



T.C  
YEDİTEPE UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

***A STUDY OF DJUNA BARNES IN TERMS OF AVANT-GARDE DRAMA WITH  
SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE ANTIPHON***

by  
Sevgi ŞİRANLI

Submitted to the Graduate Institute of Social Sciences  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

ISTANBUL, 2006



T.C  
YEDİTEPE UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

***A STUDY OF DJUNA BARNES IN TERMS OF AVANT-GARDE DRAMA  
WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE ANTIPHON***

by  
Sevgi ŞİRANLI

Supervisor  
Prof. Dr. Aysin CANDAN

Submitted to the Graduate Institute of Social Sciences  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

ISTANBUL, 2006


*A STUDY OF DJUNA BARNES IN TERMS OF AVANT-GARDE DRAMA WITH SPECIAL  
EMPHASIS ON THE ANTIPHON*

by

Sevgi ŞİRANLI

Approved by:

Prof. Dr. Ayşın CANDAN  
(Supervisor)

  
.....

Prof. Dr. Süheyla ARTEMEL

  
.....

Prof. Dr. Cevat ÇAPAN

  
.....

Date of Approval by the Administrative Council of the Institute 16. / .II. / 2006

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the support and motivation of my supervisor Professor Dr. Ayşın Candan for taking me into the enchanting world of contemporary drama by instructing me and inviting me to appreciate various dramatic events on several occasions. She has encouraged me to analyze Djuna Barnes, mostly an unknown genius to the literary world and guided me with patience and serenity to finish my study under the stressful conditions of my professional life, and family commitments. She has given me a brand new perspective into the understanding of modern man through drama.

I am also grateful to Professor Dr. Cevat Çapan for permitting me to attend his lectures for a second time even after I finished my course requirements.

Furthermore, I would like to express my appreciation to Professor Süheyla Artemel for administrating such an outstanding post graduate program at the faculty of Letters at Yeditepe University which I have been highly recommending my colleagues who would like to pursue a post graduate degree in English Literature.

My special thanks go to Assistant Professor Dr. Barry Stocker who has widened my perspectives in Philosophy which I believe is inseparable from any literary study. His high expectations and demanding benchmarks have forced me to go beyond my limits.

I would also like to thank Professor Dr. Nedret Kuran Burçoğlu whose *Imagology* course I tremendously enjoyed and benefited in understanding the many faces of the contemporary man from a 'supranational' perspective.

Finally, I must express my gratitude to my husband for motivating me to complete my postgraduate degree under the stressful conditions of my marital, professional and administrative commitments...

## ÖZET

Dünyada çok fazla gerçek anlamda zeki kadın yoktur. Dünyada çok fazla gerçek anlamda zeki erkek de yoktur. Milyonda biri çıkar, bize ışık tutar ve biz bu ışıktan yararlanırız.Ürktüğümüz karanlığı aydınlatırız. Bunca yıldan beri bir Shakespeare vardır. İşte Djuna Barnes da bir ayrıcalıktır.Sonu olmayan , zamanla daha da rahatsızlık veren mükemmeliyetçiliği ile iyimserlikle doğan 20.yüzyılın gitgide hayalkırıklığına batışını seyretti. Yarattığı aykırı aileleri, romantizmden uzak cinsel ilişkileri, trajik sonları ve karakterlerin kendilerini aklamalarını kabullenmemesi ile zamanının kadın dramalistlerinden daha radikal, daha ele avuca sığmaz ve daha yenilikçi görülmektedir.

Kelime anlamı ‘Öncü Birlik’ olan ‘Avant-garde’ devrimsel anlamda güçlü devlete karşı gelen olarak yorumlanabilir, böylelikle ‘avant-garde’ sanatçı da kurulu düzenden kendini soyutlamış konumdadır. Bu bağlamda Djuna Barnes da toplumun kurulu düzenine karşı gelen bir ‘yasa karşıtı’ olması, kendini kendi içinde soyutlaması, toplumda kabul edilmiş olan erkek ve kadın rollerinin sınırlarını zorlaması,’sanat sanat içindir’ felsefesi bağlamında estetik deneyimin sınırlarının zorlanmasına odaklanması ve neredeyse seyircisiz olmayı göze alan oyunlarıla avant-garde bir sanatçı olarak görülebilir.

Bu tez çalışmasının amacı Djuna Barnes’ın deneysel oyunları aracılığı ile 20. yüzyılın hayalkırıklığını , keder ve büyük ölçüde şiddetini nasıl yorumladığını göstermektir.

Özellikle onun lirik oyunu *Antiphon* üzerinde yoğunlaşan bu çalışma Bayan Barnes’ın doğalcı görüşünü, biçim ve biçem konusundaki arayışlarını vurgulayacaktır. Barnes’ın Shakespeare’in *Fırtına* oyununa yaptığı göndermelerin amacı kadın oyun yazarlarından babaerkil aile düzenindeki trajedilerin fonksiyonunu tekrardan tanımlamalarını istemesidir. Amacı ‘yok sayılanın ’ ‘şiddete maruz kalanın’ ‘ayrıcalıksızların’ hikayelerini olabilecek tüm tabuları yıkararak yeniden yazmaktır.

Şu bir gerçek ki, *Antiphon*, Barnes’ın dünyaya bir karşı söylemidir,trajedisini ise modern dünyanın trajikomedisine bir cevap..

## ABSTRACT

There are not very many truly bright women in the world. There are not very many truly bright men in the world, either. One among millions gives us the light bulb and we all benefit. We can illuminate the dark we dread. After all these years there has still been but one Shakespeare. Miss Djuna Barnes was also a singularity. Herself the eternal, aggravating perfectionist, she watched the twentieth century, born full of optimism, slip deeper and deeper into its disillusionment. With her perverse families, unromantic sexual relations, and refusal of tragic conclusion or redemption of characters, Barnes appears more radical, more undomesticated and more innovative than other women dramatists of her time.

The term avant-garde, which literally means 'advance-guard' can be interpreted in a revolutionary sense, that is against the overpowering state, and thus the avant-garde artists are alienated from the established order. In this respect, Djuna Barnes can be considered an avant-garde artist, being herself an 'antinomian' against the established order of the society, with her isolation in the self, with her expansion of boundaries of accepted gender roles, and focusing primarily on pushing the frontiers of aesthetic experience within the philosophy of 'art for art's sake' with an uncompromising view to the extent of even having 'no audience at all' in her plays.

The aim of this thesis is to show how Djuna Barnes interprets the twentieth century of disillusionment, despair and large scale violence through her experimental drama.

This study of Miss Barnes with special emphasis on her verse drama *The Antiphon* will stress her consistently naturalistic vision, her explorations with form and style. Barnes allusion to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* serve to redefine the function of tragedy in a patriarchy and she claims that for women dramatists. She claims to recover the story of the 'absent', 'the violated' or the 'underprivileged' by breaking every possible taboo.

Surely *The Antiphon* is Barnes' own 'antiphon' to the rest of the world, its tragedy a response to the tragicomedy of the modern world.



***"To be 'one's self' is the most shocking custom of all."***

#### **PREFACE:**

Djuna Barnes doesn't appear in Anthologies of American fiction nor are her poems printed in poetry collections. Miss Barnes belongs to the generation of expatriate artists who lived in Paris during the 1920's and commonly known as the Lost Generation. The term 'the Lost Generation' indeed refers to the whole Western Civilization which had already become lost during that time. Djuna Barnes, although she seems to have been lost in her time has been more contemporary to our time in terms of her innovations, inventions of literary language and her stylistic efforts. Her innovative efforts look backward to a vocabulary which is considered old to archaic, as well as forward, to constantly reinvent a language challenging its metaphors and images . It's the 'unexpected' or the 'peculiarity' which best describes the versatility of her writing.

Mis Barnes insists upon her highly personal vision of life as suffering and loss; she moreover distances herself from her characters, who live in their own subjectivity. Achieving the authors point of view demands an utmost attention. In other words, her works can be understood only with vigorous effort.

In our world Miss Barnes is known to the world of readers with her novel *Nightwood* which continues to be admired and influential. T.S Eliot who wrote the preface of the novel, found twelve years later that he had no occasion to change his original praise of this



work of ' creative imagination.' In his note to the second edition he wrote,\*' As my admiration for the book has not diminished, and my only motive for revision would be to remove or conceal evidences of my own immaturity at the time of writing- a temptation which may present itself to any critic reviewing his own words at twelve years distance- I have thought best to leave unaltered a preface which may still, I hope, serves its original purpose of indicating an approach which seems to be helpful for the new reader.' Sadly that novel is the only work by Barnes most people have ever read.

## **EARLY LIFE**

Djuna Barnes was born on June 12,1892 in Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York.Her father, Wald Barnes was an American; her mother, Elizabeth, British. After Wald Barnes met his wife to be in England ( where he had gone with his mother Zadel Barnes) he brought Elizabeth Chappel to America and married her.The family's wanderings took them to Cornwall-on-Hudson and later to a farm on Long Island where the undeveloped condition of that part of New York State lent itself to Wald Barnes's desire for a life of independence from society, for privacy and creativity.

Djuna Barnes was educated at home by Zadel Barnes, her grandmother,an early feminist and a teacher, who lived with the family. Miss Barnes's education reflected not family affluence but family agreement that what the public schools offered its pupils was inadequate and in some ways even harmful to a child's development.Learning was an ongoing process in the family,but even more important than the sessions at reading and writing was the atmosphere of dedication to the arts inspired by Wald and Zadel. In the evenings, Zadel Barnes seated by the fire, often read aloud from a wide spectrum of authors. Music was also important, since her after was accomplished enough to play the piano,as well as other instruments. The visual arts were encouraged as well. The life of the family was close ,and each of the family's varied interests contributed its own educational dimensions.In many ways her father Wald Barnes was a gifted man and one of vision. He trusted nature but distrusted society. Mother and son were so close that they shared a common philosophy. Wald Barnes 's rebelliousness was shaped by his refusal to live by the conventions of Late Victorian society. And by his impulse to reform the society to the

---

\* Barnes Dune, *Nightwood*, New York: Faber& Faber, 1963

prototype of nature. In this respect, Wald Barnes resembles Robert Frost and Walt Whitman who rejected society and found peace in the bosom of nature.

As a young woman, Miss Barnes studied at Pratt Institute and at the Art Students League. Her first employment was as a newspaperwoman and illustrator for the Brooklyn Eagle and her stories and Imagist poems began to appear in a number of periodicals. Her earliest fiction, the stories collected in *A Book* makes use of American settings in which appear central characters who are in some way alien to the American scene. Most of her primary characters are women, while men usually appear in only secondary roles.

By the time Miss Barnes joined the Provincetown Players for the 1919-1920 season, she was already a published poet and short story writer. Her *Three From the Earth* appeared on the same evening's bill with a premiere performance of Eugene O'Neill's *The Dreamy Kid*. That landmark season, which brought both Miss Barnes and O'Neill to public attention, was also enriched with the premieres of two other Barnes one-act plays, *Kurzy of the Sea*, and *Irish Triangle*. With her perverse stage families, unromantic sexual relations, and refusal of tragic conclusion or redemption of her characters, Barnes appears more radical, more undomesticated, and far more innovative than Rita Wellman or Alice Rostetter, other women dramatists of Provincetown. Barnes' excessive textualizing challenges the production process, providing a poetics of resistance in these early plays. Repeatedly in the early one-acts Barnes is found to be sabotaging public and participatory aspects of the form with her meticulously detailed directions. † Like Kay Boyle, Natalie Barney, and so many bright women of her generation, Barnes chose to privilege marginality, to live *ex patria* ('like the dust of old Europe' she said to Emily Coleman) in Paris, Berlin, Tangiers, London and later the *Devon* countryside. At the end of the season Miss Barnes left for Europe to write and interview famous personalities for Mc. Call's magazine. Two years later, in 1922 James Joyce's *Ulysses* was published by Shakespeare and Company, and T.S Eliot's *The Waste Land* also appeared. By this time Miss Barnes knew both Joyce and Eliot well. She knew Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, Gertrude Stein and many other expatriate writers and artists who were forming the nucleus of what was to be a decade of such lively and intense Paris-based artistic activity.

---

† Broe Mary Lynn, *Silence and Power*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1991

The 1920's was an innovative but also introspective decade for writers who were usually thoroughly disillusioned with their world. Its enormous hatreds had erupted into World War I. Then the war's aftermath of greed and corruption, the fiasco of the Versailles Treaty, and the materialism of entire nations, America especially, wore away whatever idealism might have survived the war itself.

