that The Antiphon would not have great difficulty finding an audience. Altman says that Barnes wrote not with "the naive idealism of a poet or novelist who suddenly turns to writing for the stage" but as a writer with "half a life-time of practical experience and training in writing, acting, and as a drama critic" (271-84).

When the play is seen in relation to Barnes' other works and her biography, some of its obscurity is removed. The story is based on the same autobiographical material as Ryder, but the implications have changed. This time those

characters who occupied subordinate positions in Ryder, the mother and brothers, are the central characters. In The Antiphon Barnes returns to the material in Ryder as a woman in her sixties. The discipline of poetic language and the dramatic form combined to allow her to both unleash and conceal a story of narcissistic rage at an unempathic, unprotective mother whose passivity and lack of self allowed the children to be captive to the unrestrained grandiosity of the father. The family drama, so humorous in Ryder, becomes exposed here as physical and sexual child abuse, as Barnes, finally, confronts a tale of a father's unthinking savagery and a mother's passive complicity. That the rage is concealed in poetry and obscurity does not change its emotional contours. In Ryder we saw a portrayal of the failure of an idealized father, the child's idealization traumatically ruptured by the father's collapse and his abandonment of his family in the face of social pressure. In Nightwood we saw the shifting narcissistic needs of the characters, all amplified by a philosophical overlay which linked individual misery to universal suffering. Psychologically, while Ryder and Nightwood revolve around questions of narcissistic needs, The Antiphon shows the emotional wreckage and narcissistic rage of the child whose needs are not met by a secretly grandiose mother and overtly grandiose father.

In the play Miranda, the daughter who would seem to be

Barnes, slowly presents her accusations against the dead father, brothers, and mother and is, in turn, accused by them. Old angers and jealousies against all members of the family entwine in a mass of accusations and counter accusations. The setting is Burley Hall in an area of England in which Djuna's mother actually lived (Field 187). Burley Hall is in gothic ruins, surrounded by accoutrements of theatricals. The carnival trappings of the great hall, we are told, are Miranda's. There are theatrical costumes, "bonnets, flags, and boxes" (95). We are told that she is a lover of the carnival. This original home, now deserted and destroyed, is the scene for a reunion mysteriously arranged by one of the brothers, Jeremy, who has arrived in disguise as Jack Blow. Despite its broken windows and collapsed walls, it is still a place for travelers to stay the night, watched over by an elderly relative, Jonathan, who acts as its steward. Thus, it is both ruined and inhabited, a carnivalesque trespassing of normal boundaries of public and private. In this setting the family members will accuse each other of all the crippling injuries which they have carried forward into the present. This theatrical family trial is played out among the debris of the carnival: a carnival gryphon, musical instruments, broken statues, toys, and masks. Each surrealistic character confronts the others with ancient accusations. The brothers physically attack the mother, and the confrontation between mother and

daughter lead to their simultaneous death.

The play is set during the war in 1939. Thus, the time chosen reflects, not the reality of Barnes's childhood, but the events of her young adulthood when the fragmented post World War I European world was again shattered by the advent of World War II and her own expatriate society was scattered. Jack/Jeremy expresses the miserable forebodings of this early war period.

I expect to see myopic conquerors
 With pebbled monocles and rowel'd heels,
 In a damned and horrid clutch of gluttony
 Dredging the Seine of our inheritance. (91)

Barnes herself was an only girl in a family with four brothers. Other children, offspring of her father's mistress and those born from his promiscuous foraging around the countryside, were also known to her (Field 25). In Ryder she told tales of her siblings, sketching childhood battles and adolescent sexual encounters, but the subtle relationships between siblings and the rage directed at the parents by all the children were nowhere to be found. In The Antiphon the brothers shrink to three, two of whom are cruel and materialistic, and a third who is presented as kinder but who has secretly devised a plan for a reunion which will precipitate the whole fatal string of confrontations. The tales told here of outrageous paternal brutality and maternal rejection have no part in Ryder.

As the play opens, Jeremy, disguised as Jack Blow, coachman, enters in a clowning, theatrical way with his sister Miranda. Miranda, in surveying her mother's former house, relates the family history to Jack, apparently not recognizing him as her brother. Her recital is one of rage against her father, a "barbarian," and against her mother for her relationship to her father. Of her mother's marriage she says

Of that sprawl, three sons she leaned to fairly;
On me she cast the privy look of dogs
Who turn to quiz their droppings. (87)

Louise DeSalvo makes much of this image of the girl child as dog shit. Generalizing, she states that women "are treated like shit, because to the patriarchal order, they are shit" (302). Miranda's rage against the favored treatment of her brothers thus becomes an accurate description of the political realities of a patriarchal society. A Kohutian explanation would not deny this, but would allow us to recognize how this oppression works on an individual level. Miranda's mother is self-centered, childish, selfishly manipulative and demanding. Raised in a patriarchal society, she prefers her boys to Miranda. Her own self-image is so weak that she feels that the daughter who is like her must be worthless. Such a mother cannot give adequate mirroring to the daughter and, because she herself is so weak, she looks to her daughter for the

"mothering" and the sense of self which she herself needs. Such a woman, unmirrored and in turn unmirroring, is a terribly insufficient selfobject. Preoccupied with her own needs, she can neither mirror her children nor provide the soothing strength of the idealizable selfobject which allows the child to participate in its power and strength.

Jeremy, disguised as Jack, is the designing hand in this reunion, but he does not quite understand it himself and feels uneasily that he may be a "shill, or a Judas goat" (93). His sense of impending disaster, combined with his detachment from the coming action, places him in the role of a Greek chorus who registers the seismic jolts of the coming tragedy but is not personally involved. He refers to the coming events in the language of the carnival barker, suggesting both theater and carnival.

This way to the toymen:

This way, strutters, for the bearded lady;

The human skeleton, the fussy dwarf,

The fat girl with a planet in her lap;

The swallower of swords whose hidden lunge

Has not brought up his adversary yet! (93-94)

The other two brothers, Elisha and Dudley, arrive.

James Scott claims that the brothers' entrance is marked by a "Symbolic, even Absurdist, technique [which] quickly replaces the almost Jacobean threat" (122). Their entrance features one brother carrying an open umbrella and the other

tossing almond shells on the ground. The brothers are grotesque figures, wantonly cruel, and rage-filled, bent upon the destruction of their mother. They are crueler than Jeremy who, as the most preferred of the sons, seems to have developed into someone with more empathy. Elisha says of his brother, Jeremy, that he "can be kind" (101). That he has not apparently arrived seems an advantage, since he has "fits of clemency" (98). The point of the reunion, as seen by these two brothers, is stated by Dudley.

We'll never have as good a chance again;
Never, never such a barren spot,
Nor the lucky anonymity of war
All old people die of death, remember? (101)

It is matricide, rather than patricide, which the brothers plan here. Their dead father is safe from their rage, their mother its target for her failure to protect them against the grandiose father. Despite the mother's clear preference for her sons in this family, they have not received enough support to feel a sense of their own independent autonomy. They seek to find it by killing their mother to free themselves from her and achieve maturity. Dudley says, "Tommorrow we are men" (101).

