

"Hieroglyphics of Sleep and Pain"

Djuna Barnes's Anatomy of Melancholy

"grief concealed strangles the soul."

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Anatomy of Melancholy

Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* is an unfinished work of mourning. The ongoing critical debate about whether incest occurs between the main character Nora Flood and her grandmother testifies to this unfinished mourning because her memory of their relationship is rendered in a "hieroglyphics of sleep and pain" (56) that conceals as much as it reveals. Something hidden remains outside Nora's conscious memory of her grandmother. But if what Freud calls the "work of mourning" fails, then the interiorizing and idealizing work of memory we perform upon the death of the other is the only testimony we have of what has been lost. And if Nora's hieroglyphic figure resists the interiorizing and idealizing powers of language, because she cannot find the right words to express her pain, then neither Nora's, nor Barnes's, nor the reader's mourning work is finished.

Critics have not yet considered their debate as a re-enactment of the fictional text's own refusal to represent the issue of Nora's incest in a decidable way. As long as Nora's grief remains concealed and uncommunicated, she will suffer the narcissistic wound of melancholy. The reader or critic who attempts, and inevitably fails, fully to explain the significance of the grandmother suffers a similar wound and therefore participates in this interminable act of mourning, or melancholy.

Since the significance of the grandmother remains beyond our full comprehension, just as it does for the main character Nora Flood and Barnes herself, she obstructs our desire to complete the mourning process, a process of interiorizing and idealizing the lost figure through language. Inasmuch as we are unable totally to comprehend the significance of the grandmother, she remains for us a thoroughly linguistic, yet hieroglyphic, figure waiting to be deciphered. We mourn what remains of her to be understood.

The appeal to biographical evidence has not made the hieroglyphic any easier to decipher. Recently, for instance, Philip Herring's controversial biography of Barnes, *Djuna: The Life and Works of Djuna Barnes* (1995), questions the evidence of incest between Barnes and her paternal grandmother, Zadel Barnes. Despite the prominence of incest as a theme and the hieroglyphic dream symbols used to convey Nora's relationship with her grandmother in *Nightwood*, most critics have been cautious in applying a Freudian interpretation to the text because of its reductive male bias, while others see the text as a parody of Freudian psychoanalysis. Recent revisions of Freud, however, provide a way of understanding the causes of psychological resistance to meaning that are indispensable in helping to translate such cases as Nora's hieroglyphic dreams. The psychoanalytic theory of mourning and melancholy in the writings of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, and specifically in "Mourning or Melancholia: Introjection versus Incorporation," offers a technique of revealing the psychological processes that lead to concealment in language, especially through their analysis of melancholy as an illness of mourning, an inexpressible or cryptic mourning.

Furthermore, Jacques Derrida's extensive writings on Abraham and Torok allow us to understand mourning not just as something negative but as the affirmative ethical structure that underlies the subject's relation to itself and the other. Derrida points out that the inability to finish mourning the lost object has the ethical advantage of not integrating, assimilating, and effacing the other in memory. In this respect, "failure succeeds" (*Memories* 35) since to fail to assimilate the other in mourning permits one to respect the other as an other. Derrida calls this contradictory state of incorporation, where a lost object is taken within the self, but left outside the self in the crypt, "impossible mourning" (*Memoires* 34). For instance, Nora's hieroglyphic dream of the grandmother that is left undeciphered remains a foreign body within the self, an outside on the inside, an other affirmed as

other. While the failure to assimilate her grandmother signifies Nora's pathological illness of mourning, she hopes to repeat this failure in some analogous way since the contradictory structure of impossible mourning which builds the crypt may succeed in preserving the uniqueness of her love for Robin, allowing the singularity of Robin to remain, unassimilated, in memory.

For Barnes and her main character Nora, then, *Nightwood* is ostensibly a work of mourning over a lost love. What complicates the relationship between Nora and her lover Robin Vote is the intrusion of Nora's feelings for her deceased grandmother. In comments Barnes has made about Robin Vote's historical counterpart, Thelma Wood, readers are, by analogy, encouraged to see Robin and the grandmother as deeply imbricated figures in Barnes's, as well as in Nora's, psyche. Herring, for instance, alludes to a memoir in which Barnes says that she had "fallen in love with Thelma Wood because she resembled her grandmother" (59). In a letter to her friend Emily Coleman dated May, 1936, Barnes writes, "I am up to my neck here in my lost life—Thelma & Thelma only—& my youth—way back in the beginning when she has no part in it & yet she is cause of my remembrance of it" (qtd. in Plumb, "Revising *Nightwood*" 158). What critics have overlooked in this admission by Barnes is its significance not for the psychoanalytic "talking cure," but for the theory of the illness of mourning. With the entry of Robin Vote into her life, Nora feels that she can begin to decipher the hieroglyphic of her dreams about her grandmother, complete her mourning, and end her melancholy. In other words, through the relationship between Robin and Nora, Barnes can surmount the things that obstruct the expression of her childhood grief and write her anatomy of melancholy.¹

"A Second Anatomy of Melancholy"

Many have noticed that one of Barnes's favourite books was Robert Burton's seventeenth-century book *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, one friend of Barnes even going so far as to call *Nightwood* a "second *Anatomy of Melancholy*" (Herring 204).² Her interest in Burton's text includes both the form and the content, for *Nightwood* is marked by the traits of the novel and the anatomy. As Plumb points out in the introduction to her splendid new edition, one of the titles Barnes originally considered for *Nightwood* is "Anatomy of the Night" (viii).³ If, as Northrop Frye states, anatomies present us with a "vision

of the world in terms of a single intellectual pattern" (310), then in *Nightwood* that pattern is melancholy.

Barnes employs a number of linguistic techniques to show that Nora's melancholy hinders her attempts to mourn her grandmother (and Robin) by telling their story. Barnes's techniques may also indicate that she is hiding something from herself through these techniques that include hieroglyphic dream language, a discontinuous narrative, as well as themes and images representing, ironically, the problems with communicating and eating. The problems of communicating and eating are, as we will see, associated, but it should be noted here that the "devices turning on the difficulty of communication" (Frye 234) attest to another convention of the anatomy genre in Barnes's text. Louis Kannenstine has already commented incisively on the narrative discontinuity in *Nightwood*, citing most notably O'Connor's remark "I have a narrative, but you will be hard put to it to find it" (82). Yet Kannenstine does not mention Frye's observation that "violent dislocations in the customary logic of narrative" (Frye 310) are a recurring feature of the anatomy genre. The discontinuity is produced by the presence of digressions and epigrammatic statements in O'Connor's speech, qualities that Kannenstine notes (113-15). Digressions are "endemic in the narrative technique of satire," but never more often than in Menippean satire, which Frye renames the anatomy genre (311).*

Drawn from the writer's creative powers of "subconscious association" (Frye 275), the riddles of Barnes's imagistic style contribute, to borrow Kannenstine's word, to the "obscurity" (90) proper to an anatomy of "night." While we, as readers, share this obscurity with the characters, we also share a desire for luminaries that will serve (in the words of another great anatomist) to light us on our way in this night of our obscurity.⁵ For psychoanalysis, words and images are the luminaries that bring unconscious memories to light. When we carry out the work of mourning successfully, we replace the lost object with another. The "ideal" replacement or substitute is language.