The writers of this decade, possessed of enormous talent, lacked hopeful real-life models. They were faced with essentially three choices: they could write naturalistically about the actualities of this violent century; they could begin looking backward for their models, or they could try both. The best writers, typified by Joyce, Eliot and Miss Barnes, began to follow a double vision which combined a nostalgia for man's heritage, as well as his ability to believe in, and to hope for, the actualities of a here-and-now real world. This sense of the past is seen in *The Antiphon* through literary borrowings, allusions and parody. **There is a tension between the longed-for certainties of the past and the inevitable present.** Miss Barnes was in close contact with associates self-consciously literary to even an esoteric extent; and she was reaching toward maturity as a writer. Among the literary influences cited as having informed Miss Barnes's work are such resources as the Bible, Chaucer, John Donne, John Milton, Joyce, Eliot, The Elizabethans and the Jacobean. To this list might well be added the short lived Imagist Movement.

Her short stories are written in a simple style. Her first and second novels, *Ryder* and *Ladies Almanack*, are clearly derivative in style, although each differs from one another. *Ryder*, parodies many writers, while *Ladies Almanack* parodies eighteenth century literature of manners. Her most successful novel, *Nightwood* is a unique modern work that is stylistically pure, unself-conscious, and not visibly effected by any derivative qualities. Her verse drama *The Antiphon* which is the core of this study returns the reader to that literary world and its models particularly Shakespeare and the Jacobean.

The stylistic variety of her work is further complicated by the presence in a number of her works of a dimly recognizable authorial voice attributable to a persona of the author herself. This voice takes on stylistic alterations to suit the works in which it appears and the age and condition of the character. It is the voice of a woman in her fifties in the Miranda of *the Antiphon*. The Shakespearean overtones of *The Antiphon* invite comparison with an earlier time thus content, form and style are all variables. There are no constants at all. In

the following sections the comparison of Miranda with the Miranda in *The Tempest* will illustrate this point in detail.

The work of art is generated at a certain creative pot which juxtaposes style, form and intend together to produce meaning. Miss Barnes views about the subject of artistic creation are extremely uncompromising. She entirely rejects the idea of rushing into print. To her, an artist has no business publishing everything he writes, instead he creates because as an artist he must ; but he should show the world only his very best work. And only a little of even that. For the artist must remain exclusive, free, private, his only commitment must be to the demands of such art. In this respect Miss Barnes is very similar to J.D Salinger who almost rejected publishing his novel *The Catcher in the Rye* and refused interviews since he believed in ther privacy and the secrecy of the artist . Miss Barnes can also be compared to Franz Kafka who also refused publishing his writings and even demanded them to be burned after his death. Miss Barnes' secrecy also reminds us of Emily Dickenson who rather called herself a nobody and scribbled her poetry on the pages of her recipe book..

To Miss Barnes, the artist may not sell himself to the world and retain his own standards. Art to her is not a part of the consumer culture, a product to be mass produced and placed in the hands of every wage earner.It cannot be expected that very many readers will appreciate the workmanship of fine art, so there is no reason to anticipate its wide circulation. Miss Barnes's esthetics are visibly related to her writing. That the entire human enterprise is an atrocious but alluring mistake. Never to have been born at all would be the highest good. Having been born, to die quickly would be the next preference..Instead, to the artists's dismay, men fall in love with women who reciprocate ( give and take mutually) the expression of their love generates more births and hence more deaths. Life , itself is filled with pain, anguish, loneliness and suffering of every imaginable kind. Therefore even if the life-death cycle could be justified, a person is still faced with the irresolvable fact that his journey is not worth the ride.

As it is seen clearly, Miss Barnes's works are concerned with the most trying questions known to man; an even her lightest stories rest upon her despair. Just as the setting is important to her work, just as her characters are so consistently alienated from the places in which they are found, so place has a visible effect upon the creative process of molding the form ,style, and intend used by the author. *The Antiphon* with its flight from occupied

Paris to England, and with its World War II background an integral part of the setting reminds us of Miss Barnes's own last minute flight in 1940 from Europe to America by way of England. We might speculate that Miss Barnes's own experiences with the world have from first to last reinforced in her a sense not only of her own but of all mankind's essential isolation in the self; and this alienation from the world has never made anyone very comfortable. Barnes not only examines the failures of representational reality, but also the asymmetries of age and power and contradictions inherent in gender definitions that undercut social and familial intimacies.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF BARNES'S LITERARY WORKS**

Almost all significant characters in Barnes's stories have come from somewhere other than their native land. And of the remaining natives, these can justifiably be said to be strangers alienated from their own lands. Life appears to be senseless and even meaningless in her stories, and her touches of humour lend themselves to that attitude. In her treatment of life's meaning, we see the difference between naturalism of the kind Miss Barnes writes and existentialism. Despite the hard realism of naturalism, its determinism and its pessimistic outlook about man's ability to shape the world to his will, naturalistic writing insists that human life can be rationally understood. Life is frequently tragic and painful, it is true, but the purpose of the naturalist is to show how and why life is tragic. Existentialism on the other hand points out that life is not only tragic and painful but life is also irrational. Miss Barnes sees life and the perpetuation of life as a mistake; indeed the mistake is to be alive and then by procreation, to compound that error and produce more tragedy and pain. She finds death to be an affirmation and triumph. In her poems, the loss is deeply felt<sup>‡</sup>

### **SUICIDE**

Corpse A

They brought her in, in a shattered small

Cocoon,

---

<sup>‡</sup> From *the Book of Repulsive Women*, available on [http:// digital. Library.upenn.edu/women/barnes/repulsive](http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/barnes/repulsive)

With a little bruised body like  
A startled moon;  
And all the subtle symphonies of her  
A twilight rune.

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

In her fiction and even in *The Antiphon* we are not invited to mourn. Where death to Poe was a mysterious country whose very borders were in doubt, to Miss Barnes death appears preferable to any condition of life.

Tragedy is not dying, rather it is living. The meaninglessness and irrationality of life, she indicates can be understood; for the meaninglessness of life lies precisely in its meaning.

## **MEN & WOMEN**

Male characters appear most frequently in secondary roles. Women become the shaping forces in the lives of men. Men are not shown to be shaping forces in the lives of the female characters. Ultimately, men are used by women as their need presents itself; for women are frequently autonomous and strong willed.

As we have seen in her stories as well, the focus of Barnes's stories is primarily upon its women characters. For the men usually appear in the background.. Barnes's women are depicted naturalistically; but as they are seen from outside little can be known about their thoughts. How they live and how they adjust to their worlds are made clear, however what

they think is a mystery. The thoughts of the central character are therefore secondhand. As a result the author and the reader are placed 'outside' even the central characters. In her one-act play *To The Dogs*, the central character is Helena Hucksteppe, a beautiful yet mysterious woman who interacts with her gentleman caller Gheid Storm a well-to-do squire. The play begins and ends with Helena standing, an arm along the mantle, with her back to the audience. Gheid has recently lost his wife and long an admirer of Helena's beauty, he attempts to court with her. He is encouraged by the remembrance that one night some while ago, Helena had kissed him quite spontaneously. But Helena now gives him very short answers, discouraging his approaches. At the end Gheid is convinced that he will not have Helena. This play, which has never been produced, is dramatically effective because its characters and their actions become dramatic metaphors for its theme. That Helena begins and ends the play with her back almost squarely to the audience is a symbol for her type: a private woman, she has 'turned back' to the public world. Helena is both an individual and a self-sufficient woman. To Helena, love and wisdom are related but not in ordinary ways. She speaks of herself as being objective and unemotional. She has spent her own life in being herself. In Helena, the reader is presented with a woman who defies ordinary understanding. The rumors concerning Helena is that each spring she would drag a new man to her cottage at the end of a whip. Helena is in a sense an early cousin to Miranda, of *the Antiphon*, who also is sexually experienced, wise, self-reliant, single, and unwilling to reveal her nature. In her works women occupy exactly the same world as men, however their lives are distinct, their identities are separate. Unlike many naturalists, for whom life is a positive if a losing struggle and for whom death is tragic, Miss Barnes regularly presents death in favorable terms and existence itself as tragic.

### ***THE ANTIPHON*, The Ultimate Synthesis of Poetry and Drama**

*The Antiphon*, which is a verse drama is undoubtedly her most complex work. Its archaic to modern vocabulary, its Elizabethan diction, and its Jacobean plot are fused into a dense, obscure, intricate poetry. The reviews of her plays both as published and as performed, consistently characterize these plays as 'impenetrable' as 'unactable' and even written in

‘reprisal’ against an innocent audience which the plays defy it to understand. Customarily the playwright develops his craft with one act plays and then attempts an evening’s entertainment: the construction of a full-length play. Miss Barnes’s one act plays were all written early in her career and her full length play *The Antiphon* did not appear until nearly forty years later. This long break might suggest that Miss Barnes may have chosen a special, selective approach to the theater over a popular one. Two closely related matters must occur for dramatic communication to work well: first the playwright must have integrated his thematic material into the structure of the play in the right place; second, the audience must grasp these issues as the play progresses. As an actress herself in the Provincetown Theatre at the time of her first playwright efforts, she knew from the start what had to occur on stage. And as her plays indicate she is capable of incorporating abstractions into meaningful dramatic forms. She is entirely willing that her plays should communicate something indeed they are actually clear and forceful but only if the audience is capable of recognising what is being presented. Miss Barnes has brought her highly personal vision into her plays and that vision must be understood. Her plots and themes are the same. The plays, that is, mean just what they say. A problem related to that of structure, that is, the successful integration of the theme with the plot line, is found in the nature of Barnes’s subject matter. Her plays are about women. Male characters do appear, but they are types who are used as foils to the women characters. Miss Barnes is an expert at writing about women, but not about women generically; she writes realistically about actual well-defined individuals.

Miss Barnes’s verse drama *The Antiphon* (1958) appeared twenty years later than her novel *Nightwood*. A warlike world forms the background of the play. The time of the action is 1939, when the Germans were bombarding England. The location, Burley Hall, is an ancestral home which had been a collage for chantry priests a couple of centuries previously. The house is a visible symbol of the civilised past and its traditions. Since Burley is well damaged, the doors and windows are gone from their frames; a wall has been blown down, the house is a symbol of the destruction of modern world. The condition of the house with its contents suggests the divided and hostile condition of modern man. The individuals who are called to Burley Hall not only are divided persons within themselves but they are also the exploded fragments of what had once been a family.



Where once with its solid walls doors and windows the house suggested the sanctity of private life, at present it is a desolate place visited by strangers on their way to port and appear at times on the upper balcony where they look down in an isle curiosity upon the drama occurring below.

Before the beginning of the play, Jeremy, the youngest of three sons has called to Burley Hall his mother Augusta, a woman of eighty; his two brothers, Dudley and Elisha and Miranda, the only daughter the eldest of the children (about fifty years old) and an actress and writer. The family has been divided for so long that its members have become strangers to one another. To me the disintegrated family symbolises the whole humanity who once were the descendants of Adam and Eve and who now are isolated from each other to the extent of hostility and violence. In the play Jeremy disguised as 'Jack Blow' a coachman, knows his sister although she doesn't realise who he is. He seems to take the part of the negotiator in a rather jolly manner reminding us the comic figures in Shakespeare's plays. Dudley, a manufacturer of watches is in daily contact with his brother Elisha, his publicity agent.

Jeremy's intention in summoning together mother, daughter, and sons is to remedy the family estrangement. His choice of location is the house in which his mother was born and reared. Although the ancestral Burley is unknown to Dudley and Elisha, Miranda is familiar with it, for she has been using the hall as a storage place for costumes and other theatrical belongings.

The contents of this ruined home suggest more than Miranda's acting profession. There are, as well relics of a former family life suggested in the Chinaware, the toys and the musical instruments. Other objects lying about suggest that the family history is that of mankind. In view are a heavy curfew bell, a dummy in a British soldier's garb which is suggestive of man's warlike history and battered statues, suggestive of art artifacts destroyed by mankind. Visible beyond the house are the remains of a wall and what had once been a colonnade and these seem 'wasteland' artifacts much in the manner they are imagined in T.S. Eliot's poem *The Wasteland*.<sup>§</sup>

'...What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow  
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,

---

<sup>§</sup> T.S. Eliot, *The Wasteland*, *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature Volume Two* 1973 Oxford University Press, New York, USA

You cannot say, or guess, for you know only  
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,  
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief, And the dry stone no sound of  
water.....?’