While Dudley and Elisha hide, Jeremy tells a garbled, confusing story to Jonathan about his meeting and travels with Miranda, a story of carnivalesque doings, places, and people that concludes with his forebodings: "I'm not too

sure what's brewing hereabouts" (111). Jeremy ostensibly has arranged this meeting as an attempt to heal the family wounds; however, he is aware that he is not innocent as he sets in motion old angers. He will neither participate in nor halt the chain of events he has set in motion. He recognizes both his brothers' and Miranda's rage but remains emotionally detached. Of Miranda he says, "Will she recover from the stroke that felled her / At her people's gate, a life ago?" (113). This is the first reference to the veiled story of Miranda's tragedy. This is a story very different from the comic Ryder, with its emphasis on the humorous, devalued father, the strong and valued grandmother, and the backgrounded, marginal mother and other children. Julie, the character assumed to be Barnes in Ryder, dominates only a few scenes, her personal betrayal hidden by silence. Here the whole play works towards uncovering a primitive betrayal of the girl in an attempt to locate the source of Miranda's deep narcissistic rage.

Miranda shows us her brothers' privileged position and tells us that she fears them. The brothers dredge up new antagonisms towards their sister as well as air old ones, rejecting her lifestyle and independence. Dudley says, "As far as I am concerned, expatriate's / The same as traitor" (147). Louise DeSalvo suggests another reason: that the girl, already raped by her father, had by that action been made sexually available to her brothers, too (302). Such

lines as "Slap her rump, and stand her on four feet! / That's her best position" (176) indicate the brothers' sexual interest. DeSalvo feels that such lines indicate both their sexual abuse of her and their homoerotic use of her as a substitute for the truly desired father. Such possibilities are not suggested by Ryder, which avoids the child Julie's relationship with her brothers. Of course, Barnes' real relationship to her brothers is problematic, but such a reading overlooks another source for the brothers' anger at Miranda in the play: her talent, despite her sex, gave her a privileged position in this family, and their brutality is directed at her because of her escape from the usual strictures of a woman's world.

Miranda's inheritance of her father's artistic nature has given her what they have missed. They accuse her of "riding out the Grand Conception / Which father's lack of guts left in your corner" (176). They are both jealous of her writing talents and vehement in denouncing her failures. Both brothers and mother complain at several points throughout the play that Miranda has not been sufficiently successful as a writer and that she has not capitalized on her success or used it to meet the rich and famous. Augusta resents that her daughter has escaped the family tragedy because of her gifts. "If one child was meant to be a gifted child / It should have been a boy, and that boy Jeremy. / But Titus overwhelmed all but Miranda" (147).

Barnes' recognition of this paternal legacy can be seen in a theater review in which she claims that she always wrote with the realization that she was her father's daughter (Larabee 39).

Act II begins with the mother's appearance on the stage. Now that all the family is present, the history begins to unfold. Rather than the brothers' narcissistic rage and their planned matricide, it is the confrontation between the mother and Miranda that will prove to be the main action of the play.

Act I ends with Miranda saying, "No, no, no, no, no, no!" (114) as she hears the approaching footsteps of her mother. In Act II we begin to see the grotesque narcissistic character of the mother. This mother, Augusta, is even less assertive than the mother, Amelia, in Ryder who can, at one point in her mock heroic battle with her husband's mistress, be both aggressive and, in turn, show a sisterly concern for her rival, and, in her childbearing scenes, rise to a magnificent and terrifying anger. Augusta's exaggerated vanity, querulousness, childishness, greediness, and jealousy all point to a character so needy herself as to preclude any of the stability necessary to mirror the developing child. She is concerned first with her own comfort, calling authoritatively for a chair and tea. Augusta is used to having her way. Complaining that Jeremy, her favorite son, left her twenty years before, she says of

her sons, "I dread my sons, and love them bitterly" (126). Such a statement suggests her emotional dependency and passive aggressiveness towards them. Neither husband nor sons satisfy her. So devalued herself, she has no room for any positive view of another. The narcissist, caught up in an endless stream of inflated and deflated valuations, can care for no one. She dislikes both husband and sons. "My husband, Titus, sitting at that end / Gobbled like a turkey," and "I thought to be the mother of Aristocrats / And got me ruffians" (124). She has no self-esteem, nor little sense of self, but she has secret grandiose fantasies of feminine power. She expected to get power through her marriage to a great man and as the mother of exceptional children. She is disappointed that the children have not provided her with a sense of identity and prestige. Reversing roles, she sought to satisfy her own narcissistic needs through them.

This mother, ever the child, wants to be amused, even wistfully wishing her husband's mistresses were back to make a fourth at bridge. She is emotionally shallow and superficial, her callousness shown as she laments, "No son of mine has been so favoured / That he died in war" (135). When she hurts herself, she calls for her daughter, forcing the daughter into a mothering role. Her envy and her childlike neediness are displayed when she admires her daughter's rings. Miranda generously gives them to her,

while recognizing that her mother's neediness makes her unable to respond to any kindness. She says, "You never remember any rings I gave you" (141). Despite Miranda's love and concern for her mother, Augusta is jealous of and competitive with her daughter. "As for Miranda, brother, tell them / How I was handsomer than she" (142).

In this family with a grandiose father and ineffectual mother, both sons and daughter suffer. The father is cruel and capable of unthinking violence. Dudley says, "[E]ven as a baby in your arms / You let him lash me with his carriage whip." He continues, "I have against my father that he whipped me / Before I knew him" (143). Later, Elisha recounts a memory of his father shooting a dog as his mother, on the father's command, held him. Augusta says, "Don't look at me! Your father was to blame for everything" (165). The sons accuse their mother of passive complicity with their father's schemes. Elisha says, "You also did exactly what he told you / And let him get away with anything." He blames her for allowing the father to establish a polygamous household.

And that mother, dutiful and balking
 Lived cheek-by-jowl with all his brats and brides
 Slaved, without undue astonishment,
 The while the ladies lapped up cakes and ale. (144)

This parallels the description of family life presented in Ryder; however, Amelia, in Ryder, was pitied rather than

blamed for her role. It is only in this play that the mother is seen as responsible for her ineffectual passivity.

Augusta, too, is suffering from narcissistic rage at her husband, Titus. She describes her husband as a man who "painted little men, on river banks" (155). This devalues his grandiose ambitions. The traumatic disillusionment with the idealized husband, the supposed philosopher and artist who turns out to be a talentless coward, is shown by this statement. His character is described in blatant narcissistic terms by his son. The disguised Jeremy says, "But, to slake a thirst more raging than Narcissus, / Leaning at the brink, the cod fell in" (155).

There follows a description of the father's many mistresses as the brothers, Augusta, and Miranda argue about who was who until the law and public opinion frightened the hero into divorcing his family and marrying one of his mistresses. Augusta defends herself as a victim. "In my day, we did not leave our husbands" (160). Augusta tries to excuse her complicity in Titus' outrageous actions. However, her only reason is the trite excuse of proper female behavior. Meryl Altman sees this as part of "the exposure of deadly fictions of femininity by which women are deceived into colluding with, and loving, their oppressors" (282).

Elisha accuses Augusta of trying to castrate her sons. "And when she startles with her carving knife-- / Three boy

mice, see how they run!" (169). Miranda lays claim to their gratitude for having saved her brothers in some unnamed way from the mother, and, even though they are filled with jealousy at their sister, this jealousy is mixed with love. Dudley calls his sister "our dearly beloved vixen" (99). The brothers are aware of the abuse Miranda has suffered. Dudley says

You had her so convinced she was the devil,
At seven, she was cutting down the hedges,
To furnish brier to beat her to your favour;
All time since, been hunting for her crime. (164)

Even though Miranda was persecuted, Elisha recounts that she was still responsive to her mother's pleas. "Still you swept the strings and still she cried, / My mother, oh my mother" (168). Despite her mother's narcissistic self-centeredness, Miranda is able to love her and respond to her needs.