Frye takes his name "anatomy" for the genre of Menippean satire from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* without commenting on the influence the object of Burton's text may have had on the formal approach to that object. If we accept the Freudian model of mourning and melancholy rather than Burton's humoral psychological model, some of the resemblances to the anatomical method are strikingly similar. Frye explains that the "word

'anatomy' in Burton's title means a dissection or analysis, and expresses very accurately the intellectualized approach of his form" (311). From a psychoanalytic perspective, to anatomize is to suffer a melancholic withdrawal of our attachments "bit by bit" from the lost objects that we have identified with and will eventually take within ourselves.

When, for example, Dr. Matthew O'Connor attempts to display his "exhaustive erudition" (311), or what we now refer to as the attempt to "totalize" a given object of study, he reaches a limit and fails to exhaust anything but himself or his reader. The refusal to mourn the loss of his romantic Faustian dream marks O'Connor as a figure known as the *philosophus gloriosus*, the ridicule of which is a constant theme in Menippean satire (Frye 311).⁶ O'Connor occasionally acknowledges his failures such as his sexual impotence: "Tiny O'Toole was lying in a swoon" (in); and his narrative impotence: "I've not only lived my life for nothing, I've told it for nothing" (136). If O'Connor and Nora, out of pride or pain, deny their loss or its importance, they may begin to attack their object and take on a satirical disposition toward it. As we shall see, this attack corresponds to Freud's notion concerning the "work of melancholia." The satirical tone of *Nightwood*, Barnes's "Anatomy of Night," may itself be a symptom of her state of mind during the production of her text. *Nightwood* may, indeed, be motivated by Barnes's need, like Nora's, to anatomize the "black choler" of her own long, dark night of melancholy.

"Red Riding Hood and the Wolf in Bed": A Fantasy of Incorporation

The "work of mourning," as Freud describes it in his classic essay "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917),⁷ consists in the withdrawal of libido, or psychic energy, from its attachments to a lost object, whether that object is a person or "some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (243). The distinguishing features of melancholia are "a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and the lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment" (244). In both mourning and melancholy, the withdrawal of libido from the object is carried out "bit by bit" during which time the "existence of the lost object is psychically prolonged" (245). Unlike mourning, which comes to

an end, melancholy is pathological because of the "open wound" (253) that persists in the subject.

Abraham and Torok's elaboration of Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholy in their article, "Mourning or Melancholia: Introjection versus Incorporation," proceeds from the ambivalence the subject may feel toward the lost object (135-37). The causes of this ambivalence in melancholia are many, but the struggles in which "love and hate contend with each other" make it impossible for the melancholic person to decide whether to cling to the lost object or detach from it, as Freud notes in "Mourning and Melancholia" (256). One important aspect of the ambivalence is that it accounts for the "work of melancholia" (255) which entirely absorbs the subject, but is hidden internally. In fact, Freud asserts that where mourning is a conscious process, melancholy is not. He qualifies this opposition, saying that even if a melancholic person is aware of the loss that has given rise to the melancholia, it is "only in the sense that he [sic] knows *whom* he has lost but not what he has lost in him" (245).

A similar observation is made to Nora by O'Connor who, despite being a parodic Freudian figure and a *philosophus gloriosus*, also shows himself to be a person of genuine insight. He says to Nora, "be careful who you love—for a lover who dies, no matter how forgotten, will take somewhat of you to the grave" (122). O'Connor is referring to Nora's final rejection of Robin for her continued infidelity, but his comment applies equally well to Nora's melancholy over her grandmother. O'Connor warns Nora that the loss of her emotional investment, the loss of what Freud calls "cathexis," must be dealt with as much as the loss of the object itself. As Freud states, "In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself" ("Mourning and Melancholia" 246). Rather than withdraw her attachment from the object of her affection and displace it onto another object as in normal mourning, Nora has withdrawn her libidinal energy into her ego by identifying with that object. The difficulty Nora faces, however, is that her identification with Robin has been preceded not by the typical displacement of, or identification with, her grandmother found in normal mourning, but by the fantasy of sharing a divided self with her grandmother.

Unable to give up the lost object of her grandmother, Nora has allowed the ensuing alteration of identity to influence her relationship with Robin, particularly the manner in which she relates it. To explain how a melan-

cholic person can avoid consciously identifying with a lost object by including it in the ego as another, separate identity, Abraham and Torok return to Freud's concept of incorporation. Freud regards the substitution of identification for the love of an object as a regression to an earlier form of narcissism. Like a child during this period of "primary narcissism," a melancholic person who desires an object external to his body will identify and abolish its separate existence by incorporating or devouring it. In Freud's words, "The ego wants to incorporate this object into itself, and, in accordance with the oral or cannibalistic phase of libidinal development in which it is, it wants to do so by devouring it" ("Mourning and Melancholia," 249-50). The symptoms of the conflict that the melancholic subject has with incorporating the object will, therefore, take place in the mouth.

Freud exemplifies this oral dysfunction characteristic of melancholia with the refusal of nourishment (250), but Abraham and Torok extend the dysfunction to words in the mouth, speech ("Mourning or Melancholia" 128-29). For Abraham and Torok, normal mourning takes part in the larger process of "introjection," or "throwing within" the self an external object in order to preserve it in our memory. Desire for an object gives way to identification with it. Like Freud, Abraham and Torok believe that successful introjection means replacing a lost object with another: "Learning to fill the emptiness of the mouth with words is the initial model of introjection" (128). In the initial model, the satisfactions of the mouth filled with the mother's breast are replaced by "satisfactions of a mouth now empty of that object but filled with words pertaining to the subject" (127). The psychoanalytic claim for the remedial effects of language in mourning finds support in Barnes. When one hears of a sudden death, the narrator of *Nightwood* calls it a "death that cannot form until the shocked tongue has given its permission" (137). But how long will the tongue deny its permission?

"Incorporation" is the name Abraham and Torok give to the melancholic's refusal to mourn, when the shocked tongue denies the subject permission to speak of death. Where Freud often uses incorporation and introjection interchangeably, Abraham and Torok see the two terms as opposed to one another because incorporation for them is a denial that anything has been lost: "Incorporation is the refusal to reclaim as our own the part of ourselves that we placed in what we lost" ("Mourning or Melancholia" 127). To accomplish this denial, incorporation, as if by magic, carries out "literally something

that has only figurative meaning" (126). In order to avoid having to introject or "'swallow' a loss, we fantasize swallowing (or having swallowed) that which has been lost, as if it were some kind of thing" (126). The paradox of swallowing to avoid swallowing conveys the subject's desire to resist introjection or identification and yet to identify with the object at the same time by hiding it. This "endcryptic identification" (Abraham and Torok, "Lost Object" 142), a hidden fantasy of identification, reveals itself as Nora moves beyond her melancholy. Furthermore, what makes incorporation, the reversion from words back to imaginary food, relevant to Barnes's representation of Nora's recovery from melancholy, is the presence of cannibalistic metaphors which, ironically, Abraham and Torok say, act as a measure of prevention against incorporation.