Jeremy for reasons never explained , chooses to remain disguised to his family, although the reader is soon made aware of his identity. Jonathan Burley, Augusta’s aged brother and the caretaker of Burley Hall, addresses Jeremy by name in the closing moments of the play , suggesting that he had known from the start that ‘ Jack Blow’ is really Jeremy. A possible explanation for his disguise might suppose that the peacemaker must be neutral to the issues for which he seeks a reconciliation. Jeremy disguises himself as the fool in the Shakespearean sense, he is the fool who speaks too wisely . *The Antiphon* is written in three one –scene acts. The action is continuous from act 1 to act 2. The players assume , as the second act begins , the same positions they have at the end of act 1. A time lapse of an hour or so occurs between the second and the third acts.

## **THE ANTIPHON’S INDICTMENT**

In Hamlet , the people were 'muddied ' by internal corruption; something was 'rotten' in Denmark. Whether or not Shakespeare was actually referring to contemporary England, the issue was national, in other words localized. However corrupt Shakespeare's world may have been, it was still the Renaissance world that had a great deal of creative energy and that was expansive and adventurous. *The Antiphon* presents a much more sweeping indictment than did Hamlet. Born of nineteenth century pessimism and the industrial revolution ( among other forces) both material and philosophical tendencies join to produce a twentieth century of disillusionment , despair and large scale violence. *The Antiphon* builds upon that universal condition. For all real purposes the civilized world of the western man has already died when this play begins. No hope is possible. As the play opens the condition of Burley Hall which is more like a demolished building after a bombing, is a symbolic version of the World War II . The members of the family , on the other hand are like the casualties in a battlefield who are trying to recover their senses. Even looking backward ( which is suggested by the use of the doll's house replica in

act 2) rather than permitting a fresh start, only intensifies the recriminations. The past merely affirms that the seeds of destruction were present from the beginning. Who is to blame? Everyone, evidently; yet no one accepts either his own guilt or his responsibility. Miranda, then, voices the play's dark theme: to have been born is a disaster. Conception is murder, and all men stand condemned. The human race is grasping, power mad and status seeking.

Even the artist, represented by Miranda, is shown to be caught in human ugliness and to be swept to destruction. The torn historical building of Barley Hall and the broken statues symbolize art being caught in destruction. Man has been so unsuccessful in managing both himself and his world that the only cure is an end to all procreation. Miranda's personal code of behaviour is 'noble' she accepts blame and responsibility. She urges the perspective of objectivity concerning human affairs and humanistic dealings with all people, and she counsels a stoic resignation in facing death. The artist may be the best the human race has created, but the artist's productions are exercises in futility. He or she has been stripped of important motivation to 'communicate'. The audience to which *The Antiphon* is directed has been narrowed since it no longer matters whether the human race can understand its artists, the destruction is complete. Hence, *The Antiphon*, beyond any hope or despair, must exist for its own sake.

## **IMAGISM and THE ANTIPHON**

*The Antiphon* is the peak of the tendencies, techniques and knowledge that extend back to the beginnings of Miss Barnes's writing career. Her earliest work, *The Book of The Repulsive Women* (1915) as well as other early poetry, had drawn its figures in the sharp, clean lines of the Imagist. Nothing wasted, nothing meant the poems are what they mean. Richard Aldington had set forth Imagism's principles in the Little Review: \*\* the subject was to be treated directly and without emotional involvement or comment. Rather than 'tell' the reader of an emotion, for example, the image was to carry the burden. Another point had to do with the nature of the image: it was to have 'hardness' or clarity;

---

\* *The Book of the Repulsive Women*, New York, Bruno Chapbook, 1915

\*\* *The little review anthology*, edited by Margaret Anderson. Anderson quotes from Richard Aldington's letter to the Little Review. (New York, 1953)

rather than appeal to sentiment, the image was to be more objectively visual. The imagist sought to create innovative rhythms and to avoid traditional forms. Finally Aldington stressed the importance of choosing the accurate word to convey exactly what was intended. The Imagists, above all were breaking away from the fuzziness of meaning or intent. In *Nightwood* a poetic, imagist voice was successfully fused with the prose form of the novel; but a metamorphosis transformed the simple image into a living tableau, or 'image complex' that is subject to time, to movement and to a doubly subjective condition. Each character speaks, describes, and creates images out of his own subjectivity. And the reader reaches out of his own subjective perceptions of the book and reassembles those changing image impressions for himself. \* 'Guido noticed that Hedvig shook hands with the same intensity, his hand which is diminutive like that of a doll's house, full of ill-omen, as if it came out of a smaller mould.... The feather in his wife's hat fluttered like a wind of war, she was a woman of upright, natural and jovial character...'

Miss Barnes's choice of dramatic form in *The Antiphon* cleared the way for a truly poetic language by entirely freeing her from the descriptive part of narration. In drama, the actors in their costumes and on their set are the images themselves. Once established they can be seen in production or visualised in reading. \*\*, 'The widow Augusta Burley, gaunt, determined, dressed in the long severity of long black, collared and cuffed in spotless linen, comes on from the colonnade, tapping the paving with the ferule of her umbrella, more for emphasis than caution..'

The dialogue is spoken by separate individuals, and each perceives subjectively both the present and the past. Only as they appear to him. The doctor of *Nightwood* is not the spokesperson for Miss Barnes; he is the spokesperson of the doctor himself. In *the Antiphon*, the characters can be seen to be speaking to themselves. The only real confusion is the mixing of identities between Augusta and Miranda a confusion the characters suffer more than the reader or the audience. We are able to witness the costume change, the third-act transformation of Augusta as she becomes more girlish and fanciful; Augusta.' So, let us play. The epilogue is over,

---

\* Barnes Djuna, *Nightwood*, New York: Faber & Faber, 1963

\*\* Barnes, Djuna, *The Antiphon Act 2* Faber and Faber, London, 1956

The boys asleep, and we are girls again,  
Nor need not think of them this part of night,  
Let us be young again and tell us of our lives...'

We hear the charges and the accusations, the counter charges and retaliations behind which the characters struggle to come to terms with their own perceptions of what they are, and of what their lives have been. The dramatic vehicle, because it presents at least a 'kind' of reality, releases the poet from the necessity of verbalising the mundane. The mechanics of drama then make the pursuit of a 'pure' poetry more possible.

## POETIC LANGUAGE

What we find in *The Antiphon*, however, is not a single, unified poetry. Rather two levels of poetry exist. The poetic 'voice' which invests the play is shaped to the various characters, so that each has his own manner of speaking. Jonathan Burley doesn't speak like Miranda; Miranda and Augusta have distinctive voices. Jeremy, a disguised character, disguises his speech by assuming a deliberately clownish or riddling manner. Even Dudley and Elisha have their own poetic language. Dudley's language is driving, direct, strongly motivated and overbearing. Elisha, who tends to take his direction from Dudley, has less of his brother's strong purpose. He fragments his speech. And when he appears strongest, he 'echoes' Dudley. Jonathan, an elderly, ineffectual caretaker of a crumbling world, is mild both in his manners and speech.

Miranda's language which is the most compressed of all the characters reflects a personality which has accustomed itself, through discipline to silence. Miranda who maintains a professional relationship to the world speaks as an actress or as a writer would in the voices of characters. Her dark view of existence causes her to appear herself as a victim of life and only death can rectify any injustice. What then is there to talk about? Miranda often has to be goaded to speech. And yet the best poetry of the play is given to her as though Barnes wants to prove that her silence has indeed paid off artistically.\*

Miranda: 'Ah, the gauntlet in the gift!

I've always been obliged to death, indeed.

It is the rate in everything I do.

---

\* Barnes, Djuna, *The Antiphon Act 3* Faber and Faber, London, 1956

It is the matter that I turn upon.  
It is the hub that holds the staggered spindle.  
It is the plumb-bob, piddock, gravity  
Of the Surveyor with the cautious hand:  
A portion of man's dignity, he dies.'

Many differences can be seen in the speeches of the characters since each voices his thoughts in a poetic language that arises from his own subjective nature. Yet when considering these differences in speech we are impressed by a poetic language that is common to all characters and is elegant and archaic, unusual and apt.

It is closer to being Shakespearean. Miranda uses the archaic 'wrack' for 'wreck' and she follows the image of trawling with an image from land and probably domestic life. The mole is probably a figure for Miranda herself, even a figure for Miranda goaded to speech. But a 'vesper mole' must be the one that emerges at vespers, at the call of the church bell as evening draws upon. Thus even in the compressed language of this small figure, the larger theme of the *Antiphon* is not forgotten: one must respond. Like answering the vesper bell or responding to the antiphon, the bell of the called response, Miranda will face her life. The language of *The Antiphon* is really demanding for two principal reasons. It is largely informed by the diction and vocabulary of Shakespeare, and it is as well metaphysical in its conceits. Each line of the play must be analysed as intensely as we search for the meaning in a short concise metaphysical poem.

Miranda:

' It's true the webbed commune  
Trawls up a wrack one term was absolute;  
Yet corruption in its deft deploy  
Unbolts the caution, and the vesper mole  
Trots down the wintry pavement of the prophet's head.  
In the proud flesh of the vanished eye  
Vain glory, like a standing pool,  
Invites the thirsty trades of paradise.  
The world is cracked- but in the breach

---

My fathers mew. ‘ \*

In paraphrased from:

‘ It’s true that the entangled society  
slowly moves up a wreck, one thing was true  
yet corruption spread out strategically  
lets out the caution and the evening mole,  
hurries down the pavements of God  
In the proud flesh of the disappeared eye  
Glory which is vain ,like a standing pool,  
Invites the thirsty men of paradise  
The world is cracked in the middle  
And in the gap my forefathers gave out weak animal sounds.’

In other words, the world is insane, but in the gap between sanity and insanity my forefathers sigh weakly.

*The Antiphon* presents a real reversal of expectation , for Miss Barnes implies the thesis that literature exists quite outside of time and the fashions of the moment. The language of fine literature has nothing to do with colloquial speech, it may in fact be an absolute. Although the action of the play occurs in a modern world torn by World War 2 , the play’s language suggests that the same characters could have existed in the same interrelationships at any time during the past hundred years. This wealth makes the play anachronistic in style.

Although demanding, *The Antiphon* is dramatically unified and sound. There is no question that it works in fact it did work at the Royal Dramatic Theater of Stockholm where it premiered to bewildered but enthusiastic audiences in a translation by the late Dag Hammarskjöld and Karl Ragnar Gierow. Douglas Messerli in his article in New York Native issue 44 gives us an insight about Barnes , her style and the production of *Antiphon* at the Royal Swedish Theater in 1961:\*

---

\* Barnes, Djuna ,*The Antiphon Act 3* Faber and Faber ,London ,1956

\* Messerli, Douglas , *The Barnes, The Life* ,reprinted from *New York Native*, Issue 44, August 16-29, 1982

' With the death of Djuna Barnes on June 18th 1982, this country lost one of its most original and intelligent authors, a woman who for the greater part of her life might be said to have exemplified the holistic approach to the arts that characterizes the attitude – if not the practice – of many contemporary artists. For, although Barnes is primarily known as the author of one of the great masterworks of twentieth-century fiction, *Nightwood*, she was as well a painter, caricaturist, journalist, playwright, poet, storyteller, wit, and – much against her will – a gay and feminist spokeswoman.

Barnes began as a journalist in 1913 as a cub reporter and feature writer for the Brooklyn Daily Eagle. One year later she moved over to the New York Press, where, under the editorship of Carl Van Vechten, she was featured as an interviewer of celebrities. And in the next few years, in the pages of the Sunday Press, the New York Morning Telegraph Sunday Magazine, the New York Sun, and the New York Tribune, she interviewed almost every major literary figure and entertainer of the day, including Lillian Russell, Diamond Jim Brady, Flo Ziegfeld, Billy Sunday, Jess Willard, Enrico Caruso, David Belasco, Robert E. Jones, Frank Harris, and – with some literary license – Satan.

During these same years Barnes moved to her Patchin Place apartment next door to e.e. cummings, and there, through her fiction, drama, and paintings, she began to establish herself as one of the Village "Bohemians." She quickly became "intimate," as she put it, with other Villagers such as Marsden Hartley, Charles Demuth, Floyd Dell, and Eugene O'Neill, with whom she helped to establish the Provincetown Players.