Elisha accuses his mother of making Miranda support the family.

When you, grass-widow, were set out to pasture
Finding it a time of locusts and of famine--
Thinking only of your sons--and rightly so--
Pushed her, into the dark, as sole provider (169)

Louise DeSalvo says that the mother pushed her into prostitution, a life which references to Miranda's theatrical life indicate that she had since been compelled

to follow. However, the anger which this speech reflects may come from Barnes' anger at having to take on the financial burdens of her large family at an early age. As a young journalist, she supported her mother and three younger brothers, while paying for her grandmother's hospitalization (Field 13-14).

As in Ryder, the grandmother is the focus of feelings of love, betrayal and disillusionment. The family story is the same. She came with her son and helped seduce Augusta. She was able to hoodwink anyone, either man or woman.

Augusta says,

She had my purse, my person, and my trust

In one scant hour.

Even stones wear down beneath the lick of flattery

And I but rock-salt to her stallion son,

Before whose rough unbridled head I dwined

At his fast leisure. (154)

The dead grandmother is admired. She was an independent and exciting woman. Miranda says, "Free-soiler, free thinker, nonconformist, mystic-- / Abolitionist, Hyde Park orator--," but Augusta accuses her of hypocrisy, adding "But kept her cordials in the caddy!" (149). As in Ryder she was a sexually fascinating woman. She had two husbands and many lovers. "She was mourned indeed by fifty silk umbrellas" (154). She was also, in her own way, loving and kind. Miranda defends her grandmother. "But, as St. Peter

shut the door, her heel / Stayed by, to let the children through" (156). This is the Sophia of Ryder and Barnes' own grandmother. As in Ryder, she is idealized, seen through, and forgiven. She is not blamed for her son's transgressions, even though she is most certainly a part of them. Instead, she is seen as the defender of the children, a role that the ineffective, childish mother could not play.

When Jeremy leaves to retrieve a package, Dudley puts on a pig's mask and Elisha puts on an ass's mask, both grotesque symbols of their characters. They begin to physically attack both Miranda and Augusta, pushing and shoving, flicking Augusta with a whip, and weaving into their speeches all their accusations against mother and sister. Augusta believes they are playing, showing again the childish behavior that has helped to create the family tragedy. While Elisha catalogs Miranda's sins--alcoholism, unemployment, spinsterhood, childlessness, and "rank continence"--and threatens to "staff" her (179), Miranda stops their attack on their mother. Jeremy returns with a doll's house. This surrealistic device, a replication of the real family house, reenacts the past. Louise DeSalvo calls this scene "one of the most brilliantly orchestrated scenes in modern drama" (307). Augusta is first struck with the doll, which is a likeness of her husband. This doll deflates the importance of the grandiose father. No longer the philosopher, artist, and founder of a new race, he is "A

chip, a doll, a toy, a pawn, / A little man soon cooled. A nothing!" (182). Now that he is dead she realizes how she had been deluded by his grandiose fantasies. "What apes our eyes were / Saw him great because he said so" (183). The man who ruled their lives and seemed to be so superhuman is now trivialized. However, the doll house depicts far more than the deflation of the father. When Augusta is forced to watch the past through the doll house window, she witnesses the childhood rape of Miranda by a man chosen by her father, saying as she does so, "I don't care what you've done, I forgive me" (184). Miranda says of what she sees, "Miranda damned, with instep up-side-down, / Dragging rape-blood behind her, like the snail--" (185). The rape has been at the father's instigation: "Beneath her, in a lower room, her father / Rubbed his hands" (185). The mother is an accomplice through her passivity. Jack says

You made yourself a madam by submission
 With, no doubt, your apron over head
 Strewing salt all up and down the stairs
 Trying to catch an heel on its last mile--
 A girl who'd barely walked away sixteen--
 Tipped to a travelling cockney thrice that age,
 (185-86)

Linda Curry did the original research on the rape scene presented in The Antiphon. She compared voluminous copies of earlier drafts tracing Barnes' deletions under pressure

from Eliot to shorten the play . Earlier drafts are more explicit, detailing the father's own attempted rape of the girl and his trussing her and hanging her from a hay hook while he searches for another to rape her. Her brother's forced witnessing of the rape, her father's delight, and her mother's passivity as the event takes place are all part of earlier drafts (286-298). Louise DeSalvo points out the close correspondence between the family in the play and what is now known about the psychological state of incest victims and their families. The need for silence, the sense of being betrayed by the mother as well as the father, the mother's projection of blame on the daughter, and the brothers' sexual abuse of the already abused girl are the common emotional coin of the incestuous family (300-315). All of these emotional elements are present in The Antiphon.

Elisha gives Miranda the brothers' weapons, admitting that this tale tops any of their accusations. In this game of who has been the most hurt by the family situation, Miranda wins. "Miranda, I give you our weapons, Jack, to you / My compliments. You pulled a trick unseats us all" (189). Nothing that the mother has done to her sons can approach the enormity of this betrayal of the daughter.

Even though Miranda has had no protection from her mother and has been betrayed by both mother and father, she is still emotionally caught in taking the blame and forgiving her mother. Miranda describes a narcissistic

family system when she says, "For I do swear, dear uncle, I have loved / Three sons, and one woman to the heart" (188). She has "mothered" both her brothers for her infantile and narcissistic mother, and, instead of being "mothered" by her mother, has also "mothered" her.

When Miranda makes the divided carousel seat into a bed, a bed topped by a carnival crown in which she lies sleeping, Augusta, not sufficiently mature to have separated emotionally from her daughter, says "See, she has a sleep, I gave it her" (190). Her identity is enmeshed with Miranda's, of whom she says "She's only me" (162). When Burley says, "I think it time you saw her as Miranda," Augusta replies "I think it's time I saw me as Augusta" (191). Her identification with her daughter is further stressed when, in the process of this act, she gradually takes Miranda's shoes and hat and puts them on. She identifies with her daughter and tries to acquire achievements, excitement, and even sexual adventures through her. She ascribes this lack of boundaries to motherhood in general.

What's never been remarked is that the mother
 Fearing what it is a spirit eats,
 Goes headlong through her children's guts,
 Looking for bread. (205)

The narcissistic mother is an emotional predator.

Every mother, in extortion for her milk--

With the keyhole iris of the cat--draws blood.

Teasing the terror for the teasing story. (210)

The narcissistic mother destroys the children or invades them to satisfy her own needs.

Most of Act Three takes place on the bed composed of the carnival gryphon, halved in the first two acts and now brought together. Augusta, who wants to play like a child, climbs into this bed with Miranda saying, "The boys asleep, and we are girls again" (193). While Augusta tries to draw Miranda into childhood games of make-believe, Miranda is murderously angry at her mother's early betrayal of her. "To think I had a mother should betray me!" (195). Despite Miranda's rage, the mother acts as a child, substituting one imaginary scene for another: a hunting box, vacation resorts, the races, fancy restaurants, the opera. Meandering between centuries, places, and reality, she imagines Empress Josephine, Lost Atlantis, and fairy tales. This defensive behavior of refusing to understand what is happening is her way of avoiding the responsibilities of adulthood. It is her reaction to all the events of the play. Miranda, on the other hand, does not indulge her mother in these fantasies, nor does she let her mother romanticize their family history.