The most explicit use of cannibalistic metaphor occurs when the reader encounters Robin during her unhappy marriage with Felix Volkbein. Associated with death and memory, Robin's image in *Nightwood* will live on the borderline between introjection and incorporation. Robin is the kind of woman who is "the infected, carrier of the past—before her the structure of our head and jaws ache—we feel that we could eat her, she who is eaten death returning, for only then do we put our face close to blood on the lips of our forefathers" (*Nightwood* 36). The narrator's notion that "we could eat" Robin evades incorporation and anticipates Nora's identification with Robin because the narrator and Nora knowingly articulate the loss. They replace the lost object with language, just as the act of cannibalism itself replaces the fantasy (Abraham and Torok, "Mourning or Melancholia" 130). Robin's power to stimulate memory seems paramount, but why she is "the infected, carrier of the past" is not readily apparent. Perhaps, as "eaten death returning," Robin's image, while being eaten itself, is infected with a previous, unidentified death that has already been "eaten" through the concealed fantasy of incorporation, and that only through its association with Robin returns to conscious memory. Robin is the infected carrier of Nora's incorporated memory of her grandmother.

Another passage, below, confirms the memorializing effect of Robin's image. Her image—to invoke Jacques Derrida—carries the "force of mourning." The image's force of mourning is its potential to be, despite death or not being. Its force is its ability to dwell in that ghostly state of "being" between life and death, "a spectral power of the virtual work" ("By Force" 175) of the

possible. The image possesses the power to be life-like, like life in death, a spectral power which carries "the force, *to resist, to consist and to exist in death*" (176).

The passage below deserves to be quoted in full since it illustrates so well what Derrida calls the "pictorial vocation, namely, to seize the dead and transfigure them" (185). On Robin's pictorial vocation the narrator states:

The woman who presents herself to the spectator as a "picture" forever arranged, is for the contemplative mind the chiefest danger. Sometimes one meets a woman who is beast turning human. Such a person's every movement will reduce to an image of a forgotten experience; a mirage of an eternal wedding cast on the racial memory; as insupportable a joy as would be the vision of an eland coming down an aisle of trees, chapleted with orange blossoms and bridal veil, a hoof raised in the economy of fear, stepping in the trepidation of the flesh that will become myth; as the unicorn is neither man nor beast deprived, but human hunger pressing its breast to its prey. (*Nightwood* 36)

As a "picture" or "image," Robin assumes the memorializing function of the picture and image in general, which Derrida indicates "makes the absent present" ("By Force" 183). She makes a "forgotten experience," an unconscious memory, available to conscious memory again in the form of an image. The image, or picture, though "forever arranged" in memory, is a danger to the "contemplative mind" because it does not present itself with a clear meaning to the understanding as a concept. Nevertheless, the "insupportable" image of the eland in the "eternal wedding" wearing a "bridal veil" clearly conveys a scene of desire. Foreshadowing the ambivalence Nora feels toward her grandmother in her dreams, the scene is mixed with an "economy of fear" because of a predatory presence of "human hunger pressing its breast to its prey."

Despite being described as a woman "who is beast turning human" (*Nightwood* 36), Robin is not necessarily the predator of the visionary scene. Robin's sexual promiscuity during her relationship with Nora does mark her as sexually aggressive. Her relationship with the young girl Sylvia suggests the plundering of sexual innocence. It is the narrator, however, who resem-

bles Nora in wanting to "eat" Robin—a display of both desire and oral aggression. Nora's reaction to O'Connor's transvestism reveals a similar fusion of desire and oral aggression when she says, "'God, children know something they can't tell; they like Red Riding Hood and the wolf in bed!'" (69). Jane Marcus in her admirable analysis regards the wolf as a metaphor for Nora's grandmother, a role played here by O'Connor (245-46). This reading places Nora in the role of Little Red Riding Hood who is about to be devoured sexually by the grandmother. Nora's observation that children "like" or desire sexual contact with the wolf is ironically consistent with modern interpretations of the traditional fairy tale, particularly Charles Perrault's sexually suggestive version written in French.⁸ Doubtless, twentieth-century critics have been influenced by Freud's case history of the "Wolf Man," "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" (1918), where he explicitly links the child's fear of being eaten by the wolf with the wish for sexual satisfaction from his parent (35-36). But no one has seen the allusion to the fairy tale as Nora's effort to get beyond her interminable mourning when she will no longer have to hide her identification with her grandmother in the fantasy of incorporation.

We can, I believe, see the structure of the relationships in the fairy tale acting as a governing scene for many of the relationships in the text, beginning with Nora and Robin's. For Barnes, the fairy tale is the "trepidation of the flesh...become myth." The fairy tale structures the two dreams that Nora cannot explain even though she knows that they are intended for her. After her second dream, she goes to O'Connor who, she hopes, will make the dreams understandable to her: "'What was that dream saying, for God's sake, what was that dream?' For it was for me also" (124). What the tale of Little Red Riding Hood reveals is that the imposition of the unequal grandmother-child relationship upon the lesbian relationship pervades the text.⁵ Furthermore, the ambivalent feelings of desire and fear that would attend Nora's incestuous feelings toward her grandmother are evinced in the literal and metaphorical meanings of the word "wolf," the rapacious canine, and the sexually rapacious (traditionally male) person. The ambivalence is also evident in that children "can't tell" others about their secret love. Abraham and Torok's theory of incorporation focusses on subjects, like Nora, who cannot even tell themselves.

One of the things that Nora cannot tell herself is what motivates her to tell the story she is telling, with great difficulty, of her own sexual predation. What motivates her sexual predation is her hidden identification with her grandmother. In terms of incorporation, there is no reason to object to the wolf's oral consumption of the grandmother and Little Red Riding Hood as a sexual metaphor in Nora's cryptic comment. But what requires explanation in the tale, especially the Grimms' version, is the relationship of the wolf's disguise as grandmother to Nora's fantasy of incorporation. The comparison of Red Riding Hood suggests itself to Nora when she sees O'Connor wearing a "woman's flannel night gown" (69). Like the wolf, O'Connor dresses like a woman so that he may be identified as a woman, if only to himself. Judging from their mutual embarrassment, O'Connor's transvestism has remained hidden up to this point. The allusion to Red Riding Hood may refer not only to a narrative of desire, but also to one of hidden identification.