Like most of her artist friends, Barnes moved into that great American suburb of Paris after World War I. There she aligned herself with Natalie Barney and the "Amazon" circle. But at the same time, she kept close ties with friends who frequented the more male-centered Stein group. Among her closest friends in these Paris years, however, were the "outsiders": T.S. Eliot and James Joyce. Indeed, Barnes, who shuttled back and forth between New York and Paris and traveled throughout the continents, staying for a while with Jane and Paul Bowles in North Africa, perceived herself as a sort of outsider, as a perpetual world traveler rather than as an American expatriate. And her works of this period – *Ladies Almanack*, *A Night Among the Horses*, and *Ryder* – all reflect this transcontinental sensibility.



It was Hitler's rise to power that returned her to the United States and a more sedentary form of life. During the early pre-War years, Barnes remained active, highly involved with the Theatre Guild and contributing regular interviews and articles to the Theatre Guild Magazine. For a while she published regular theatrical almanacs in the New York World Magazine and for the magazine of the Guild.

*Nightwood* was published in 1936 in England and the following year in the U.S. But as the country entered the War, Barnes began to slip into silence, obscurity, and legend. It was rumored that she had become alcoholic; Kay Boyle once told me that even as early as her Paris days Barnes would begin drinking in the morning and continue through the day and into the night. She survived, so the stories ran, on small amounts of money slipped under her door by Lillian Hellman and other friends.)

In truth, Barnes was busy at work on her most difficult piece to date. Throughout these years, under the editorial guidance of Eliot and Edwin Muir, Barnes revised and winnowed down her long play *The Antiphon*, into greater and greater complexity. Its appearance in the late 1950s temporarily returned Barnes to public attention; Dag Hammarskjöld befriended her, helped to translate the play into Swedish, and saw to its production at the Swedish Royal Dramatic Theatre in 1961. But the play was not well received, either as a theatrical production or as a literary text. And, except for the publication of her *Selected Works* one year later, for which she revised most of the short stories, Barnes soon "retired" to the life of a near-recluse. From here on, she announced, she would devote herself to poetry only.

It was ten years later, while at work on her bibliography, that I met Djuna Barnes. By that time, she had established a frightful reputation for repelling admirers who dared attempt unannounced pilgrimages to her Patchin Place apartment. Although my visit was by appointment, I was terrified nonetheless; I'd read of her threats and had heard of the times when she had called the police to rid herself of unwanted guests.

"What's your name?" she snapped as she peered through the unlatched door.

"Douglas Messerli," I answered, trying hard not to show the fear I felt. "I have an appointment to see you."

"I guess I have to let you in. Sorry about the smell in here. I can't help it. I'm an old lady. Now what was your name again?"

"Douglas Messerli," I repeated.

"Terrible name! Change it! Get rid of it immediately! Now why have you come to bother me?"

So began an hour of conversation in which Barnes gradually grew calmer and calmer, finally recalling bits and pieces of the past: describing the huge bronze platter behind Belasco when she interviewed him in 1916, remembering the dress which Coco Chanel had given her and which she, in turn, had passed on to "some Paris tart." I was not talking to an individual, but to cultural history.

Yet this legendary figure had also been an incredible individual, a sexual, political, and – yes – religious human being. Before me sat the woman who had written about gay relationships long before it had become fashionable, perhaps even commendable to do so. Yet, although she wrote about homosexuality, she was never an apologist for gay life; in fact, her gay characters, especially in *Nightwood*, seldom find happiness in or even survive love. Barnes, in short, never argued that it was "all right" to be gay, but that was not because she was uncomfortable with her sexuality. Barnes simply presumed the naturalness of her sexuality, just as she presumed her equality with men. What interested her far more than sexual identity was the moral conditions of her characters, both women and men. Accordingly, metaphysics became the focus of her fictions rather than the sexual preferences of figures such as Dr. O'Connor, Robin Vote, and Nora Flood. And in that framework Barnes felt that humankind was a rather bad lot.

Near the end of our conversation I asked her what she felt about the works of another woman writer, a novelist who was rumored to be gay [Eudora Welty]. "I do not like women writers," she hissed. I don't think Barnes was saying that she did not like writers who were women, but rather that she did not like women who were writers. For Barnes, I believe, the emphasis was not on sex but on the act of writing itself. I'm not sure that I agree with her; at times, it seems to me, it is just as important to explore how sexual identity defines the act of writing, how it shapes our perceptions. But as I sat with her that afternoon in 1973 until her emphysema made it difficult for her to continue, I slowly grew

to understand some of her frustration, her anger, even her despair. Barnes had written, had painted, performed, accomplished whatever she had because of a vision that brought everything together, a vision of a universe that was complete. Her resentment had grown out of what she perceived all around her as a delimiting, a narrowing of subject and process by our society, sometimes by those who claimed to love her work most. Djuna Barnes wrote about gay women and men and about their lives, but her subject was always the human condition. That subject is not always appealing, but her writing will continue to be read by all who are drawn to her powerful truths.'

Years later *The Antiphon* was performed on stage in 1992 in Frankfurt. The following extract is taken from the archives of Frankfurter Allgemeine dated 14-05-2001 and translated into English:\*

' *The Antiphon*; A play written with Fury:

The play was especially performed on Mothers Day. This is the tragedy of a mother and her daughter. Barnes wrote this play relating to her own childhood experiences. Barnes father had once attempted to have an incest relation with her own daughter . The play was first performed in 1992 in Frankfurt. Renate Köper as Augusta and Elizabeth Trissenaar as Miranda. The director was Peter Eschberg. Elizabeth Trissenaar had played Miranda before and welcome this offer to play the same character again. Especially the last performance fell on The Mothers Day and probably Barnes would have liked this coincidence. The first performance was in 1958. At that time the play was accepted as a taboo and certainly one to be censored and avoided. This play can both amuse the audience and upset them. It is classified as a drama of women. It is written in an anachronistic way. When the uncle and the sons disappear in the last act the stage is left for the fatal battle of the daughter and the mother. The mother Augusta represents the depression period of the 1930's. In this way an antiphon is created. This antiphon or in other words counter oration is something to be performed on stage. This certainly gives the audience great satisfaction to the extend of catharsis in Greek Tragedy. Elizabeth Trisenaar is a real character player in Germany although she avoids to be called a star. 8 years later she is again on stage performing the same character. She thought a lot about whether to accept this role or not but finally she agreed as a result of the fascination she had for Barnes. Elizabeth tells us about her role as Miranda: ' I have had many thoughts about the perspective of Barnes

---

\* Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 14-05-2001 Nr. 111,S65

towards this character. Djuna Barnes is a very important figure for the women of her own generation. *Nightwood* is a novel which appeals to the dreams of the women of her own generation. That's why I found it very interesting to be involved in *The Antiphon* again. I remember the lines very well as I have a solid memory of the last performance. There are such sentences that although I now know the lines by heart I feel like it is the first time I read them out. '

This is a conflict of mother and daughter, that's why Elizabeth accepts this role. The title 'Antiphon' already reinforces the depth of the play, a counter speech. We all need a counter speech in life. Monotony is to be avoided in life. This conflict is reflected through a family tragedy in the play. This is not a play for ordinary audience. In ancient Greece the plays are all around certain themes, love, society, children..etc.. In Shakespeare there is a variety and that's the reason why Barnes favors old plays. Barnes has respect for these old plays but it is also important to adapt these into our time. With this in mind Trissenaar is a master of tragedy. On May 12th Saturday *The Antiphon* is again on stage. '

#### **THE POWER OF SILENCE IN *THE ANTIPHON*:**

*'Courtesy requires that when you speak  
You make it more than silence.'*

*- Burley, The Antiphon*

*The Antiphon*, Djuna Barnes' only full-length drama, is intimately concerned with speech and silence, with the dramatic use of mask and the peculiar voice both to reveal and to conceal. It is quite a different proposition, to claim that *The Antiphon* is silent: unplayable, inscrutable, inviolably private by accident or design.. *The Antiphon* is to be sure an extremely complicated work both verbally and emotionally. Like the late high modernist works of Joyce, Pound and Beckett, the play is dense with words and phrases and with feelings that point in many directions at once, that demand a close and committed reading. Like the gryphon that is central to its stage decor and also to its metaphysical structure, *The Antiphon* synthesizes aspects of many preexisting forms and types; but the reader who complains that it is not a good example of one of them, that the 'average' audience would have been unable to place and understand it, is in the absurd

position of calling a gryphon a failure because it is not a servicable horse. Rather, we need to understand Barnes' expectations of the dramatic form by looking at her experience of the twentieth century theatre, and listen to what *The Antiphon* itself tells us about the dangers, uses, and adaptations of the dramatic form. It is first of all important to understand that *The Antiphon* is not a closet drama. Closet drama at their most successful draw on a conception of character which is dramatic and not lyric; but they themselves are really long poems and not plays. Barnes, conceived *the Antiphon* in the hope that actors would someday realize it, also understood the difference. The most cursory examination of the text of *The Antiphon* as we have it shows that it is a script, and not a poem. More than a set of images to guide the imagination of the reader, her detailed physical settings can be seen as instructions to a designer, for realising carefully thought-out, appropriate visual correlatives to the mood and action of the play. Her plan for the decor includes a gallery which various of the main characters ascend and descend, upon which an 'audience' of unrelated 'strangers' occasionally and momentarily appears. This both enables the actors to use stage distances effectively to develop character and provides a symbolic frame for their action. Barnes also provides descriptions of characters' gestures and manner of delivery which, while they do guide us as readers in picturing actions we are not witnessing, were clearly intended to function as instructions to actors.

Her introductory 'Cautionary Note' explains the physical appearances and the motivations of her characters and the intended tone of dialogue. And stage directions throughout- 'hurriedly turning the prow end of the gryphon.' 'seating herself', 'searching her pocket'. 'peering about', 'spitting out shells' explain what physical movement is attending the dialogue, while constant parenthetical adjectives and phrases- 'spitefully' 'ignoring this with contemptuous pity', 'appraising Jack' 'with troubled modesty' - suggest the manner in which Barnes wanted the lines to be delivered.

For us readers, these directions function as hints or clues to help us imagine a play taking place as we read it. To real actors or directors, they would be clues toward a fully realized interpretation. Perhaps critics who complain that *The Antiphon* is static have failed to make his imaginative leap from script to performance, from reading about a woman named Augusta who says certain things to visualising Augusta on a stage removing Miranda's shoes and putting them on her own feet while saying these things in a particular tone of voice. Moreover, these bits of business are not simply business: they illustrate

character motivation and contribute to the symbolic intensity of the play. So, as Augusta step by step strips Miranda of her costume and, with Miranda's consent and help, assumes it herself-rings, shoes, hat- we watch the mother assuming the daughter's identity as her own, both compensating vicariously for her own disappointments and attacking the daughter for the very accomplishments and experiences she envies and wishes to usurp , and we understand that Miranda permits and colludes in this as well. Similarly, Miranda 's slow descent from the gallery corralates to her unwilling, but finally total , abandonment of the detached or silent position of the writer/ observer placed among the audience , and her final reengagement with the emotional issues of the family battle. The very existence of this gallery, the provision for the vantage point of the spectator within the play, is crucial to Antiphon's self- referentiality , for this is a piece about theater as well as a piece of theater. It should be remembered that Barnes' ideas about performance and staging were not the naive idealism of a poet or novelist who suddenly turns to writing for the stage. Rathet they were the result of half a lifetime of practical experience and training, including involvement as both writer and actress with the Provincetown Playhouse and the Theater Guild., and a short but intensive stint as drama critic and columnist for Theatre Guild Magazine. Barnes' ideas about the theater were formed in the early days of American experimental drama; she knew the movement not just as an observer but as a participant.\* Barnes was involved between 1916 and 1920 first with the experimental Washington Square Players and then with ther Provincetown Playhouse in Greenwich Village, which produced three of her early plays( Three from the Earth, 1919 An Irish Triangle,1920 , Kurzy of the Sea, 1920) . Later she was involved with the Theater Guild, in many ways the sucesor to the Provincetown; she appeared from time to time in productions, including a 1922 appearance as the Madonna in a Theater Guild production of Claudel's The Tidings Brought to Mary ; between 1929 and 1931, she wrote features and then a regular column of reviews and theater news for their monthly magazine. We know from this column , and from the evidence of her library that she was extensively familiar with the history and theory of drama; she was also conversant with the practical life of the theater, with new ideas about set design, direction, character, and interpretation, and with how these ideas were actually realized. As a drama critic for the Guild Barnes saw a staggering number of

---

\* Altman, Meryl, *The Antiphon ' No audience at All'*, Silence and Power, S. Illinois University Press, 1991

plays and interviewed many theater people, including the eminent actors, writers, producers and designers of her day.'