Again and again, the story keeps returning to the story of Titus, his many wives and children, his frightened abandonment of his principles and his family, and the

entanglement of love and hate between the family members left. Miranda both rages against her mother and tries to protect her from her sons.

My brothers say, "Let's break Miranda! You?
 Why mother, they'd have thrown you in the pit--
 The last salt-lick before oblivion,
 Where the gammers of the world come down to feed--
 Except I put my foot against that door." (209)

Miranda is jealous of her brothers who are, in turn, jealous of her. She accuses her mother of favoring her brother.

You who would un-breath my dying breath
 From off the tell-tale mirror plate, to blow
 Into the famine of my brother's mouth,
 Haggling in a market place? (217)

The mother, disappointed in her unloving and unfaithful husband, turns to her children for the life she has missed. She clings to her children, particularly her favored son, Jeremy. Augusta accuses Miranda of being responsible for the fact that her son left her. "He would have stayed with me, if you had stayed. / He'd have wanted to, if you had wanted to" (216). She, greedy for the unmet narcissistic needs of her own childhood, has been cheated by her husband and now feels cheated by her children. "Should I cry now, whose cries were always swindled?" (220). Child herself, she is also in turn the one who cheats. She has cheated her children by not meeting their needs, using them instead to

meet her needs. She demands of Miranda, "Make me something!" (212) and, again,

Magpie!

In what pocket have you my identity?

I so disoccur in every quarter of myself

I cannot find me; (213).

Despite her expatriate separation from her family, Miranda has not been able to emotionally disentangle herself.

Augusta asks her, "Why don't you love us any more? / That is the question-- / Where is Miranda?" and Miranda responds, "The question is, why do I" (215). Despite her father's callous use of her in the name of his philosophical ideal of free love and her mother's failure to protect her, her emotional involvement and the entanglement of both rage and love continue. She still accuses, looking for an explanation which will reduce her rage.

It is this which has given Miranda her acquaintance with the grotesque, the private depths of carnival unexplored by Bakhtin. She is said to belong to the depths. When she says, "But on the dark side, there I entertain," and Augusta replies, "The bowels?" Miranda responds, "Woman is most beast familiar--" (205). Augusta accuses Miranda of being too fond of death. Death is the measure of all that Miranda does. "A portion of man's dignity, he dies" (218). This returns us to the imagery of Nightwood, the grotesque depths. Miranda is seen here as most familiar with these

depths which connect death, life, love, and anger. Despite her upbringing, she is a person of passion; her brothers, on the other hand, are rage filled but emotionally distant. Dudley, for instance, feels that his wife's relationship to him is based on his money. Jeremy takes no part in the actions of his brothers, but does nothing to stop them. His detachment provides emotional distance, reminiscent of the emotional distance created by O'Connor in Nightwood. Miranda is different. Though she can rage, she can also love.

Augusta, on hearing the sounds of her sons' departure, attempts to stop them. As she tries to reach the top step of the stage, Miranda says, "Be not so swift to see and know" (220), ironically recalling the time that her mother failed to see and know of Miranda's rape. Despite her anger towards her mother, Miranda tells Augusta that her sons have come to kill her and tries to dissuade her mother from following her sons: "Stay with me. They left you long ago" (221). But Augusta blames Miranda for everything. "Stop them! Stop them! You let them get away! / It's your fault! You--you--you!" (220). The mother accuses her of being the one who would kill her or bury her alive. Miranda replies, "Nay, sparrow. / I'd lay you in the journey of your bed, / And un-bed you, and I could, in paradise" (222).

Childishly, in a complete reversal of the mother-daughter roles, it is Augusta who has idealized

Miranda and then has reacted with narcissistic rage at what she perceives as Miranda's shortcomings:

Then why had you let me grow so old?

And let them get away--and Jeremy?

You are to blame, to blame, you are to blame--

Lost--lost--lost--lost-- (223)

In the struggle between them, Augusta pulls down the curfew bell and kills them both.

Like a death scene in an Elizabethan drama, Jonathan and Jack Blow/Jeremy return to see this final grotesque event. Jonathan reacts with puzzlement, and Jeremy finally understands that his attempts at healing have, instead, produced this final entangled tragedy for which he claims no responsibility. This double death, the end product of the narcissistic rage of both mother and daughter, kills them both. The twisted upbringing of the family, with all the needs of the members subordinated to the all-powerful father, and fed by the vast neediness of the secret grandiosity of the narcissistic mother, has ended in tragedy.

The Antiphon was Barnes' last finished large work, but she continued over the years to write. True to her history of switching genres, she began to work on an epic poem, which, however, after years of work, was left unfinished. Thus, in Ryder and The Antiphon which bracket her life's work, the family story is told from the perspective of youth

and age, first as comedy and then, finally, as the tragedy
it must have been for all of the family.

Conclusion

To examine Barnes' work from the perspective of Kohut's and Bakhtin's theories is to see her work from a theoretical perspective foreign to her and foreign to the time in which she wrote, as well as unavailable to her early critics. We might ask, then, while we try to put all this in perspective, about Barnes' critical perspective and the cultural influences under which she wrote. Barnes was not a critically naive writer. Although her father had rejected the public school system, her private education provided her with a sophisticated sense of writing and a wide exposure to literature. Field says that the "richness of her relationship to the centuries of English literature and her passion for words (equalled only by Joyce and Nabokov among the moderns) seem to derive from the fact that she never went to school and was instead read and spoken to in a great variety of styles by her grandmother, mother, and father" (33). She herself said that her grandmother had really educated her (Field 175). Whatever the destructive sexual and psychological dysfunctions of her family, participation in music, art, and literature had been a healthy family passion. Her grandmother was a reasonably successful writer, and her father wrote operettas as well as painted. Field traces the mixed genre of Ryder specifically to her father's

folk operas and the title "Bow Down," originally intended as the title of Nightwood, to a popular folk opera (183).

As a young writer in Greenwich Village, she was in the center of the literary currents of the time. Surrealism and dadaism were au courant. It was also the time of imagism and theatrical innovation. Her Beardsleyesque drawings show the influences of that decadent style. Her early village experience included a heavy involvement in theatrical groups. Barnes both participated in productions for the Washington Square Players and even appeared on stage in minor roles (Kannestine 129). She was involved in a common-law marriage to Courteney Lemon, a man whose ambition was to write a critical history of literature (Field 15). All this shows us that she was immersed in a world of both writing and thinking about the way literature was written. As a playwright involved with the Provincetown Players, she participated in a community which would help shape twentieth century American theater.

In 1920 she went to Paris, which brought her into the circle of famous expatriate writers of this period. She knew Joyce, Hemingway, Eliot, Robert McAlmon, John Glassco, F. S. Fitzgerald, and the large number of other writers, artists, publishers, patrons, and eccentric characters who formed the artistic community of the time. Her admiration for Joyce's work is reflected in her remark upon the publication of Ulysses: "I shall never write another line.

Who has the nerve after this!" (Field 108). She was later influenced by Eliot who was responsible for Nightwood's publication and whose draconian insistence on massive cutting in The Antiphon was responsible both for its publication and its incomprehensibility (Curry 287). She lived amidst the most important artistic and critical influences of the century.