Rather than identifying merely with Little Red Riding Hood, then, Nora is also the wolf disguised as the grandmother because she has eaten her grandmother through the fantasy of incorporation. However, we should be careful not to confuse Nora's conscious reference to the story with the unconscious fantasy that precedes it. Since she refuses to mourn the loss of her grandmother, she avoids swallowing the *reality* of the loss by resorting to the unconscious *fantasy* of swallowing what is lost in the form of an object, such as food, real or imagined. She need not adjust to the painful reality of her grandmother's death through the process of introjection while the fantasy of incorporation enables Nora to deny the loss even occurred. Nora encrypts or hides the shameful secret of their incest to protect the idealized vision she has of her grandmother, or in psychoanalytic terms, her "ego ideal." When she says the "children know something they can't tell," she may be referring to her own childhood repression of the unspeakable act of incest with her grandmother. Her interest in the narrative of Little Red Riding Hood does signal that Nora is beginning to remember what she has hidden from herself.

"Findings' in a Tomb": The Crypt and Its Decryption

As Esther Rashkin points out, the melancholic cannot speak the trauma of loss and must develop a "rhetoric of hiding" (42), or what Abraham and Torok refer to as a "cryptonymy."¹⁰ To keep their secret love for their grandmother from themselves, Barnes and Nora develop precisely this "rhetoric of hiding." But Barnes does not use simple cryptonyms or words that hide a trauma in words. Barnes's rhetoric of hiding consists mainly of "hieroglyphs"—a combination of words and images or scenes—of memories that appear in dreams and sometimes behavioural habits reconstructed in a discontinuous narrative. The very discontinuity of the narrative, with its imagistic and aphoristic style, guarantees that the point of the story will be either difficult to recover or, at times, lost altogether. The hieroglyphs resist meaning, but Nora's dreams of her grandmother imply that she is performing the work of melancholia, or in Abraham and Torok's contradictory phrase, her "melancholic mourning" ("Mourning or Melancholia" 137).

The paradoxical experience of melancholic mourning in *Nightwood*, given that Abraham and Torok set the two terms in opposition to each other, is possible only if Nora can keep a secret from herself and then be seen to reveal it, if not to herself, at least to others. The "*intrapsychic secret*" ("Mourning or Melancholia" 131) that Nora keeps from herself is, however, not kept in her unconscious, but in an "artificial unconscious" ("Topography" 159) constructed in the ego that Abraham and Torok denominate the "crypt" ("Mourning or Melancholia" 130). The walls of the crypt are built by the contradictory feelings of love and hate represented in the cryptonyms, the words that hide. Whereas introjection assimilates the lost object of love to the self, incorporation swallows and preserves the lost object in the crypt as a living, though foreign, presence within the self. '

Inexpressible mourning erects a secret tomb inside the subject. Reconstituted from the memories of words, scenes, and affects, the objectal correlative of the loss is buried alive in the crypt as a full-fledged person, complete with its own topography. The crypt also includes the actual or supposed traumas that made introjection impossible ("Mourning or Melancholia" 130). The crypt is a wound left by the loss of the love-object that the melancholic tries to isolate and hide. Nora's melancholic mourning signifies the destruction of the crypt.

Destroying the crypt releases Nora's buried desire for her grandmother and the memories associated with her. In her past, Nora may not have been able to articulate certain words, utter certain phrases, so, in fantasy, she took into her mouth "the unnamable, the object itself" ("Mourning or Melancholia" 128). The unresolved trauma of incest, along with any other abuses, real or imagined, may have made Nora's grandmother a toxic object impossible to assimilate, but her grandmother remained a person whom Nora "loved more than anyone" (*Nightwood* 123). Melancholies, Abraham and Torok suggest, cherish the memory of their lost object as their "most precious possession, even though it must be concealed by a crypt built with the bricks of hate and aggression" ("Mourning or Melancholia" 136). They add an important point in understanding melancholy:

It should be remarked that as long as the crypt holds, there is no melancholia. It erupts when the walls are shaken, often as a result of the loss of some secondary love-object who had buttressed them. Faced with the danger of seeing the crypt crumble, the whole of the ego becomes one with the crypt, showing the concealed object of love in its own guise. ("Mourning or Melancholia" 136)

By remembering her dreams, Nora begins to understand that her "ego becomes one with the crypt, showing the concealed object," her grandmother. Whether or not Robin constitutes the secondary love-object whose loss shakes the walls of the crypt, Nora identifies Robin's love with entombment soon after their first encounter. Robin's entombment consciously repeats Nora's unconscious entombment of her grandmother and therefore offers a means of healing Nora's psychic wound.

Robin's role in Nora's melancholic mourning initially appears merely as a displaced repetition of the grandmother, as a conscious reminder that something else has been buried. If Nora's grandmother, undeveloped in *Nightwood*, is based on Zadel Barnes and her philosophy of free love (Herring 58), then Robin's promiscuity may have evoked a recollection of her grandmother not just in Nora but, through the autobiographical allegory of the novel, in Barnes herself. For in Robin, "love and anonymity...were so 'haunted' of each other that separation was impossible" (49-50). Nora mourns in

advance the loss of her love, anticipating the end of their relationship from its earliest stages:

Love becomes the deposit of the heart, analogous in all degrees to the "findings" in a tomb. As in one will be charted the taken place of the body, the raiment, the utensils necessary to its other life, so in the heart 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. (50-51)

The analogy between Robin and Nora's grandmother goes further than placing desire for a lover in the tomb of memory. The prohibition against the desire joins the two women in Nora's mind. The social stigma against homosexual love, significantly for incorporation, the "love that dare not speak its name," receives explicit notice by O'Connor, but little from Nora. Surprisingly, Nora portrays her love for Robin as incestuous, the same prohibited desire that she feels for her grandmother and that her secret crypt commemorates.¹²

Nora's endocryptic, or hidden, identification with her grandmother differs, nonetheless, from her identification with Robin in that Nora is not aware that she assumes the identity of the former object as it breaks through the walls of its crypt. Nora complains to O'Connor that she cannot lose Robin because "'She is myself'" (108). But, in Robin's case, the loving assimilation of Nora's lost object is fully conscious and expressed in the displaced object of words. Nora's identification with her grandmother stays hidden and unspeakable until melancholic mourning permits the object partially to reveal itself through the hieroglyphic of dreams. Nora's role as grandmother compels her to infantilize Robin and designate their love as incestuous. In a desperate attempt to understand Robin, Nora haunts the cafes to meet Robin's lovers, learning only that "'others had slept with my lover and my child. For Robin is incest too'" (129). All of Nora's claims that she must go "'against nature'" and that her love for Robin is "'forbidden'" (129) agree with the feelings Nora's melancholic fantasy might ascribe to her grandmother, the lost object's ego.