The Provincetown Playhouse , also called the 'Playwright's Theatre' is best remembered for discovering and launching the career of Eugene O'Neill. But as conceived of by Susan Glaspell and George Cram 'Jig' Cook and remembered by Djuna Barnes in the first of her Theatre Guild Magazine articles the Provincetown was originally an idealistic and collective enterprise. The early Provincetown group of which Barnes was a part did not foresee that they would later be fostering talent and creating productions that would move to Broadway as O'Neill soon did. Rather, they saw themselves as an experimental alternative , constituted in opposition to the commercial values of Broadway. While they sought constantly to improve their production values, they were proud of their status as 'amateurs'. The focus was, at least initially, on the play and the playwright- not the actors.- and it was an integral part of the scheme that a member of the company might wear many hats; a playwright might also act, an actress might also design sets, a director might also take tickets. Those who wrote for the Provincetown imagined an audience of like-minded Greenwich Villagers, people much like themselves , who would be willing to suspend expectations for an evening , to try on something new and argue passionately about it afterwards. Early experimental groups such as the Provincetown , the Washington Square Players, and the Actor's Group Theatre freed writers like O'Neill and Odets and Barnes to develop truly modern and experimental dramatic forms. The irony with which the Provincetown was soon forced to struggle that these forms could, after all, be commercially successful; and some would argue that in moving productions to larger houses and more general audiences the experimental theater movement lost its initial idealistic impulses. This understanding of Barnes ' background in the theater helps answer the hostile rhetoric question, ' What could Djuna Barnes have been thinking of when she wrote *The Antiphon*? Remembering the context of her dramatic development can help us to see why Barnes , in the 1950's wrote an emotionally and intellectually taxing play, a verse, and expected not only that it would find an audience and perhaps make money. Despite the pessimism for which Barnes is famous, the form of *The Antiphon* argues a probably unjustified optimism about the seriousness and engagement of American Theater professionals and American audiences. Barnes returned to a core of autobiographical

material- on which she has drawn before, first in her one-act play *Three from the Earth* and then in *Ryder* and which she had previously interpreted in very different ways. As Burley in *The Antiphon* recognises. ' The lily, onion , and confessional / have many layers. Pare on.' And in returning to this material she also returned to the theater. What better way to set forth and ten pare away a many-layered deception and mystery than through the medium of actors, themselves mask-wearers by profession? If actors merely dramatize the sinfulness of human pride- the desire to appear what we are not, to mock God by recreating ourselves in a fictional image-what better medium than the theater could Barnes have found her final anatomy of the deceptions and manipulations women and men practice upon those closest to them, and upon themselves? And so she has given us in *The Antiphon* the tragedy of a man - Titus - who wished to be Napoleon, his wife Augusta , who wished , as she says in Act 3 , to be the Helen of Troy, and their two sons , Dudley and Elisha, who in retaliation have wished to be policemen.

It is in this light that we must understand the self-referentiality of *The Antiphon*, its constant allusion to role, scene, and costume , its controlling metaphor-constantly drawing attention to itself: It is a performance , managed and orchestrated by Jeremy/ Jack , who has called his family together, assembled the cast, and proceeds to make them dance in various ways , performing a sort of private family morality play. He is however, only imperfectly in control.

' Over the balustrade hang flags, gonfalons, bonnets, ribbons and all manner of stage costumes... ( on the table) a gilt mardi gras crown.. Miranda , a tall woman in her late fifties , enters from the cloister. She has a distinguished but failing air, wearing an elegant but rusty costume, obviously of the theatre , a long cloak, buckled shoes and a fashion tricorne...

She is followed, at a respectful distance, by Jack Blow, a bearded fellow.. At his entrance he is holding a billycock straight up over his head, as though he expected applause from the gallery. His manner during this act is.....clowning.' ( *Antiphon act 1* )

Miranda and Jack enter almost the manner of circus performers entering a ring. Jack in particular ignores the 'fourth wall' of realistic theater from the first instant, presenting an outright caricature of the principle of male dominance in the exaggerated and incongruous fashion of a clown. The two begin by characterising , antiphonally, the scene in which they



find themselves- rudeness once was home almost immediately , Jack does so by' metaphorical ' reference to the theater.

Jack:.....But where's your Uncle Jonathan?

You said you came to kiss him fond farewell.

The scene is set but seems the actor gone.

In short no audience at all.

My hands will have to be your clamour , lady.

Miranda: Not so fast ' ( A,act 1)

Is Jack the only viewer present to applaud Miranda's farewell performance.Left alone for a minute, Jack soliloquizes, but he uses this opportunity not to communicate private thoughts to the audience, but to reflect upon the theatrical nature of what he is doing:

' Do I hear the world approaching at my back?

Then though the world be present, I'll be proctor-

Hurry! Hurry! This wasy for the toymen.....' ( Act 1 )

Jack wonders not about his actions or feelings , but about the nature and quality of his performance and about his degree of mastery over the show that is about to take place. As these two examples , and many others, show, reference to the theatricality of what is taking place is usually accompanied by some anxiety about the possibility of human communication. Is there an audience? Characters seem to fear both that someone is listening and that noone is listening. And who are these oddly dressed people? Burley, the voice of rationality throughout the play , quite reasonably wants to know:

Burley:' Less skipping, if you please.

Jack. Suspect her as a member of the Odeon;

A dresses to the opera- and say,

She swept the Comedie Francaise for tragedy.

Me- plain Jack- who followed close behind,

The whipper -in the prudent ferryman.

Burley: Courtesy requires that when you speak,

You make it more than silence.'( A, act 1)

But Jack refuses to honor Burley's request for an honest explanation in simple, representational language. He goes on to describe Miranda, on the occasion when he 'first met' her, as behaving like an actress before 'her public, her herd in hobble':

' Her hands dropped and thoroughly performed-

The tension lost as in tragediennes

Who have left the tragic gesture to the stage

And so go forth alone to meet disaster.' ( A, act)

Again the ambiguity: is Miranda more powerful because of her 'herd in hobble' or audience, or does she stand before them like a sacrificial victim? At the end of Act 1 as all the characters, including Augusta, head offstage, finally assemble for what seems an imminent collision, he remarks, 'Therefore, let us begin it,' as though the first act were merely a prologue he had finished delivering. Miranda, from the balcony, answers futilely, 'No, no, no, no, no!' unable to prevent the collision between characters which gives rise to dramatic plot. What is at issue in act 1's constant reference to itself as theater is not simply deception and anxiety about audience but control over the unrolling of a plot which Jack has the power to set in motion but which neither he nor any other character has the power to stop.

Barnes, however, is in complete, consistent control of both plot and language. Act 2 continues to develop the theatrical metaphor as it fleshes out the bare characterizations and outline of family history sketched by the prologue. The psychological action begins with a family attack on the poses of the father, Titus, who is not present to defend himself and who therefore functions initially as a scapegoat for the hostilities and failures of his family. This attack develops in two directions: the group attacks Augusta for her complicity with Titus, and the mother and brothers attack Miranda for her nonconformity and disobedience to the revised family standard of conduct, under which success is measured purely by material gain. The attacks on Miranda are posed metaphorically in terms of the role-and the costume - she has chosen for herself. She has committed the sin of appearing 'dressed as though there were no God,' compared with which actual disbelief in God would be a minor infraction.

'Augusta( nervous on finding herself alone with her sons):

I wonder what it is Miranda 's dressed for.

Though compounded of a thousand ills,  
Embroidered, and embossed for some high scandal,  
She is, all in all, magnanimous-

Elisha: So? The whole fool's present in Miranda.

Dudley: If rigged for anything it's trouble.

A strolling player indeed! Without Protector,  
Husband, son,or bank-account? Phizz, phizz!  
She'd beter been a traveling salesman,  
With all that tutti and continuo,  
And walking round creation once a day,  
And been no menace to our purse. ( A,act 2)'

Miranda is criticised for being an actress, for dressing a part. Yet, Augusta, in attempting to justify her own past behaviour and throw the blame on Titus and his mother more effectively, recalls her own youthful costume in elaborate nostalgic detail; and almost every character by the end of the act has been accused of , or laid claim to , playing the role of the fool.

'Fool' in *The Antiphon* has a Shakespearean resonance. Jack calling himself ' Tom O' Bedlam' and 'plain Jack, juggler' lays claim to a role similar to that of Kent in King Lear; under cover of anonymity and bizarre behaviour , he brings forth the truth about the past in an attempt to heal old wounds . Act 2 closes with two ' plays within the play' which, again as in Shakespeare , push the self-referentiality yet another step, as though we saw the action reflected in a small mirror within a large mirror. In the first of these smaller plays , Dudley and Elisha , who have earlier admonished one another, ' Patience.( Keep it fast)Keep it funny' like one comedian aside to another, put on masks which paradoxically enable them to express their sexual hostility toward their mother and sister in a more disguised way:

( Exeunt Burley and Jack. They are no sooner gone than silently and swiftly the two sons\_ Dudley donning a pig's mask, Elisha an ass's, as is the playthings would make them

anonymous- rush the two women. Elisha knocks Miranda's cane away, seizing her and pinning her arms behind her. Dudley pushing Augusta about in an attempt to make her dance. )

Dudley: I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house down!

Augusta( thinking they are really playing) : A game, a game! ( Antiphon , Act 2 )

The play or game seems to give permission both for actual physical violence and for extreme verbal cruelty. The brothers beat, trip, kick and maul Miranda. They taunt her for her age, her infirmity, and their concept for what they see as her failures: lack of man and child, lack of traditional female role, poverty, profession as writer and intellectual, expatriation. And Augusta also seizes the opportunity of the carnivalesque 'game' to wound Miranda. The tragedy of Augusta's uncomprehending complicity, in favoring her sons and standing with them against Miranda ( ' You never would- you know you never would/ Listen to your brothers' is revealed here. Augusta never does understand that the brothers wish for her own death and that only Miranda's presence prevents them from accomplishing their purpose. Augusta has failed, in other words, to recognize that 'playing' is an extremely serious matter.

But the second play within the play- Jack's - while it is static and more artificial , involving a sort of puppet show with dolls and a dollhouse rather than masks on live actors, brings Augusta to an inescapable sense of her own guilt and complicity, her own responsibility, as an adult, for her husband's rape of Miranda by proxy. Here jack plays Hamlet as well, catching the 'conscience of the king' ( in this case, the queen) by means of a play. And Augusta, conforming her guilt by shrieking out a denial and a refusal to know -'I did not see it! I did not hear it!' - cries out also against the theatrical situation in which she finds herself:

Augusta( Looking wildly about, and seeing stray travellers who have climbed up the back way into the gallery, staring down, she throws herself over the doll house, beating at it with both hands):

'No,no! Stop it! Enough! Away!

Woves! Mountebanks! Historians! ' ( Antiphon Act 2)

The last word is one of the few significant variants from Barnes' earlier published version of the play: in the 1958 text, the word is not 'historians' but 'histrions.'

For Barnes, the meaning of these two words converged in an awesome and terrible way when she came to depict her own family history. Without knowing- and I argue we cannot possibly know- to what extent Barnes was drawing on specific actual experiences, to what extent she created and recreated character and situation to tell the subjective emotional truth about her childhood, we can understand that *The Antiphon* is a revenge tragedy in a double sense. In writing it, Barnes both depicted and carried out symbolic revenge, so that *The Antiphon* itself acts like a play within a play, a corrective investigation and remirroring, if the larger play is life. 'I wonder what you'll write when I'm dead and gone,' says Augusta (Antiphon, act 3) Within *The Antiphon*, the ironic answer would be 'nothing' for the two die in the same moment, and Miranda has no chance to remember or record her history. But in a larger sense, Barnes went on to write *The Antiphon*, without which Augusta would never have lived to have the opportunity for that comment. Another mirror within a mirror-or is it outside?

The tragedy of tragedy- the dark and violent potential of the drama- has already been revealed by the beginning of act 3. But this last act is far from anticlimactic, for it is here, alone with Miranda, that Augusta gets her chance to 'play the fool' to justify her moral stance by role playing.