Politically, socialism was in the air, but Barnes, save for her brief relationship with Courtenay Lemon, seems to have been uninvolved with the political issues of the day. Although Barnes' work traces the historical, political, and social influences of her time in her depiction of the America of her childhood in Ryder, the decadent and chaotic Parisian world between World War I and II in Nightwood, and, finally, the world of early World War II destruction in The Antiphon, Barnes' work is primarily concerned with private emotion.

Freud's psychology was also very much in the air, but Barnes' relationship to Freudian thought appears to have been hostile. She seemed unwilling to indulge in the communal introspection which its advent had precipitated among writers. In the view of Margaret Anderson, Barnes was "unenlightened" and as a result she created "self-myths" which she never took "the pains to revise." Barnes found it embarrassing "to approach impersonal talk about the personal element" but it placed a barrier between Barnes and others

of the village scene who were embarrassed to "attempt a relationship with anyone who was not on speaking terms with her own psyche" (Field 98). Barnes seems to have been suspicious of the popularization of Freudianism, and Barnes' own family would have given her reason to be sceptical of Freud. The artistic and philosophical unconventionalities of her family--ruled by an egotistical grandmother, abused by a self-indulgent ineffective father, and unprotected by a cowardly, dependent mother--most probably concealed the incest which Freud would have discounted as fantasy. Even though Barnes was consciously hostile to Freudian thought, psychoanalysis saturated the literature of the time, and thus she was not totally immune to its influence, whether in exploring its possibilities or in rewriting it from her perspective. Her own early play, The Dove, was described by one critic as psychoanalytic. Field calls Barnes' works "[o]ne of the best instances of deep auto-analysis outside of the Freudian canon" (98). Jane Marcus suggests that Nightwood is a parody of psychoanalysis, and, indeed, Marcus reads it as parody of Freudian theory from a feminist perspective. In her view, O'Connor is the psychoanalyst who desperately attempts, through inadequate words, to answer Nora's questions, but whose own inner chaos figures the failure of the psychoanalytic project (233).

Jung was also beginning to influence the psychoanalytical atmosphere and the artistic community at

this time. Transitions, an influential modernist literary journal in which Barnes had published, consistently published Jungian-influenced essays by Jolas throughout the 1930s (Kannestine 107), and it had also published an important essay by Jung on the psychology of poetry at the same time as it published Joyce's Work in Progress, which Barnes most certainly read. Kannestine makes the case that the Jungian-inspired valuation of the mythic world, particularly as revealed in dreams and sleep, in "spirit and substance are pervasive in Nightwood" although Barnes herself never was actively involved in the movement (107). Certainly, Barnes could hardly have been unaware of Jung.

Feminism, too, was an issue of the times, but Barnes' relationship to it was ambivalent. As a journalist she was exposed to the agenda of the suffragettes and she also had herself force-fed so that she could write about the prison experience of the English suffragettes (Field 53). Her own independence and life style spoke to her personal enactment of feminist ideals, yet her apolitical nature left her mute on the cause, except as a general indictment of the patriarchal society which can be read in her books. Later in life, she would make superficially anti-feminist comments. Once, according to Field, reporting on what he calls "the exaggerated posturing of the contemporary feminist movement," she said, "These women! Why don't they do something? Or knit socks for their husbands?" (248).

Hank O'Neal said that in 1978 she talked about how she always hated old ladies: "[T]hey aren't good for anything. They aren't pretty and they can't screw so what good are they?" (352).

Lesbianism, which had become a public lifestyle for some literary figures, was also treated by her with ambivalence. Despite the lesbian love relationship in Nightwood and her familiarity with Natalie Barney's lesbian literary circle in Paris, which she parodied in Ladies Almanack, she distanced herself from a lesbian identity. She knew all the lesbian writers, including Gertrude Stein, of whom she complained: "--D'you know what she said of me? Said I had beautiful legs! Now what does that have to do with anything?" (Field 104). Later on in life, she would protest her own heterosexuality and announce her dislike for lesbians. Field quotes Barnes as telling a friend, "I'm not a lesbian. I just loved Thelma" (37).

All of this historical context was muted in the early criticism of Barnes' work, such as in Louis Kannestine's The Art of Djuna Barnes and James Scott's Djuna Barnes which were, inevitably, written under the influence of New Criticism. Such criticism centered on structure and language, concentrating on the internal unity of the work which could be discussed with little reference to the author or her historical time. New Criticism's stance on the integrity of the artistic object devalued the impact of

biographical influences and ignored ideology. Nor did New Criticism develop any sophisticated approach for character analysis which was devalued in the New Critic's emphasis on symbolism and form. Such concern with structure, language, and artistic unity can be seen in all early critiques of Barnes. The attempt to determine a unified theme in her works, in particular, led to the neglect of the divergent aspects of the novels. Thus, contradictory themes were asserted by critics, particularly for Ryder. History and biography were overlooked in determining meaning. In general, no one recognized, as Jeffrey Berman says in Narcissism and the Novel, "the fictionality of autobiography and the autobiography of fiction" (119). Scott's early book on Barnes concentrates on plot and language, including only sparse biographical detail that presents Barnes' family as eccentric but benign. Beginning with Field, issues of biography and history are more central, if unsympathetic.

Today, however, many critical theories--feminist, Marxist, reader-response, new historical-- foreground questions of biographical, psychological, historical, and ideological issues, relying heavily on external biographical and historical data. The writers of the essays in Silence and Power, armed with new feminist approaches, have reconstructed many ignored facets of Barnes' life. Such essays recover many lost aspects of her work, such as the innovativeness and complexity of her early journalism, the

concrete historical antecedents of the art work in Ryder, and the effects of unnoticed aspects of her life, such as the way economic privations separated her from the wealthier lesbian circle, which she satirized in Ladies Almanack. Such essays both add to her stature and make sense of her seemingly eccentric literary choices by exploring the concrete reality within which she worked.

The newest work on Barnes, armed with a feminist sensitivity, presents her in a radically different way, pointing out that her much celebrated innovations of language and structure conceal even more radical innovations in the undermining of patriarchal power and the rethinking of gender. Several of these essays tie together issues of the carnivalesque and the psychological that I have been dealing with here.

In "The Sweetest Lie," Judith Lee reads Nightwood as deconstructing gender myths in our culture, focusing on Barnes' use of what she terms anti-fairy tales to expose the culture's myth of masculinity and femininity underlying heterosexual love. Lee sees Nightwood's heterosexual marriages, which transpose masculine and feminine traits, as parodies of the fairy tale. She identifies homosexual love in Nightwood as narcissistic in that the loved one is perceived as part of the self. This narcissistic merging with the other is a denial of separation and difference. While Lee is operating out of a feminist framework rather

than a Kohutian one, her description of the narcissistic nature of the fused qualities of these loves is similar to what Kohut calls an archaic selfobject relationship. Lee juxtaposes the conventional differences between masculine and feminine against what she suggests is an even more fundamental experience of difference: "the difference between the identity one imagines (the self as Subject) and the identity one experiences in relationship with someone else (the self as Other)" (208). An attempt to achieve oneness, in narcissistic love, is doomed because it overlooks this inevitable duality. Lee feels that this "difference" makes romantic love "the sweetest lie," but that it is also at the heart of the mother/child relationship in which the child must seek to establish difference. Barnes' work explores that need to establish difference in the relationship of mother and child which the love between Nora and Robin parallels. She thinks that Barnes' work exposes the inevitable impossibility of any relationship because not only is there difference but there is also the realization that the lover loves someone different from what one perceives oneself to be. She feels that Nightwood concludes, through O'Connor's tragic lament of suffering and silence, that there can be no solution to this tragic impasse. Lee suggests that Nightwood deconstructs traditional romantic notions of love and of the romantic notion of unity, "that the female experience,

specifically lesbian love, proves false our assumptions about both love and gender, [and] it promises a new form of meaning," but that the emphasis on silence at the end "denies the possibility of making meaning" (207). On a more profound level, Lee suggests that Nightwood shows us the ultimate instability of language. She feels that the "contradiction at the heart of Nightwood is that if the most profound experience is unspeakable, and every interpretation is a distortion, how can any story have meaning?" (208).