Nora exhibits another significant melancholic feature when she reproaches herself for her treatment of Robin. By representing her love for Robin as

incestuous, Nora foists the history of her family's dysfunction upon her. Cheryl Plumb sums up the issue from an autobiographical perspective when she weaves together two questions from Barnes's unpublished notebooks: "'Did your grandmother ever try to make love to you' which Barnes labeled 'monstrous family questioning' and the plaintive question 'I have yet to be forgiven for being abused?'" ("Revising *Nightwood*" 158). The two questions are inextricably related. However, the latter question may be distinguished as accentuating the conflicts that the melancholic person must undergo as a witness to something about which she feels desire yet fears to testify. Since it is her conflicting role as witness which makes her mourning impossible, we must first attend to the symptoms that signal Nora's melancholic self-reproach, and then, in the last section of the essay, turn to the courtroom of conscience where the mourner is called as a witness and where the only testimony to the crime she can give, even to herself, is the ghostly presence of the other that haunts her in the act of mourning.

Plumb feels these two questions represent the "hidden theme" of childhood betrayal and abuse recaptured in Robin, Thelma's fictional other ("Revising *Nightwood*" 158). Nora does regard both of the dreams she has of her grandmother as "something being done to Robin" (56). She tells O'Connor in their long exchange concerning her grief over losing Robin that "'there's something evil in me, that loves evil and degradation'" (113) and later asks if she is Robin's "'devil'" (121). These reproaches are more intelligible in relation to the dreams if we take them as being directed at the grandmother who has been secretly preserved in Nora's crypt.

Abraham and Torok confirm Freud's speculation that the melancholic's self-reproaches "loosen the fixation of the libido to the object by disparaging it" (Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" 257). They go further than Freud, however, who shows surprise that the "melancholies show no shame at all the horrible things for which they blame themselves" (Abraham and Torok, "Mourning or Melancholia" 136). Abraham and Torok explain that melancholies "stage the grief attributed to the object who lost them" (136) not simply in a "public display," but in a display whose magnitude is a measure of the object's love for the subject, which in *Nightwood* is the grandmother's love for Nora:

the more suffering and degradation the object undergoes (meaning: the more he [sic] pines for the subject he lost), the prouder the subject can be: "He endures all of this because of me." Being a melancholic, I stage and let everyone else see the full extent of my love object's grief over having lost me. (Abraham and Torok, "Mourning or Melancholia" 136)

Robin refers to Nora as her "Madonna" (122) who by comparison makes her feel "dirty" (120), yet Nora is hardly guilty of anything more serious than loving the wrong woman too much. On the other hand, the grandmother-child structure of their bond with which Nora reproaches herself almost takes on the archetypal dimension of original sin in *Nightwood* because of the implied incest and the unequal union of lovers. The archetypal dimension of this unequal union of grandmother and child is especially clear in Nora's rivalry with Jenny Petherbridge over Robin.

The satiric figure of the elder sexual predator embodied memorably by Jenny Petherbridge, a "'squatter' by instinct" (60), reflects the grandmother's relation to Nora, and Nora's own perceived relation to Robin. Jenny mirrors Nora's feeling of possessiveness toward Robin. Furthermore, Jenny's role as a toxic grandmother figure is clear from the moment she is introduced. Although middle-aged, the narrator describes Jenny as advanced in years and yet, to use an animal metaphor consistent with Barnes's satiric style, always "in heat": "She looked old, yet expectant of age; she seemed to be steaming in the vapours of someone else about to die, still she gave off an odour to the mind (for there are purely mental smells that have no reality) of a woman about to be *accouchee*" (58). Her mimetic rivalry with Nora for the affections of Robin—for they each desire the desire of the other—will be repeated when she competes with yet another of Robin's lovers, the "child" (62), Sylvia."

The significance of the rivalry with Sylvia stems from Jenny's public confession of her feelings of guilt, which resemble Nora's melancholic feelings of self-reproach. Jenny wants to be rid of the young girl whom Robin has abandoned; and, when she takes steps to do so, she is seen by others as manipulative: "'You can't blame me, you can't accuse me of using a child for my own ends!'" (98). Jenny's remark implies that it is Robin who has used the young girl for her own ends, but the denial of blame is a partial

admission of guilt. This is not the first love triangle that Jenny has created. It is, after all, the "squatter's instinct," her mimetic desire to possess the object of another person's desire, that made her Nora's rival. Jenny's equivocal confession of guilt anticipates Nora's own regrets concerning her possessiveness toward Robin. Nora's regret is further compounded by the ghostly presence of her grandmother who compels Nora to act, unawares, like her grandmother and the predacious Jenny. The dreams of her grandmother evoke the feeling in Nora that she has been caught in a love triangle long before Jenny raises the spectre of one again in her life. Through Jenny, and then through Nora, *Nightwood* repeatedly expresses the melancholic self-reproach that Barnes feels and, ironically, publicly stages. This occurs, not in order to show the extent of her grief over the loss of her grandmother, but of the grandmother's grief over having lost her.

When Nora shows her self-reproach to O'Connor concerning her treatment of Robin, his acceptance and acknowledgement of the grandmother's love for Nora facilitate Nora's mourning. O'Connor fulfills the function of the analyst who, as Abraham and Torok see it, is not only meant to recognize the love object behind the disguises of hate and aggression, but also to accept the melancholic's "narcissistic bliss at having received the object's love despite dangerous transgressions" ("Mourning or Melancholia" 137). After hearing only the second dream, O'Connor exhibits his astute skills at listening, for his response affirms Nora's desire for her grandmother, whom we know she loved more than anyone. His reply, "'It's my mother without argument I want!'" (*Nightwood* 124), could be interpreted as an acknowledgment of Nora's "incestuous" love for Robin, but the incestuous desire he declares for his mother applies equally well to the grandmother as the intended target of his sympathetic response. When the melancholic obtains this acknowledgement from the analyst, the crypt gradually gives way to "genuine mourning and the fantasies of incorporation can be transferred into introjections" (Abraham and Torok, "Mourning or Melancholia" 137). Having found another means to repeat safely the initial trauma of incest, Nora may continue to perform the work of melancholia she has already begun by falling in love with Robin.

That Nora associates Robin with the cure and not the illness of mourning is evinced in Nora's own acknowledgement of Robin's memorializing function that we have called, after Derrida, her "pictorial vocation." Since

the desire for the grandmother is an encrypted desire, the desire is completely forgotten in the sense that it is repressed memory, though a special kind which creates the crypt and is referred to by Abraham and Torok as "preservative repression" ("Mourning or Melancholia" 133-34). In another psychoanalytic paradox, Nora can only forget what she has already secretly forgotten (because it is preserved in the crypt) when she does the work of mourning and knowingly remembers her encrypted desire for her grandmother through the return of the repressed memory in such symptoms as slips of the tongue and dreams. The narrator recounts Nora's unusual heightened awareness surrounding the first dream:

She nodded and awoke again and began to cry before she opened her eyes, and went back to the bed and fell into a dream which she recognized; though in the finality of this version she knew that the dream had not been "well dreamt" before. Where the dream had been incalculable, it was now completed with the entry of Robin. (54-55)

Without any mention of the content of the dream, Nora links Robin to her enhanced ability to recall a recurring dream which until now remained uncertain, or "incalculable," in its significance.