The act opens after a gap in time: intermission for the audience, 'dinner' for the characters. Augusta pronounces the gryphon 'a solid beast, an excellent stage, fit for a play' and goes on to suggest that she and Miranda 'pretend' to take on the roles of mother and daughter they have been playing all along. Augusta:

So, let us play again, The epilogue is over,  
The boys asleep, and we are girls again,  
Nor need not think of them this part of night...  
Now the animals are puy up in their box,  
Let's be young again and tell of our lives...  
Come, play me daughter.' (Antiphon act 3)

Augusta behaves as though her colloquy with her daughter were outside the play, after the epilogue, outside of history and judgement.

Augusta: ' Let's jump the day of wrath. Let us pretend.

The play is over and the boys are put to bed.

Let's play at being Miranda and Augusta.

Say we're at home hunting box with lords Say duck-sniping-on a lake, or snaring

Woodcock in the hills- shooting and kissing-

Your father wore the trappings, but his aim-

Miranda : Was wild.

Augusta: So let us both forget him.

I think the gryphon moved. We have a carriage!'

Treating the terrible revelations of act 2 as fictions, or as the result of a male world of responsibility from which she cuts herself off, Augusta proceeds to write her own imagined role, to indulge her fantasy of being a young woman, beloved and therefore famous. She imagines herself into traditional scenes of Romance, imagines herself present as feminine onlooker to great moments of history, sees herself as Empress Josephine, Helen of Troy, and makes use of her envious guesses about Miranda's sexual experiences to imagine herself living all these things through Miranda, to the point of assuming her very own costume. As Miranda says, ' Love puts forth her foot, and in my shoes.'

But Miranda refuses to cooperate with this fantasy. Throughout the play, she is rarely and very reluctantly drawn into discourse, and never in order to defend, justify, or explain herself. Now, too, she remains for the most part silent or unromantic about her experiences, and she checks her mother's enthusiasm at every point.

Miranda.( smiling):

' No fountains, no flambeaux, no music nor no gallants.

.....

O unhappy wanderer,

I've seen you dig for Antony

With a kitchen spoon.

.....

Blow less hard about the stage. Be still.'

Miranda moreover refuses to participate in the illusion that by playing or pretending women can wish their history away. She insistently calls her mother back to the truth of their family life, to the sins of Titus, Dudley, and Elisha, to Augusta's complicity and failure to protect Miranda or even herself.

' Be not your own pathetic fallacy, but be  
your own dark measure in the vein,  
for we 'are about a tragic business, mother..' ( Antiphon act 3)

It is Miranda's refusal to help her mother to tell the other, sweeter story- her refusal to 'play' that hastens Augusta's inevitable casting off her momentary alliance with her daughter in favor of her deeper preference for her sons. Miranda's refusal to share in the illusion also catalyzes the excellent arrangement of catastrophe in which the women quite literally do each other in as the men escape. What is at issue here for Miranda – and for Barnes- is the exposure of the deadly fictions of femininity by which women are deceived into colluding with, and loving, their oppressors.

We may finally understand The Antiphon's supposed obscurity or unintelligibility, its reliance on archaic language and formal verse patterns, in the light of the play's thematic distrust of conventional 'realistic' language. Miranda, who like the early participants of the Provincetown Playhouse is at the same time writer, actress, heroine, and wardrobe mistress, is distinguished by her silence: that is to say her refusal to accept the truth about her experience and her family.

And she herself provides an explanation of the play's difficulty, toward the end of act 3.

Miranda:

Rebuke me less, for we are face to face  
With this the fadged up ends up discontent:  
But tie and hold us in that dear estrangement  
That we may like before we too much lose us.  
As the blacksmith hammers out his savage metal,  
So is the infant hammered to the dance.

But if not wrapped in metric, hugged in discipline,  
Rehearsed in familiarity reproved;  
Grappled in the mortise of the ritual,  
And turning in the spirit of the play,  
Then equilibrium will be the fall;  
Abide it.

The extremity of the family's emotional situation (the fadged up ends of discontent) make necessary a formal, disciplinary solution, a ritual, a dance avoiding and reproving the familiarity of conventional wisdom , conventional realistic presentation. Only in the spirit of this play – Miranda's play- with all its gaps, silences, and difficulties, is any connection or 'tie' between humanbeings possible.

In a play about the artificiality of human interaction, the difficulty is finding a language through which the truth can be told. This artificiality should not be seen as a weakness, since it is exactly the point that is targeted in the play. Instead, we should understand the play's complexity as a victory of interaction between manner and matter and look for an avant-garde company of theater idealists perhaps a feminist theater company to stage this production.



**RAPE, INCEST AND CHILD ABUSE IN THE ANTIPHON AND HOW IT IS  
COMPARED TO SHAKESPEARE'S  
THE TEMPEST**

Dune Barnes' *The Antiphon*, a tragic drama in three acts, is a chilling, utterly realistic, and highly accurate portrayal of the psychodynamics and sexual pathology that operate within a family organized so that each child (but especially Miranda, the daughter) will be available for reutilized and ritualized sexual molestation that their father, Titus Highboy Hobbs, disguises (with the collusion of his dim-witted wife, Augusta) as religious ceremony.

*The Antiphon* is an early and extremely overt and courageous example of the literary exploration of a girl's victimization by incest, a subject that, according to Judith Herman's landmark study, *Father-Daughter Incest*, was not usually treated in literature, until recently, until "the resurgence of the women's liberation movement" even by "the most courageous explorers of sexual mores" who "simply refused to deal with the fact that many men, including fathers, feel entitled to use children for their sexual enjoyment."

Barnes inverts the usual process of narrative progression by presenting the reader or the viewer with the *effect* of Miranda's history on her character, before she recounts its cause in Titus Highboy Hobbs' rape of his daughter. The effect of reading the play or seeing it is shattering. From the moment that Barnes' central character, Miranda, sets foot on the stage, as she enters Burley Hall in England, her ancestral home, we enter the cracked cosmology of a woman who has been raped by her father, although this fact is withheld from us until much later in the play. As her brother Dudley puts it, "She's afraid of life" (*A*, 137). It is first necessary that we behold the world as Miranda beholds it; that we see the effect of his act on the way she perceives the world; that we live through her terror, fear, and self-loathing, moment by moment; that we learn her language, the language of the incest victim, which simultaneously masks and reveals; and that we experience her extraordinary bravery in simply continuing to live, instead of doing away with herself, which would be far simpler, far less painful. Only after we enter Miranda's world are we given the cause for her seeming pathology in her father's barbarous misuse of her at sixteen, when "he tried to make her mutton", nothing more than a piece of meat, to

be devoured, to be used sexually, by any man that he has allowed to have access to her, including her brothers.

The effect of this form is extraordinarily realistic, because it duplicates the need of the incest victim to maintain her silence, to maintain her dignity, to hide behind a cloak of normalcy. Miranda presents herself to us at first as just any woman, although she comes to represent for us all women who have been sexually abused as children – up to one-third of *all* women.

Act I introduces all of the participants in the tragedy, with the exception of Augusta, the mother, who makes her entrance during act 2. Because her father has ripped her open, Miranda, wherever she goes, perceives “a rip in nature” (*A*, 82): “The world is cracked – and in the breach/my fathers mew” (*A*, 83). Because she can never get past that moment of her desecration, the rape has robbed her of her present, and so for Miranda all time is past time,” This lichens bridled face of time” (*A*, 84). For Miranda all time is rape-time, and rape is the ultimate act of ownership, for what the rapist wants to do is to own his victim’s psyche: he wants to imprint his image onto his victim’s consciousness for every single moment of her waking life.

Miranda understands that when her mother married her father, she too was victimized. The ceremony of marriage was also the ceremony of Augusta’s obliteration, and Barnes suggests that *any* marriage, not only Augusta’s marriage, insists upon the extinction of the woman: “Hopping and singing went she, when in one/Scant scything instant was gaffed down.../in passion’s clabber drowned, - /Holding a single flower upright” (*A*, 87).

The act of sexual intercourse, for Augusta, is described by her daughter as “the tragic bullet,” “that sprawl” (*A*, 87). Instead of portraying the act of giving birth as a dignified act, Miranda describes it in bestial terms, seeing her mother as a dog that “pupped truncated grief” (*A*, 87). This description not only conveys Miranda’s disgust with all things sexual; it also indicates her feelings of revulsion, loathing, and hatred of her mother.

From the moment of their birth Augusta regards her male children very differently from the way she regards her female child, having internalized her husband’s and society’s loathing of her own gender. At the moment of Miranda’s birth, there has been no celebration: “Yet in her hour, her either ends being terror, /the one head on the other

stared, and wept” (A, 87). Whereas she has had “three sons (whom) she leaned to fairly,” on Miranda “she cast the privy look of dogs/who turn to quiz their droppings” (A, 87).

Barnes establishes, therefore, that from the moment of Miranda’s birth her mother regards her as shit. Whereas her brothers have been “pupped,” she has been excreted. Because she is excrement, it is no wonder that she has been abused: she does not even possess the status of beast, which is the image which is reserved for her brothers; she does not possess even the status of human excrement – she is beneath even that image. This image of the girl-child as nothing more than dog excrement is repeated again and again in *The Antiphon*, and Miranda’s language, a kind of lyric coprolalia, is completely understandable given the fact of how she has been regarded. Barnes also implies that her mother’s birth canal is reserved for male children; a girl-child emerges from her mother’s anus. Barnes therefore transforms the culture’s preference for male children into this stunning and powerful image which answers why women are treated like shit: they are treated like shit, because, to the patriarchy, they *are* shit.

Because her brothers have a privileged position within the society and within the family hierarchy, Miranda, with good cause, states: “I fear brothers” (A, 90). Her brothers are violent barbarous men, true sons of Titus Highboy Hobbs: they are their “father’s blasphemy (A, 100). Soon after Dudley appears, he announces “when I don’t understand a thing - /I kick it! (A, 98), and we know instantly that one of the things that he has kicked has been Miranda. In fact, we realize soon after their entrance that both Dudley and Elisa count, as their right and privilege, access to Miranda’s body, so that in addition to having been violated by her father, she has also been violated by her brothers, which is in keeping with recent research that has determined that once other male members of a family learn that a girl has been sexually abused, they will also begin to abuse her. Dudley indicates this, when he says,” we loved the lamb - /Till she turned mutton (A, 147). When Dudley first sees her, he calls her “Our deadly beloved vixen, in the flesh” and he says, “What more could two good brothers want?” (A, 99). Dudley uses the word “want” as a double entendre, a form of discourse used again and again, obsessively, by each of the characters throughout the play. It indicates quite clearly that this family is fixated on sex, preoccupied with it as a weapon of power that forces the status of victim upon women.

We know that Miranda is fair game for her brothers; whatever they want from her, they get. The name Miranda – which in Latin means “to be admired” – is brilliantly and

savagely ironic. Miranda is all too much admired by each male member of the family, even as each member of the family, including her mother, reviles her and victimizes her. And we soon learn that both Elisa and Dudley prefer to degrade Miranda through sodomy – the ultimate expression of their revulsion of her and their sexual domination of her – because they do not even need to see her face. The act of sodomy also serves as a reminder of her status in the family as no better than excrement. When he sees Miranda and Augusta, Elisa says, “Turn them to the wall” (*A*, 99). As Burley, Augusta’s brother and witness to the family interaction, puts it, Elisa “walks behind his love, to kick her down” (*A*, 139). In describing how he “teases” members of his family – although it is clear that he is referring to Miranda – Elisa says, “I gouge my chin into the shoulder bone,/And whiz my thumb into the buttock joint”(A, 139). All family “play” in the Hobbs family is sexual “play” that involves sexual degradation. And the Hobbs boys describe their behaviour as a form of sport. It is important to note that this use of sodomy both to “own” Miranda and to degrade her illuminates the fact that these men so despise women that they prefer anal intercourse to entering a woman through the vagina. This both denies her essential nature as woman and suggests as well that they use Miranda as a replacement for their unacknowledged homoerotic desires or (even more likely) their desire to vent their rage on their father by raping him – but because they believe he is more powerful than they are, they find a substitute in Miranda and in other women.

Even Jeremy, the preferred son, disguised as Jack, has used Miranda. As he states, “Being vertical is one of her positions” (*A*, 107) – being on her back, being sexually available to any male member of the family who wants to use her, is in the nature of things as far as these sons of Titus Highboy Hobbs are concerned. And he colludes with his brothers in their plan to murder their mother by playing on Augusta’s jealousy of Miranda and Miranda’s deep-seated rage at her mother for not having protected her.