Lee suggests that the final four pages of the novel in which Robin confronts the dog under Nora's horrified gaze restates the same theme that we see in O'Connor's final collapse into "nothing but wrath and weeping" (362). Such an interpretation does indeed "deny the possibility of meaning, but there is another possible interpretation of the final chapter which suggests a different interpretation. While Lee is correct in her assessment that the novel forestalls attempts to make meaning, it is not because experience is finally unspeakable. The short, final, grotesque chapter disrupts the sense of closure established in the preceding chapter. The reappearance of the now needy Robin turns the tables on the love affair, the abandoned Nora now being pursued by the fragmented and pitiful Robin. Thus, the novel promises the continuation of the working through of emotional pain within the onward rush of time which changes all things. This fragment, which gives no

sense of closure, suggests the unending passage of time in which life continues rather than the traditional novelistic ending which serves to provide artistic closure and suggests an interpretative stance.

Lee's analysis of the novel's destruction of the myth of romantic love gains from adding the perspective of Kohut's theory. Kohut's description of the process of the selfobject relation, and of an individual's ability to make use of selfobjects to build self-structure, offers a more optimistic way than Lee's of analyzing the psychological process through which this book has led us. The problem of the romantic notion of unity that Lee is addressing can be resolved in Kohutian terms. Romantic love, which has difficulty tolerating the recognition of inevitable difference, is still tied too closely to archaic selfobject relationships. Truly mature love entails the recognition of the inevitable difference between oneself and sustaining selfobjects. Loved ones are never quite what we think them to be, nor are we quite what they think us to be. If an individual has a sufficient sense of self-structure, separation and differences will not be catastrophic and such a person will have the ability to love in spite of difference.

That Barnes' work functions as a feminist critique of Bakhtin is suggested by Sheryl Stevenson. In "Writing the Grotesque Body: Djuna Barnes' Carnival Parody," she argues

that Ryder's parody of male texts is not only the usual carnivalesque toppling of the conventional but also a critique of patriarchy. She sees Ryder as "a reseeing of carnivalesque writing from a woman's angle and a reworking of carnivalesque procedures for feminist purposes. . . . Foregrounding the way each parodied discourse is saturated with conceptions of sexuality and gender, these parodies present not only Wendell's exploits and myth, but also female characters' resistances and countermyths" (81). Stevenson feels that a recognition of this female difference in parody causes us to recognize Bakhtin's neglect of concepts of gender. Because Bakhtin seems to have remained blind to the way gender shapes society and literature, to use Bakhtin to discuss feminist issues confronts Bakhtin's patriarchal bias. Stevenson interrogates Bakhtin's crucial validation of carnival degradation, which Bakhtin says brings the ideal back to the real with an emphasis on revitalizing and renewing physical processes. Rather than the Bakhtinian lifegiving, positive carnivalesque, Stevenson finds that Barnes' carnivalesque emphasizes pain and debasement. She feels that Ryder "illustrates a peculiarly female carnivalesque, and one that uncrowns Bakhtin's carnival as being of a 'rosy' physicality" (86) by the intertwining of life and death in childbirth. Ryder's mythic story of Thingumbob and images of childbirth show us a different carnivalesque. While "Wendell's mythic

representation of sexuality abstracts death in childbirth, highlighting the larger 'contradictory process' rather than the individual's pain," childbirth "shows women tied to the earth, part of a process which betrays them at once to pleasure, maternity, physical suffering, and death" (90-91). Stevenson suggests that, while the laughter of the carnivalesque may involve healing for the man, it often results in brutality and death for the woman, and, thus, acts in unthinking collaboration with the underlying patriarchal violence of the society. Stevenson suggests that what, from a Bakhtinian perspective, are supposedly regenerative acts of sexuality and birth have vastly different implications for women and men.

Carnival as part of patriarchal violence poses a valid but inadequate critique of Bakhtin. Such a reading of Barnes narrows the idea of the regenerative in carnival to a conventional goodness rather than grounding it in the inevitable grotesque of decay and death. I suggest, in addition, that Barnes' work critiques Bakhtin by what it suggests about the modern carnivalesque. Bakhtin avoids an analysis of the modern grotesque by excluding modern literature from his scheme but he does speculate about it. His work on Rabelais, which extends backward to Rabelais' roots and forward to Romanticism, pointedly excludes the modern grotesque, but he speculates that the revival of the grotesque in the twentieth century is "complex and

contradictory" and of two types: the first is "related to the tradition of realism and folk culture," and the second is the personal grotesque discussed by Kayser and connected with the Romantic tradition which developed anew "under the influence of existentialism" (460). The modern grotesque, then, Bakhtin suggests, recuperates some of the carnivalesque in two ways: through the comic collectivism of folk humor and through an existential terror which inversely implies a lost golden age. The modern and Romantic grotesque, according to Bakhtin, still retain regenerative magic, in the first instance, by evoking a "memory of that mighty whole to which they belonged in the distant past" (47) previously associated with carnival and religious festivals, and, in the second instance, by implying positive possibilities inherent in our negative perception of an imperfect world because "the existing world suddenly becomes alien (to use Kayser's terminology) 'precisely because there is the potentiality of a friendly world, of the golden age, of carnival truth'" (48).

With this in mind, let us turn again to Barnes to see how her work suggests a gap in Bakhtin's speculation about the modern grotesque. While Ryder may fit into the tradition of folk realism, the world of the night in Nightwood and the disintegrated, shattered world of The Antiphon are neither Bakhtin's category of modern folk realism, nor in his second category of a modern literature

of existential horror which mirrors an implied ideal world. Rather, there is in these a third type of modern carnivalesque omitted from Bakhtin's two categories: one of a grounding in the physical realities most readily captured in images of blood and excrement. It is this type which Bernard McElroy, in describing Joyce's Ulysses, suggests is based on the gross physicality of the body, humanity's humiliation in acquiescing to this physicality, and its implication in "the primal conflicts between self and self, and self and other" (80). Such an understanding is not as celebratory as Bakhtin's carnival and it focuses on the private individual life, but, through its implication of a shared physical reality, this private grotesque suggests a sense of shared humiliation and pain.

Barnes' use of the grotesque to get to the authentic and the real underlying the superficialities of class and culture has been noted by Carl Hervig as evident in even her early journalism. In writing of interviews done on an aging Lillian Russell and Diamond Jim Brady, Carl Hervig says, "The attraction for Barnes is toward luxury-turned-decadence, the flower whose sweetness already carries a hint of death and decay, the musk of incense mixed with dust in Russell's room. Jim Brady's aging body is burdened with the weight of diamonds and gems." The people that Barnes interviewed, "like the figures who populate most of her work, are caught between the contrasting images of

public cosmetics and private paunches and are reminded daily of their mortality by the pervading odors of the flesh" (267-68).