In the dream, Nora finds herself and Robin in her grandmother's room "which was impossible," the narrator tells us, "because the room was taboo" (55). The contradictory experience of desire and fear associated with the feeling of transgression in the room expresses itself in various ways throughout the dream. Nora hears herself invite Robin into the room, indicating a desire to be there, but she feels "anguish" when she hears her own voice (55). Despite being the object of desire, Robin, who has entered the dream in another part of the house, shows the "smile of an 'only survivor,' a smile which fear had married to the bone." Robin's frozen smile expresses the "painful love" that pushes her "further away," as if Robin and Nora were a "pair of opera glasses turned to the wrong end." Like the architecture of the crypt itself, the grandmother's room is described as a contradiction, for while it was her room, it was at the same time "the absolute opposite of any known room her grandmother had ever moved or lived in, was nevertheless saturated with the lost presence of her grandmother, who seemed in the continual process of leaving it" (55-56). However, what Derrida calls the

"contradiction within desire" ("Fors" 69), a contradiction that builds the crypt, also destroys it—not only because the sheer effort of maintaining the secret of the desire can lead to failure, but also because the conditions that prohibit the melancholic from speaking of it can change. Nora's fear of losing the memory of Robin in mourning her so resembles the forgotten, encrypted desire for her grandmother that Robin triggers in Nora an intense desire to remember which breaks down the walls of her crypt.

The first dream brought to completion by Robin dramatizes a scene of desire with the grandmother that Nora has until this time partly hidden from herself. Recalling a childhood memory of her grandmother, Nora's dream is rife with ambivalent emotion: "—the grandmother who, for some unknown reason, was dressed as a man, wearing a billycock and a corked moustache, ridiculous and plump in tight trousers and a red waistcoat, her arms spread saying in a leer of love, 'My little sweetheart!'" (55). The lasciviousness in the "leer of love" suggests that the grandmother's sexual gesture is unwelcome. The sexual advance may bear directly on the way Nora portrays Robin's objectified role in the memory: "—her grandmother '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" (56). A lost object of desire uncovered in Nora's encrypted, unconscious memory, the grandmother is aptly described as a "prehistoric ruin." A memory is a ruin that can be "drawn upon" even though it is prehistoric, or buried in the past of the unconscious before it can be recorded by historical, or conscious memory. For the melancholic, the special emphasis given to the phrase "drawn upon" connotes, more than simple recollection, identification.

The endocryptic identification upon which Nora has drawn has reincarnated her grandmother, and it is the phantom of the grandmother in Nora that determines the structure of her relationship with Robin. Now that Nora is becoming aware of the identification in her melancholic mourning, the grandmother does symbolize "her life out of her life." The grandmother still directs her behaviour from the crumbling crypt, allowing the influence to appear as "something being done to Robin." In the dream, one critic states, "Robin thus becomes like the child Nora, seduced by the grandmother" (Kaivola 90). Cast in Nora's childhood role by a dream, Robin is "disfigured and eternalized by the hieroglyphics of sleep and pain." Robin

is eternalized by the dream, a lover's memorial to her, in much the same way that her grandmother is eternalized by Nora's crypt.

However, by the time of the second dream Nora regrets the commemorative effect and its inevitable attachment to loss and death. She regrets it because, as Abraham and Torok argue, the illness of mourning makes the sufferer feel guilty for the crime of repressing an illegitimate desire ("Illness" 122). Nora wants to be free of her interminable mourning for her grandmother by unmasking the crime of repression and identifying the victim she has buried. Recounting the burial of her grandmother, and her father's grief, Nora appears to remember the moment when the repression of her encrypted memories is lifted:

And I woke up and still it was going on; it went down into the dark earth of my waking as if I were burying them with the earth of my lost sleep. This I have done to my father's mother, dreaming through my father, and have tormented them with my tears and with my dreams. For all of us die over again in somebody's sleep.— And this I have done to Robin; it is only through me that she will die over and over, and it is only through me, of all my family, that my grandmother dies, over and over. (124)

Clinging to the memory of a beloved lost object may reassure the melancholic Nora by making the absent present, but clinging to the memory of the lost object also repeats the loss which is always attended by the pain. The paradox faced by the mourning subject is that to finish mourning is to forget the beloved other whom you have sworn never to forget.

"Book of Concealment": Impossible Mourning and Mourning the Impossible

Nora seems to accept the possibility that her mourning for Robin may never be finished, and that something of Robin will remain outside, unknown, and beyond the interiorizing memory. Nora experiences what Derrida poignantly calls the "tender rejection" (*Memoires* 35) of impossible mourning: "Only the impossible lasts forever; with time, it is made accessible. Robin's love and mine was always impossible, and loving each other, we no longer love. Yet we love each other like death" (*Nightwood* 116). To understand how "the impossible lasts forever," we as readers must share Barnes's and Derrida's

passion for the impossible, a paradoxical experience that joins and separates the mourner and the mourned.

"With time," Nora believes that the impossible is made accessible through her mourning. But to gain access means to approach the impossible, not to possess it. With time, the work of mourning allows Nora to approach the love of Robin, but like death, that love cannot be possessed. Nora will never know Robin's love in its completeness, any more than she will know the illegitimate love she felt for her grandmother. Nora's mourning is the only evidence of the impossible relationships she shared with Robin and her grandmother, the only way she can dress "the unknowable in the garments of the known" (114). The impossibility of Nora's desire for the two women does not therefore make her desire for them a mistake. O'Connor raises the issue of impossible love in relation to his feeling that his gender orientation is a "permanent mistake," saying to God, "I will not be able to stay permanent unless you help me, oh Book of Concealment!" (in). O'Connor also faces the "impossible that lasts forever" in his relationship with God as a "Book of Concealment," a relationship in which God appears to be absent, and any knowledge of God or God's love is concealed. Still, the metaphor of God as a book implies that some aspect of the relationship is readable, even though it is not fully understandable, or knowable. *Nightwood* is our Book of Concealment whose secrets we have yet to uncover, and whose meaning we will never fully know. Is *Nightwood* merely a fiction, or is it autobiographical? Or is the distinction, as Derrida states, "undecidable" (*Memoires* 22)?