After meeting Jack in Paris, and without knowing that he is her brother, she has probably been involved in a sexual relationship with him, and she has let him accompany her to their ancestral home, and Jack/Jeremy describes the meeting in language that transforms Miranda into tragic hero:

*Say I fell in, a time ago in Paris.*

*I, with the single, she, the compound eye*

*Met back to back – a kind of paradox.*  
*Descending the terraces of Scare Coeur*  
*I saw her stand before the city literal,*  
*Tall, withdrawn, intent and nothing cunning;*  
*. . . Her hands dropped and thoroughly performed –*  
*The tension lost, as in tragediennes*  
*Who've left the tragic gesture to the stage?*  
*And so go forth alone to meet disaster – (A, 104)*

It seems as if Jack/Jeremy has enjoyed knowing that he is committing incest, even as he keeps this knowledge from his sister. And he tells Burley the history of her life in the demimonde and how he has seduced her. He describes to Burley a woman, her “hip well stapled back, the thigh/in its cup full quartered, lay and couched/Where she sat checking on her gap in time – “(A, 111). Throughout the play, “gap”, “rip”, “tear” and other words that denote forcible entry or opening refer to Miranda’s vagina, which has been forcibly entered first by Titus and then again and again and again throughout her life. Jack/Jeremy tells Burley, who wants to hear all the details, how at “the apex (climax)” he cried out “lady, do not scream” (A, 111). Although at first we are not sure that he is referring to Miranda, when Burley asks Jack/Jeremy to name the woman he is describing, he says “Miranda” (A, 112).

Even as Miranda fears her brothers, Jack articulates his fear of his sister: as Jack puts it, “I became her man - /Out of the high fear” (A, 113). But Jack/Jeremy also understands that Miranda, because of how she has been misused, is potentially deadly, and he describes her leaving Paris “As the leopard in a land made desolate...forsaking covert for some prowl” (A, 104). Miranda is potentially deadly because she has nothing left to lose, because her very existence is testimony to the bestiality of each of the male members of her family. As her mother sees it, her status as victim has degraded her, but it has also ennobled her, and her very existence reminds them of their own degradation: “She’s one of awful virtue,” says Augusta, “and the Devil” (A, 140). Until she is safely dead, she just might tell her story, which would defame each of them, would unmask the fraud of Titus Highboy Hobbs. Simply because Miranda exists, simply because she can bear witness to the atrocities she has experienced, she is a threat. What *The Antiphon* enacts in its

concluding scenes is the horrifying consequences to the incest victim of the silence being broken.

Like every victim of incest, Miranda has internalized a sense of worthlessness, a compulsion to repeat the degrading experiences that gave her both the only attention that she has had as a child and the only power that she has known. When Burley asks Jack if he will betray her, Jack states that he won't have to: all he will have to do is set up a situation so that she will destroy herself: "It won't be necessary; she is her own collision./...She has rash fortitude; she will undo herself, /Meeting herself but totally unarmed" (*A*, 114). Her father's rape has initiated her into prostitution, as every act of incest is an initiation into prostitution, and it is highly likely that Miranda has spent her life in the care of "patrons" who pay her for her sexual services. Later in the play, her sons describe how Augusta has sent Miranda into prostitution to support her after Titus has abandoned his family.

Act 2 is an increasingly terrifying litany of the perverse and sadistic behaviour of Titus Hobbs and the complicity of his wife, Augusta. In the course of this act, which begins in sardonic humour but which ends in the brutalization of Augusta and Miranda, we learn that Titus has practiced polygamy, that he was a believer in "Free-love," "Free lunch," "Free everything" (*A*, 127-128), and that, for the most part, Augusta has condoned his behaviour. Even now she seems to miss the time when her husband's "wenches" roamed the countryside: "I almost wish/they walked again, I'd have a fourth at bridge – "(*A*, 124).

When the family settled in New York after having taken a ship at Plymouth, it was in a house "he liked to call 'Hobbs Ark'" (*A*, 128), a house surrounded by a high wall that afforded him the kind of protection that he needed to carry out his utter domination of his family – a wall "Which he'd built up high for fear of tongues – "(*A*, 159). It is clear that he believed his role, like Noah's, was to father a whole new race: "He said he was the stud to breed a kingdom" (*A*, 161). And Augusta was enthralled by him: "A very autumn cone he was, all scaled in medals; /braced in knocking points; ribboned, buckled - /I do love a man who jangles!" (*A*, 135).

Unfortunately, not only did Titus jangle, he also beat his children and quite possibly even murdered a "bastard child" (*A*, 165). Dudley recalls, "Even as a babe in your arms/you let him lash me with his carriage whip"; "I have against my father that he

whipped me/*before I knew him*” (A, 143). In response to this accusation of her lack of maternal protection, Augusta can only respond, “That puzzles children – “ (A, 143), which is a completely inappropriate response given the atrocities she has permitted her husband to engage in – as completely inappropriate as her description of him as “an eager, timorous, faulty man” (A, 144). Augusta has learned to use a language which excuses men for their behaviour, which does not hold them accountable for their actions, which romanticizes them or makes them tragic heroes, rather than one which describes them as reprehensible when they are reprehensible, as in this case. Titus is no religious prophet, no hero, no saint, as his wife sees him; rather, he is a sadistic monster who destroyed his children, made perverts of his sons and a prostitute out of his daughter. As Elisa says, “You also did exactly what he told you, /And let him get away with anything” (A, 143), while Augusta lived with the masquerade that they were living a good Christian life and that she was the good Christian wife, “Knitting ‘little things’ for the Swahili (A, 144). Barnes suggests that the brutalization of children, polygamy, and incest can all be carried on within the context of civilization, provided those practices are disguised as the practice of religion; indeed, Barnes suggests that one of the prime functions of religion is to provide a shield behind which these practices *can* be carried out.

When confronted with her complicity, Augusta remarks, “I was a victim” (A, 159), and she states, “In my day we did not leave our husbands” (A, 160). In fact, Titus’ total domination is made possible by the unlikelihood that Augusta could support herself without him. Although her behaviour is indefensible, it accords with the behaviour of many mothers who are trapped into complying with their husband’s victimization of their children because there is no way for them to support themselves and their children outside the patriarchal household. Indeed, men’s control of the economic power structure of a society results in women and children having to choose between going hungry and enduring any behaviour that the head of the household chooses to engage in. Barnes suggests that any society that does not allow women access to economic well-being is a society that covertly clings to the right of the father to behave as he pleases within his own household, even if his behaviour is like that of Titus Hobbs. In fact, when Titus abandons his family, Augusta finds that she cannot support herself, and she pushes Miranda into prostitution to support her: “When you, grass widow, were set out to pasture, /...Pushed her, into the dark, as sole provider” (A, 169).

There is considerable evidence in the play that August has engaged in some of her husband's practices herself. She calls Elisa an "unnatural brutish boy"; she says "you nursed me standing!" (*A*, 173). And although it is unclear whether that act was forced upon her, by Titus or Elisa, it is likely that she initiated her own incestuous relationship with Jeremy, who fled the household when he tired of it. Augusta remarks that Jeremy left her "stranded on an high bad bed,/...Shedding the airy tears of age, and rocking/My one and happy memory, the hour/We went hunting, all alone together,/In the Catskill mountains" (*A*, 133).

The result of their having been beaten by their father and sexually abused by their mother is that all three of Augusta's sons exact a deadly vengeance upon women in general, and their mother and sister in particular. Theirs is the psychopathology of the sex offender, for, as Elisa puts it, "There's only one kind inch on any woman - /between her tot and tail - "(*A*, 141). And rather than seeing Miranda as an equal sufferer within their family, they turn their rage at their mother for not having protected them from Titus – and their rage at Titus for abusing them – onto women, including Miranda. And although they have been victimized by their father, they have also internalized his idea that men are superior to women, which is another reason that they cannot include Miranda within their number so that, although each of them as the comradeship of his brothers, Miranda is completely alone. If they decide to join together to attack her, as they do by the end of the act and as they surely did during her childhood, she cannot possibly fight back.

The whole family seems to perceive Miranda's incestuous relationship with Titus as a privileged status. Elisa refers to Titus as Miranda's "first cadet" (*A*, 135). And Augusta says that "Titus overwhelmed all but Miranda" (*A*, 147). As the act progresses, it becomes clear that, despite what has happened to Miranda, every member of the family is jealous of her and envies her. Augusta envies her youth and feels enormous rivalry with her daughter. She asks her brother Burley to tell them "How I was handsomer than she" (*A*, 142) and she tells Miranda that Titus' "acts to me/were never gentle, fond nor kind; /nor he never held nor stroked me anywhere" (*A*, 212), implying that Titus fondled, held, and stroked Miranda. And rather than blaming Titus for destroying the family and perverting the relationships within it, she blames Miranda: "I pushed four children from my list," she says, "One stayed in the web to pull it down - "(*A*, 117).



At the end of act 2, after Jack and Burley exit, Dudley and Elisa begin to enact a debauched scenario in which Dudley dons a pig's mask and Elisa as asses. Augusta, whose major defence mechanism seems to be a denial of what goes on about her, gleefully chortles, "A game? A game!" (*A*, 175). Dudley, "striking out in light rapid taps" at Augusta, taunts her, "Going to play with baby?" (*A*, 176), and it becomes clear that Augusta and Titus have foisted their episodes of sexual abuse onto their children by introducing them as play, a game.

Elisa tells Miranda that she'll "be crawling in my gutters yet"; he calls her an "abominable slug of vengeance," and he refers to her "starving puss" (*A*, 178), and, as he mauls her he calls her "dog" (*A*, 179). Dudley cheers Elisa on and urges sodomy: "Slap her rump, and stand her on four feet! /that's her best position!" (*A*, 176). Throughout this deadly serious scene of sexual attack which is disguised as sexual play, Miranda asks her mother to join forces with her as a woman against her sons, but Augusta will not; in fact, Augusta trivializes the impact of what is happening to Miranda and what has happened to her: "I've seen my daughter die before, and make it" (*A*, 180).

What they all fear most is Miranda telling her tale. Elisa states, "If we take her home and loose her on our ledgers, /She'll blot us up" (*A*, 180). He calls her "Mangles, childless, safe less document – " (*A*, 179), and what seems to enrage him as well is that as much as they torment her, she is bound to no man.

When Jack and Burley re-enter with a model of Hobbs Ark, a "beast box, doll's house" (*A*, 181), we realize that it is a prop that will be used to split Augusta from Miranda even further; it will, in fact, be used to turn Augusta's envy of Miranda into murderous rage.

The dollhouse scene is one of the most brilliantly orchestrated scenes in modern drama. In it, Titus Hobbs is reduced to the size of a tiny doll; this monster, who has destroyed the lives of this whole family, becomes "A chip, a doll, a toy, a pawn,/...A nothing!" (*A*, 182). Augusta ruefully states that if Titus had been the size of the doll in real life, "I could have jumped him, and have been/Happily unacquainted with you all" (*A*, 182). The use of the dollhouse and the Titus-doll to symbolically deflate Titus' power exposes the fact that the father's power, depends upon the fact that he is perceived as having absolute power, absolute authority. This is what the institution of the patriarchy depends upon: that a "little man," a "midge, a tick, a peg,...a gnat" (*A*, 182), is perceived

by the members of his family as all-powerful, and more than anything else, it is this perception of the father's power that keeps and says: "You have an husband in the hand,/A slave, a fit of pine to do your bidding./Was this the inch that set you out at hack?/Then 'tis a kissing splinter for a catch,/And you can game again!" (*A*, 182).

But rather than being relieved that this monster-man has been whittled down to his proper size, Augusta is furious: "Whose malice was it hacked him down?" she asks (*A*, 183), and she is furious precisely because she can excuse her utter enslavement to a man of heroic stature, but the fact that she has been enslaved by "A midge, a tick, ...a gnat" deflates her own status as well. Barnes' dollhouse scene is a brilliant depiction of how women who have been dominated by men need to make heroes of them in order to rationalize their having been dominated. It is too risky to see them as they really are, because then the enormous self-sacrifice, the self-annihilation that comes from serving their needs and their wishes will have counted for naught. To be the slave of a hero is one thing, to be the slave of "this splinter" (*A*, 183) is quite another. Augusta's great awakening, forced upon her by her sons, and is that she "saw him (Titus) great because he said so (*A*, 183). And once Augusta realizes this, she will never be the same again.