It is physical reality and bodily functions, with their implicit threat to our identities, which the human mind wants to keep at bay. For the narcissistically vulnerable, in particular, this triggers disintegration anxiety. This avoidance of physical reality, bodily functions, illness, and death, which is more easily accomplished in our technological and language-controlled world, is a universal of Western human existence. Despite this, we are unequivocally rooted in our own illness, physical pain, loss, and emotional pain. The grotesque in literature is another way of confronting this reality.

In order to understand how the carnivalesque functions in this way, particularly in Nightwood, let us consider how Marcus' essay uses Jameson, Kristeva, and Bakhtin to read the novel. She reads Nightwood as a rewriting of the book of Leviticus where the impure and the excluded--the cripple, the black, the female, the homosexual--become validated by being written into the world in carnivalesque profusion, and, using Jameson's concept of the political unconscious, she reads Nightwood as an unconscious forecast of the holocaust (221). Its grotesque characters are seen as having a political function, an affirmation of the fringe elements of society encoded in the "Gutter language . . . the voice

of outcast people" (226). Marcus writes that the political unconscious in Nightwood allows it to triumph over its own prejudices to write the other--the homosexual, black, lesbian--in a way in which the reader is drawn into empathy. She says that "Nightwood asserts that the outcast is normal and truly human. Freud and fascism, by labeling deviance medically and politically, expose the inhumanity for the madness of order in every denial of difference--from Leviticus to the sex doctors: Kraft-Ebbing, Havelock Ellis, Otto Weininger, and even Freud himself." Because the outcast is normal, "Barnes makes us all misfits, claiming that in human misery we can find the animal and divine in ourselves" (233).

Such a critique begins to suggest a commonality among the divergent critical theories, suggesting a relationship between the carnivalesque and Julia Kristeva's "abject" and its political consequences. With this in mind, let us review Kristeva's theoretical structure and what I see as Nightwood's critique of it in a way which aligns Kohut and Bakhtin. Kristeva, in tracing the psychological process of the struggle to deal with our intimate yet universal confrontation with the ongoing decomposition of physical reality, traces historically two techniques of coping. One is the Old Testament devising of rigid categories of the clean and the unclean, such as in the book of Leviticus, or as in the Indian caste system. The clean/unclean opposition

seeks by rules of exclusion to maintain the self. Societies with strong prescriptions of pure and impure create a strong, socially determined sense of self. In the clean/unclean split that which is abject is kept at bay by expelling the unclean and keeping it away. "Refuse and corpses," writes Kristeva, "show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, are the part of death--There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border" (3). The second way of dealing with the abject, which occurred in the Christian tradition, is through internalization. The terror of the interjection of abjection is neutralized by Christian redemption. Thus, the Christian is always impure, always abject, but glories in his abjection because it is transformed by Christ (9).

Neither the revulsion from the physical, which invests the real with loathing, nor a toleration of it to magnify the miracle of redemption includes that abject which is implied by Bakhtin's locating carnival as the lining of the sacred, always intimate with religion. While Kristeva's analysis suggests two common societal methods of dealing with the basic existential fears by casting out what is impure, or by magnifying the impure to emphasize escape from it through redemption, carnival suggests a third way of

binding the terrors of individual existence and the horrendous reality of suffering and death by a merging with a unifying whole. This explains the pre-Renaissance carnival's persistent presence in religion, its pagan roots and its links to the feasts of the church. Carnival, then, has traditionally been another way of dealing with the abject--an embracing of the abject which merges the individual with the whole. Carnival breaks through conventional life with the shock of physical reality. It is an attempt to bring down the structure of all that intervenes between the individual and the real, which is both horrible and beautiful. A recognition of being, carnival persistently tries to get beyond everyday experience.

Bakhtin's notion of the carnival leads us back to the concepts of Kohut and the selfobject. Dealing with the abject can be explored in relation to its implications for narcissistic theory. The rigid laws of exclusion offer a comfortable merging with society. If I obey the law, then I am one with my neighbors, fulfilling mature twinship needs. On the other hand, if, in a New Testament manner, I merge with Christ, then I am merged with a most idealizable selfobject. However, the third possibility, the carnivalesque, merges me on an intricate physical level with a common life despite its severing me from the established authoritarian culture. The rigid Old Testament law and the

New Testament Christian answer are problematic in the modern, culturally fragmented world. While all eras have been fraught with disturbances of political, social, and religious identity, modern societies are extreme in their inability to promote a stable sense of individual identity through religious and social structure. Thus, easily fragmented individuals cannot use a cultural structure to sustain their identity. This being so, whether as cause or effect, the substantial use of the grotesque in modern literature reflects not only the culture's fragmentation and the lack of a common societal structure like religion to mend it, but also the artists' attempts to reflect and assuage that fragmentation.

Just as analysts see fewer cases of hysteria and more cases of narcissistic disorder, literature also reflects a shift to fragmentation, and the modern grotesque becomes a particularly powerful artistic possibility. Modern grotesque literature records fragmentation, which is a disintegration product resulting from a lack of a firm sense of self. However, the fragmentation encased in literature is also literature and, as a valued work of beauty, it has positive possibilities also. Thus the modern grotesque has a peculiar power as one of the only substitutes for what was previously structured by religion, as it struggles with questions of self worth, morality, destiny, and fear in the face of life's fragility and inevitable end. Otto Rank

points out that the narcissist, forever struggling with his own sense of fragmentation and lack of self, is supremely sensitive to the fear of death. Often such a fear of death gives evidence of disintegration anxiety--the fear of a loss of one's humanity, a psychological death (Kohut How 16). The narcissistically deficient individual is unlikely to commit suicide unless self becomes completely disassociated, when, as Kohut says, there is a "loss of the libidinal cathexis of the self" (Search 633). Otherwise, death holds terror for the narcissistically vulnerable. Rank says, "[T]he self-love implicit in Ovid's myth conceals the idea of death. For death remains, quite simply, the ultimate narcissistic blow to self-esteem" (as quoted in Narcissism and the Novel 10). The modern grotesque, then, has particular attraction for those suffering from a narcissistic disorder who see in it a reflection of both their own fragmentation and a way of temporarily mastering that fragmentation through the literary work.

If this is so, works using the grotesque will also be works which contain narcissistically vulnerable characters. One simple way of validating this is to notice that works which are used as examples of the grotesque are also those texts to which the newly emerging books on narcissism are drawn. For instance, Kafka, Mann, Dostoyevsky, Blake, Bronte, Conrad, and Dickens are all cited both in texts on narcissism and on the grotesque. Since the three major

texts which have begun the task of using Kohutian theory to analyze literature discuss in detail only about thirty authors, this overlap is significant.

To translate into a Kohutian framework, we can say that carnival can be therapeutic because the narcissistically vulnerable can make use of the modern grotesque, both as a symbol of their alienation and as an imaginative merging with the common carnival of physical realities, seizing on these literary representations in their attempts to temporarily soothe their fragmentation, which can be both imaged and alleviated by the grotesque, and they can use this merging with the selfobject provided by literature as a form of attempted self-rescue. Such an idea is suggested by Kohut's extension of the term selfobject to include the use of culture, literature, and social constructs for those individuals with sufficient cohesiveness to make use of them, as well as the parental dimensions of the selfobject. This is developed indirectly by Kohut by his use of literary examples, his theory that the appeal of tragedy is in its selfobject function, and his analysis of the nature of communal or national selfobjects, such as Hitler. Such examples return us to mythic explanations of the grotesque, such as Harpham's "presence of mythic or primitive elements in a non-mythic or modern context" (51), or Clayborough's analysis of the grotesque in Jungian terms which suggests the private therapeutic ends of the modern grotesque.