The undecidability of the judicial question of *Nightwood*'s status as fiction or autobiography does not make a decision about its veracity less urgent. *Nightwood* bears witness to some traumatic event which raises the question of incest, whether one takes Herring's position that there is "little evidence of sexual involvement" (55) in the letters between Djuna and Zadel Barnes, her grandmother, or Anne B. Dalton's position that the letters reveal not only that "Zadel colonized Djuna to serve her sexual needs, but...that the other adults in the family had a matter-of-fact attitude towards this abuse" (i2i).¹⁴ Real or imagined, the traumatic event is staged in the court of conscience, anticipating the critical debate. Like the letters, *Nightwood* testifies to incest without being able to prove it. Whether we accept Nora's fictional evidence or Barnes's autobiographical evidence, either figure as

witness "calls forth" in Derrida's words, "the faith of the other in engaging himself [or herself] to say the truth" (*Demeure* 23). Derrida knows that no judge will accept a witness who ironically insinuates or declares that their testimony has the status of a literary fiction, but

nonetheless, if the testimonial is in truth irreducible to the fictional, there is no testimony that does not imply structurally in itself the possibility of fiction, of the simulacrum, of dissimulation, of lying and perjury—that is to say also of literature, of the innocently or perverse literature which plays innocently by perverting all of these distinctions. (23)

To the extent that the event of incest will remain unproven and the whole truth of it unknown to us, including Barnes and her allegorical figure Nora, it remains an open secret. The only testimonial evidence of this crime of desire is the trace of the grandmother that remains in Nora's act of mourning.

According to a psychoanalytic reading, then, Nora's obsessive refusal to forget Robin testifies to incest by repeating her unconscious refusal to forget her grandmother, embracing the possibility of an unfinished, impossible mourning. She transfers her unconscious wish to keep the memory of her forbidden love of her grandmother onto her relationship with Robin.¹⁵ For Barnes, keeping a lost object of desire, no matter how impossible to attain, turns an act of memory into an act of love. Their most intimate embraces invaded by "moments of insurmountable grief," Nora anticipates the burden of mourning Robin. She anticipates the pain of losing her that forgetting involves, the repetitive process of discharging the pain, bit by bit, with each recollection:

To keep her (in Robin there was this tragic longing to be kept, knowing herself astray) Nora knew now that there was no way but death. In death Robin would belong to her. Death went with them, together and alone; and with the torment and catastrophe, thoughts of resurrection, the second duel. (52)

The only way Nora can "keep" Robin is to lose her to the living death of memory. The difficulty with Nora's prognosis of her mourning for Robin is

that it shows no sign of giving up her mourning, regardless of the pain. This prognosis may just be a reflection of Nora's early entry into the mourning process, but her inability to accept her loss makes Nora's mourning resemble melancholy. Furthermore, Nora's sense of urgency with regard to her need to remember Robin at such an early point in the relationship may be influenced by the need to preserve the encrypted memory of her grandmother. Distinguishing the effort consciously to remember Robin from the effort unconsciously to remember her grandmother proves too much when she refers to her desire for Robin as incestuous.

The prohibition against incest, of course, does not apply to Nora's relationship with Robin as it would to her relationship with her grandmother, removing the obstacle that prevents the melancholic Nora from speaking the unutterable. The word "incest" may apply metaphorically to the lesbian nature of her love, but incest, which applies literally to her relationship with her grandmother, is chosen to condense both forms of taboo desire into one prohibition. In spite of this prohibition against her desire, the same prohibition that helped build the crypt to keep secret her desire for her grandmother, Nora still feels compelled to speak. She says to O'Connor, "I'm so miserable, Matthew, 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" (109). Her need to tell her desire for Robin exhibits another desire to remember by consciously repeating.¹⁶ The therapeutic effects of narrativizing are confirmed by O'Connor, a mouthpiece for Barnes on many philosophical issues, when he explains to Nora that his motivation for telling his stories to people like her is "'to take the mortal agony out of their guts'" (113-14). The metaphorical condensation of the two "incestuous" desires in Nora's narrative indicates that she has overcome the prohibition against telling herself and others about her secret desire.

Barnes dramatizes the moment of undoing the effects of the prohibition against Nora's secret desire in some moving exchanges with O'Connor. After her second dream, Nora feels trapped by the need to remember Robin: "'Robin can go anywhere, do anything,' Nora continued, 'because she forgets, and I nowhere, because I remember'" (126). The inhibition felt by Nora brings her to accuse Robin of causing her grief, an accusation against which Robin would have no defence: "'How could she tell me when she had

nothing to tell that wasn't evidence against herself?" (126). O'Connor, significantly, focusses on the role of memory in Nora's judgement of Robin:

My brother, whom I had not seen in four years, loved the most of all, died, and who was it but me my mother wanted to talk to? Not those who had seen him last, but me who had seen him best, as if my memory of him were himself; and because you forget Robin 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—you are the only one strong enough to have listened to the prosecution, your life; and to have built back the amazing defense, your heart! (126)

Nora "forget[s] Robin best" because she loves her most and will consequently forgive her for the crimes of the heart. O'Connor intuitively that Nora wants her love for Robin recognized rather than have him join in with her attack. O'Connor's psychological strategy of recognition allows Nora to avoid an unnecessary prolongation of her painful loss and has the additional benefit of offering her the conditions to accept and therefore release her feelings of guilt for the crime of repression, the buried desire for her grandmother.

The book ends before there is any evidence that O'Connor's advice has had any permanent effects. O'Connor's response to Nora, nevertheless, does not seem consistent with Abraham and Torok's assurance to analysts that the crypt will "vanish in the same movement as the rejection of the judicial realm" (161). However, O'Connor's legal metaphors are employed to encourage Nora to avoid judging Robin and to forgive her. The crypt, Abraham and Torok assert, "owes its existence to its being repudiated" ("Topography" 160)—the complete failure of memory, as opposed to normal repression—and none of O'Connor's words betoken any "judicial" challenge to Nora's "incestuous" desire for Robin or her grandmother. O'Connor has reproduced therapeutic effects analogous to psychoanalysis, for Abraham and Torok suggest that after prolonged presence on the analyst's couch the "heavy architecture" of the crypt will be shaken and anatomized, so

it will appear bit by bit that, for lack of a lawsuit, the walls of denial have become obsolete. By means of the prohibition against not telling, the distinctive feature of the analytic situation, the unutterable will change its sign. It will turn into an actively and dynamically repressed desire not to tell, forging its paths, detours, and myriad ways of being symbolized. ("Topography" 160)

The "unutterable," secret desire for the grandmother will "change its sign" because the "repressed desire not to tell" will pass from the "preservative repression" (Abraham and Torok, "Mourning" 135) of the crypt to the dynamic repression of the unconscious. Once the repressed desire has passed from the artificial unconscious of the crypt to the unconscious proper by means of the prohibition against not telling—you cannot not tell—the repressed desire not to tell is translated by Nora into symbols, albeit hieroglyphic symbols, which tell us a secret, something that they do not tell.