How literature helps specifically in this project is suggested by Kristeva's comment that Joyce overcomes abjection by embracing it and transforming it through artistry (22). This transformation into art, which contains and masters the abjection inherent in our instability, is done through "the Word that discloses the abject. But at the same time purifies from the abject" while others, such as Celine, fail to find redemption in the "rhythm and music, the ultimate sublimation of the unsignifiable" (23). How Nightwood transforms the abject through artistry is by style: imagery, metaphors, ornate language, complicated syntax, heavily embedded sentences, apposition, puns, plays on words, literary and historical echoes, detached narration, aphoristic declamation, linear fragmentation, and philosophical generalizations. Such devices create a container for the personal pain, disguising it and neutralizing it by drawing attention to its beauty. Eliabeth Pochoda, in "Style's Hoax: A Reading of Djuna Barnes's Nightwood," contends that Nightwood's style "has usually been taken straight when it is in fact deliberately and gorgeously overambitious" (181). Barnes' overambitious style seems to be, as Kristeva suggests about Joyce, a way of overcoming the abject through artistry.

J. Brooks Bouson suggests that in literature we can find a mirroring selfobject which can temporarily sustain us with its resonance of shared experience (172). Literature

can provide a safe container for the abject, providing in art a selfobject, which both mirrors human realities and is idealizable in its beauty and which can then be used by an individual as a sustaining selfobject. The beauty of the literary work can thus be used to temporarily assuage fragmentation.

Such a process is also a way for the writer to deal with her own pain--to convert it into something beautiful and then use that beautiful object as a structuring selfobject, as Barnes seems to have done in her lifetime. For she was proud that she had authored Nightwood, and, indeed, called herself "the most famous unknown in the world." If, as McElroy says, the modern grotesque depicts not only alienated man but humiliated man--a despicable self, but the only one he has (22)--then depicting that unvalued and insufficient self in art allows the writer to gain public approval. A favorable public reception provides the author with temporary mirroring and thus satisfies narcissistic needs for confirming attention.

A more complex question is how the reader deal with both the selfobject demands of the text plus their own individual selfobject needs. J. Brooks Bouson has explored the implications of Kohut's theory for the act of reading. Both reader and critic respond in ways structured by both their personal selfobject needs and the selfobject needs embedded in the work. Because we can, as critic-readers,

temporarily immerse ourselves in the narcissistic struggle of a fragile character, we may respond to such characters by attempting, through our critical response, to rescue or support characters, or to provide empathic listening for them. Critic-readers may also use the work to temporarily fulfill their own needs. And, since critics must both immerse themselves in order to read and then distance themselves to draw upon exterior schema to structure a critical response to the work, the critic may unknowingly be caught in a narcissistic drama both in reading and analyzing. These responses, too, may be effected by the narcissistic demands of the text and the critic may unwittingly reenact the text's drama by replicating the narcissistic scenario and defenses of the work, opening up the criticism, too, to the possibility of the same analytical process as the text (24-28).

Let us see how this strategy operates in the early criticism of Barnes. She uses words to hide her meanings, masking her truth with torrents of humor, beautiful words, and obscurations which obliquely, almost inadvertently, suggest her story. Early critics concentrated on the parody and laughter in Ryder, the philosophical complexity and the beauty of language in Nightwood, and the incomprehensibility of The Antiphon. Therefore, she is a good example of the collusion of critics with the narcissistic defenses of the texts and the author because critics uniformly replicated

narcissistic defenses by responding only to the devices by which Barnes distanced the emotional pain of the works. Thus, just as Barnes muted the pain by the brilliance of her language and distanced it through factors of narration, so critics collaborate in this defensive strategy by concentrating on style and narrative structure and by avoiding specifics of the painful story concealed therein.

One example of this avoidance is a neglected scene in Nightwood in which Robin's drunken, abusive behavior is masked by poeticized language and distanced by the narrative device of its being retold at a later date to O'Connor. Robin prowls the night, drinking and taking lovers, becoming more drunken and oblivious to Nora who is attempting to rescue her. She gives money to a drunken whore in a snarling rage. Drunk and abusive, she resists efforts to get her home, collecting a crowd of onlookers. While critics talk at length about Robin as a sleepwalker, or see her mythical union with the sea and with plant and animal life, or claim that she is empty until identity is pressed upon her by others, the tawdry details of this drunken scene and the emotional anguish of the humiliated partner are ignored. The critics collaborate in Barnes' defensive strategies through their critical silence, although the scene is of strategic importance because it is the only specific scene of Robin's degeneracy and, thus, both the scene to which the novel writes and the scene which the

novel attempts to conceal.

Newer critical theories tend to involve themselves less in the aesthetic appreciation of language and form, and, thus, critic-readers do not succumb to these same defensive strategies. Instead, they respond to their own selfobject needs. Recent feminist critics, who are now working with a new theoretical perspective and thus able to see a patriarchal critique in Barnes' work totally absent in early criticism, are also forming a history of feminist consciousness that can be consolidated as feminist self-structure, both as a mirroring and idealizable selfobject. Thus, such feminist critiques operate in a doubled manner. As a critique of the patriarchal society, they mirror a feminist sensitivity, and they suggest the need for new ideals, new alternative social roles based on different values. However, feminist critics also collaborate in the defensive strategies of the novel in response to their own selfobject needs. An example of this can be seen in Sheryl Benstock's use of the scene of Robin's drunkenness to illustrate how Nora's love "becomes the unknowing instrument of the patriarchy" (263) by trying to make Robin conform to a moral code based on patriarchal self-interest and misogyny. Again, the self-destructive nature of Robin's conduct and the pain which it causes Nora escape the critic.

The narcissism of this family story seems to begin with

the grandiose grandmother. Because of the way in which patriarchal patterns of mirroring and idealizable selfobjects function in a sexist society, the narcissistic disorder is particularly connected with women. This is a consequence of the insufficient mirroring of the undervalued daughter and the sparsity of idealizable selfobjects to which the daughter can truly aspire. Barnes' female characters illustrate a narcissistic vulnerability which results from a patriarchal power structure that places women and children under the control of men and places the children, unprotected by the devalued mother and at the mercy of the father, at risk of physical and sexual abuse. While such a situation seems to offer male children a better opportunity to develop a firm, unfragmented sense of self, the male child in Barnes' work also must meet some of his archaic selfobject needs through the devalued mother. The grandiose father in Barnes' stories, although occupying a role encouraged by a patriarchal society, is perhaps the most pathologically narcissistic of all her characters. This narcissistic deficiency is tracable directly to his mother's grandiosity. She, in turn, must have been damaged by the grandiosity of her parents, who, in turn, must have been lacking the proper empathic selfobjects in their early childhood. Thus, children whose needs are unmet by either the mother or the father become the next generation's alcoholic and rage-prone individuals, and their

deficiencies in self-formation are transmitted through succeeding generations like a bad gene. This is Barnes' story, and it is out of this story and the adult suffering such a family causes that she writes her profoundly beautiful works. She uses all the resources of the writer and all the power of the grotesque to form this story into her works of art.

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