Despite being reducible to the "image of a forgotten experience" or the "hieroglyphics of sleep and pain," Nora's grandmother and Robin remain to some degree incomprehensible and enigmatic figures to her. What *Nightwood* shows us, and Derrida reminds us to think about, is that we are given to memory and thus interiorization upon the death of the other "since the other, outside us, is now nothing." Derrida adds, "And with the dark light of this nothing, we learn that the other resists the closure of our interiorizing memory" (*Memoires* 34). In *Nightwood*, the other appears as other with what Derrida calls this "irrevocable absence." The other reveals to Nora, and us, our own limit, the possibility of our own death. Indeed, "We are only ourselves from the perspective of this knowledge" (34) of the possibility of mourning our own death. Derrida's point that "we lament being no more than 'memory,' 'in memory'" (33-34) serves as an apt reading of *Nightwood*. The "irrevocable absence" of the two lost objects of desire that Nora mourns constitutes an allegory for the reader. By interiorizing within ourselves this absence, the other as other, death "makes manifest the limits of a me or an us who are obliged to harbor something that is greater and other than them: something *outside of them within them*" (34). We too as readers harbour the absence of death, something outside us and also, paradoxically, within us that resists the closure of our interiorizing memory.

Nora's hieroglyphic dreams and the crypt of her grandmother are only two examples of an outside that resists us and our interpretive efforts to take the text within us, to anatomize her melancholy. Her work of mourning is not only Barnes's work of mourning, but the reader's too.

NOTES

1. This essay was inspired by a directed reading course that I conducted with my student Shauna Reist. I am indebted to her enthusiasm for Barnes's *Nightwood*, which first brought the work to my attention.
2. See also Mary Lynn Broe, *Silence and Power: A Revaluation of Djuna Barnes* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1991), 354; Louis E. Kannenstine, *The Art of Djuna Barnes: Duality and Damnation* (New York: New York UP, 1977) 37, 87.
3. Jane Marcus's analysis of the "carnavalesque" elements in *Nightwood* in her article, "Laughing at Leviticus: *Nightwood* as Woman's Circus Epic" (in Broe, *Silence and Pouier* 221-50), provides a good starting point for the generic claim that the text is an anatomy. Marcus never calls *Nightwood* an anatomy, but her reference to Barnes as "the female Rabelais" (249) strongly indicates the presence of the tradition. Marcus borrows the term "carnavalesque" from Mikhail Bakhtin who develops the concept in his study of Menippean satire and applies it to the novel. See Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helen Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984).
4. On Menippean satire or the anatomy, see also Eugene Kirk, *Menippean Satire: An Annotated Catalogue of Texts and Criticism* (New York: Garland, 1980). The riddling quality of the epigram produces the effect of discontinuity in narrative by shifting the emphasis from action to a fusion of "sensation and reflection," as Kannenstine (95) and Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957) 280, note. For Frye, the use of an object of sense experience to stimulate mental activity, particularly the close relation between the visual and the conceptual in the riddle, helps define the epigram and links it to hieroglyphic writing and the ideogram (280). The Baron, Felix Volkbein, delivers an epigram on epigram when he says, "An image is a stop the mind makes between uncertainties" (93). Felix, talking about his failed marriage with Robin, complains that he can visualize her, but he can form no clear conception of her. Robin, like Nora's grandmother, remains beyond comprehension, a riddle.
5. Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, Gentleman, ed. Ian Watt (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965) 198.
6. As the "*philosophus gloriosus*" (311), O'Connor supplies us with the intellectual and verbal exuberance that typifies the figure. Recognized as the target of a Freudian parody (Marcus 221; Wilson 57), O'Connor is the confidant of the main character

Nora, and their long conversations give him ample opportunity to overwhelm his listeners with his theories of "the night" (69), or the unconscious, race, class, and gender identity, to name only a few of his favourite topics (see Harris 238; Marcus 221; Wilson 57). We are meant to laugh at the life and opinions of this transvestite gynecologist, but occasionally some of his many oracular utterances do show genuine insight into Nora's psychological struggles. It is proper to the irony of the anatomy genre that the reader be left to decide when the utterances are useful. Herring nicknames O'Connor the "bistro philosopher" (210). The most accurate description of his role in the text, to help Nora find a cure for her love melancholy, comes from O'Connor's own mouth when he says in one of his carnivalesque aphorisms: "You beat the liver out of a goose and you get pate; you pound the muscles of a man's *cardia* to get a philosopher" (75). O'Connor's role in *Nightwood*, more than that of any other character, demonstrates the anatomy genre's "special function of analysis, of breaking up the lumber of stereotypes, fossilized beliefs, superstitious terrors, crank theories, pedantic dogmatisms, oppressive fashions, and all other things that impede the free movement (not necessarily, of course, the progress) of society" (Frye 233). It is not unusual, Frye informs us, for the *philosophus gloriosus* to expose the "inconvenient data" of the prevailing philosophical system, patriarchal gender roles in this case, by forming an alternative and equally plausible system (229). For instance, O'Connor's theory of the homosexual as the "third sex" (123), constructed out of alternative readings of children's fairy tales, has been given serious consideration by scholars like Andrea L. Harris in "The Third Sex" (248-53)-

7. All passages from "Mourning and Melancholia" quoted from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, translated by James Strachey, volume ii (London: Hogarth, 1960), 243-58.
8. See Perrault. See also the Grimm's version. The act of eating is alluded to as a metaphor for sexuality in Zipes 24.
9. It is important to note here that the lesbian relationship in *Nightwood* is not limited to the mother-child relationship explored by Carolyn Allen, "The Erotics of Nora's Narrative in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*," *Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 19.1 (1993): 177-200.
10. On the cryptonym, see Abraham and Torok, *The Wolfman's Magic Word* (19). Cryptonyms, sometimes in other languages, obstruct meaning through unusual lexical relationships like homonyms, synonyms, and "alloemes"—a list of a word's meanings or uses. Abraham and Torok have written on case histories in which a patient, such as Freud's famous "Wolf-man," generates emotionally charged words, or "word-things" which conceal a trauma that must be kept hidden not only from others, but from his or her own consciousness.
11. On this "artificial unconscious," see also Derrida, "Fors" 75.
12. Here I echo Derrida ("Fors" 72).
13. For mimetic rivalry, see Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977).

14. Victoria Smith's essay on *Nightwood* deals with similar themes such as the witness and his or her relation to a "narrative of loss" (194). She explicitly refers to Freud's theory of mourning and melancholy as having great explanatory power for Barnes's text, but she does not refer to Abraham and Torok, or to Derrida. She also calls the chapter "Bow Down" an "anatomy of loss" (196) but makes no observations about the anatomy genre. Smith's analysis of Felix Volkbein is indispensable. However, Smith makes no mention of the figure of the grandmother, a figure which would explain the "discourse of melancholia"

(201) she tries to account for.

15. On transference as a "repetitive structuring principle" (137) between patient and analyst and the material of psychic life, see Felman 133-37.
16. As Peter Brooks states, "narrative always makes the implicit claim to be in a state of repetition" (713)