But the revelations do not end there. Jack/Jeremy pushes Augusta against the attic window of the doll's house and asks here what she sees. She replies, "A bedroom, no bigger than my hand" (*A*, 184). Miranda asks her mother if she remembers the scene that was enacted in that attic room and Augusta replies, in a superbly crafted phrase that reveals her indifference, "I don't care what you've done, I forgive me" (*A*, 184). But Jack forces Augusta to look again, and she sees, as "in a glass darkly," the "fighting shadow of the Devil and the Daughter" (*A*, 184). Miranda counters, telling her that what she sees is "Miranda damned,.../Dragging rape-blood behind her, like the snail – "(*A*, 185).

In refusing to use the word "incest" to refer to what Titus has done to her, Miranda calls incest by its proper name: rape. She refuses to protect Augusta any further by denying the impact of Titus' act upon her. She refuses to protect Augusta any further by denying the role that she has played in paving the way for Titus' rape.

Although in this scene it seems as if Augusta is calling Titus "Devil," earlier in the act Dudley reminds Augusta that when Miranda was a little girl, "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" (*A*, 164). Thus,

Augusta has blamed Miranda for her own rape; *she* is the Devil, not Titus, who is a member of the elect and who can do no wrong.

But Jack states that any mother of an incest victim is nothing more than a madam running a house of prostitution: “You made yourself a *madam* by submission/With, no doubt, your apron over your head” (*A*, 185); “between you both, you made/Of that slaughter house a babe’s *bordello*” (*A*, 186). Even Augusta is forced to admit, “I liked her most when she looked wanted” (*A*, 164). Although it is not stated clearly – because, of course, it is a family secret – it is highly likely that Miranda has become pregnant from the rape: as Burley states, “There towered an infant on her face!” (*A*, 185). It seems, however, that Miranda has never delivered the child because she is referred to as “childless.” Indeed, it is even possible that the bastard child whom Titus murdered was Miranda’s child.

To protect the family’s reputation, Miranda is given or sold to a man who agrees to marry her: “A girl who’d barely walked away sixteen - /Tipped to a travelling cockney thrice that age,/...Why?/Titus had him handy – “(*A*, 186). And Miranda has been so seduced by her father’s claims to being an instrument of God’s will that she submits: “Though Miranda cried at first, like the ewe, /’Do not let him – but if it will atone – /Offering up her silly throat for slashing” (*A*, 186).

An earlier version of the scene is even more graphic, even more barbaric, although it deflects attention from Miranda’s rape to Titus’ insane mutilation of the heifers. In this version of the scene, Dudley says: “Hauled her in an hay-hook to the barn/Left her dangling, while in the field below/He offered to give her, to the farm-hand, for a goat - /You know, I’ve seen heifers dangling from an halter/Just like that, while he charged the rape-blade in.”

In act 3, Augusta and Miranda confront one another in a scene that makes the confrontation at the end of Edward Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* appear tame by comparison. In fact, in the history of women’s literature, it has no parallel in its graphic depiction of the hatred that a mother had for her daughter and the violence that a daughter can expect from her mother. In this act, Barnes tackles a topic that is even more taboo than the topic of rape: she unflinchingly explores the fact that daughters are alone in the universe and that mothers are often the instruments of the patriarchy’s need to annihilate its

daughters when it can, or mutilate them when it cannot. As Miranda puts it, she is “Carrion Eve” (*A*, 193).

Throughout her life Miranda has had to choose to believe either that her mother *didn't* know that she was raped by her father, and that she must face her life knowing that she had not had the protection of a mother who should have been there to take care of her, or that her mother *did* know that she was raped by her father, and that she must face her life knowing that she has not had the protection of a mother whom society says should have been there to take care of her. Either way, she has been betrayed. This is the horrifying dilemma of the incest victim: whichever alternative she chooses to believe, the consequences for her psyche are the same – she is alone in a universe of male lust with no one to protect her; she is totally alone in a universe that she knows, on evidence, is out to destroy her and will destroy her whether she submits or whether she fights. As Miranda puts it, “By the unrecording axis of my eye/It should be observed I have no people:/But on the dark side, there I entertain” (*A*, 205).

And that betrayal by her mother, even more than the act of rape itself, is what she often fixes upon. As Miranda puts it: “To think I had a mother should betray me! /Tax me guilty both of audit and default; /Tot me up, as idiots their droppings, /and as indifferently, tick off the count” (*A*, 195). This, of course, deflects the blame from the father onto the mother. Rather than understanding that the father should have stopped himself, the daughter in her own way also colludes in absolving him, no matter how much she may hate him, for she chooses to believe that her mother should have stopped her father, rather than blaming the father for not stopping himself.

What Barnes understands as well is that the mother will also inevitably blame the daughter for what has transpired and that this will also exonerate the father. When the mother enacts her revenge, it will not be against the father, but against her daughter, her father's “scapegoat” (*A*, 198). As she beats Miranda to death with the bell at the end of *The Antiphon*, Augusta shouts, “You are to blame, to blame; you are to blame – “(*A*, 223).

Augusta is a pathetic, deadly prisoner of the patriarchy, and when she is confronted with the knowledge of what has happened to her daughter, she can do nothing but enact the revenge decreed by a patriarchal ideology embedded in the roles established for women in fairy tales. Barnes understands that Augusta has internalized the notion that after you find your Prince Charming, you live happily ever after, immobilized in a universe of being

loved and being cared for, and it is precisely her belief in the cosmology established in fairy tales that sets Augusta up to be Hobbs' prisoner. She never wants to grow up, to become a woman, to assume the responsibilities required of a mother. At the end of *The Antiphon*, she pleads with Miranda to play with her: "Do let's pretend we're girls again; let's play" (A, 210). One of the reasons for this, of course, is that in fairy tales there are only beautiful girls and beastly mothers; there are no role models who teach women how to become responsible adults who care for their daughters: for the power of the male to remain absolute, a woman must be immobilized by her love for a man. "Was I ever princess in a legend?/...Did I sleep a hundred years?" (A, 199). She kills Miranda, a "bloody Cinderella" (A, 193), rather than join with her in recognizing that each, in her own way, has been victimized. Augusta can never get beyond an indifferent concern for her own pain to truly see what has happened to her children. She says, "God have mercy on me!" but it takes Miranda to say, "God have mercy on us all" (A, 216).

Augusta wants to be forgiven by Miranda: "Do not stamp me down for tally in the earth," she says. "Be merciful" (A, 204). Barnes understands that, in addition to suffering the torment of being victimized, Miranda is expected to pardon those who have degraded her. If she refuses; if she will not take care of their guilt for them; if she does not tell the rapist father that it really *was* all right; if she does not tell the colluding mother that she really could not have staved off her husband's attacks – then, in addition to suffering the rape and the effects of incest, she will be punished even more severely. Thus the most abused member of the family is expected to be the most forgiving; the most defenceless member of the family is expected to assume the burden of guilt of all its members. Her simple existence bears witness to their bestiality. If they can snuff her out, they can reclaim their own pretence to civilization. The greatest threat to the façade that is civilization is Miranda alive to tell her history.

Thus, in *The Antiphon* civilization and culture become nothing more than the high wall which Titus builds around his compound – the screen of silence behind which the screams accompanying the daily atrocities cannot be heard; it is the blind which prevents us from seeing that the norm in a patriarchal family is brutality and victimization. In setting her play during 1939, Barnes suggests that the events of that year were not an aberration in the history of the human race; rather, Hitler's behaviour is reinterpreted for us, through Barnes, as normal behaviour for a well- socialized male. The only problem

with Hitler, as Barnes sees it, is that he has co-opted the right of the father to behave like a Hitler (as Titus does) within the confines of his own household. Barnes takes the word “holocaust” and applies it to the goings-on within the Hobbs household to underscore the devastation that Titus wreaked there: “Fie upon the whole of love’s debris,” says Augusta, “That horrid holocaust that is the price/of passion’s seizure” (*A*, 206). And Barnes suggests as well that had Hitler confined his attention to women only, his atrocities would have occupied nothing more than a footnote in the pages of the history of our times. The wall around Hobbs Ark reminds us of the walls around Hitler’s death camps: Hitler has practiced one form of extermination: Titus Hobbs has practiced another. And the wall around Hobbs Ark is nothing more, nothing less than the picket fence or the privet hedge that delineates the boundary of the household in which the father as fascist reigns supreme.

But Barnes does not permit us to cling for one moment to the romanticized notion that women are protectors, that women are inherently more loving than men. As Miranda tells Augusta, “had (you) been a man/you’d been the bloodiest villain of us all” (*A*, 201). And Barnes also unmasks the mythology that surrounds motherhood. Miranda states: “Every mother, in extortion for her milk - /...Draws blood” (*A*, 210). Augusta expresses the fact that mothers are expected to nurture everyone, without getting any support themselves: “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” (*A*, 205).

The end of *The Antiphon*, in which Augusta beats Miranda to death with the curfew bell and Miranda submits to the beating, is so shattering precisely because it announces Barnes’ understanding that a woman like Augusta will exact retribution for her husband’s deed from her husband’s victim – Miranda – which is the fate of the incest victim who is at great risk, especially from her mother, if the incest is discovered. Augusta can forgive Titus, but she can never forgive her daughter: “If you are speaking of your father, I forgive him” (*A*, 208). Moreover, it articulates that the daughter has no defence because the very notion that she has the potential power to defend the integrity of her person has never been taught to her; in fact, she has been taught the reverse. Jack says, “I might have known, being weary of the world,/...She’d not defends herself” (*A*, 223).

Barnes understands that the life of the victim of incest, if she is to survive, must be the life of silence, the life of a “Trippiest, a hard-won silence” (*A*, 202). For the incest victim to survive, she must keep her secret to herself. The penalty for the breaking of the

silence, even if you do not break it yourself, is death. In killing Miranda, Augusta obliterates Miranda's (and paradoxically, her own) history. One major reason for her murdering her daughter is that she is terrified that her daughter will write her life, that her daughter will write something like *The Antiphon*: "May God protect us! I wonder what you'll write/when I am dead and gone!" (A, 209).

Barnes' tale is horrifyingly real, for she does not permit us to believe in the romance of the possibility of reconciliation between the abused daughter and her mother. Rather, she forces us to watch Miranda's murder at the hands of her mother. In this moment, Augusta becomes every woman bound to life-threatening patriarchal rites: she is every mother who has bound her daughter's feet; she is every mother who has held her daughter down for the ritual incision of clitoridectomy; she is every mother who has bound her daughter's behaviour into the rigid, gender-prescribed constraints of silence, self-annihilation, and submission.

Barnes has chosen the name of her heroine carefully: Miranda in *The Antiphon* is twin sister to Shakespeare's Miranda, and *The Antiphon* provides a cipher with which to reinterpret *The Tempest*. What Prospero has created on his island, the island to which he has escaped with his three-year old daughter, is no different from Hobbs Ark. It is the fantasy kingdom of every incestuous father: a world without adult women who might intervene to protect his daughter from his total control over her. Prospero's language, like Titus', is the language of the seductive father: "No harm. /I have done nothing but in care of thee, /of thee, my dear one, thee, my daughter" (I.2.15).

Miranda's mother, "a piece of virtue" (I.2.55), conveniently disappears from Shakespeare's narrative after she has fulfilled her reproductive function of giving birth to Miranda. *The Tempest* therefore actualizes the absence of a mother's protection, which in *The Antiphon* is reality, even though the mother herself is present. Shakespeare even usurps Miranda's mother's birthing function, creating a moment in which Prospero symbolically gives birth to Miranda, having on board the ship that takes them to the island "Infused with a fortitude from Heaven,/...Under my burden groaned, which raised in me/An undergoing stomach to bear up" (I.2.154).

So unimportant is the function of Miranda's mother in this text that Shakespeare obliterates her history: we never hear how she died, or when she died, or if she died. Although Miranda vaguely remembers a world with women ("Had I not/Four or five

women once that tended me?" [I.2.46]), the world that Prospero has created is the ultimate incestuous fantasyland, a world without mature women. Like *The Antiphon*, *The Tempest* is in fact a variation on the theme of Persephone being separated from her mother, Ceres, and being carried to the underworld by Pluto. It is described by Ceres in the masque in act 4 in which Ceres appears, mourning the loss of her daughter and reviling Venus and Cupid who plotted her abduction. But in Barnes' text there is no mother mourning the male possession of the daughter's body. In the incestuous subtext of *The Tempest*, the uninhabited island is the underworld, Miranda's mother Ceres, Miranda is Persephone, and Prospero is Pluto, Miranda's father/husband. And because the masque which is performed to celebrate Miranda's betrothal to Ferdinand is described as Prospero's "present fancy" (4.I.129), it becomes clear that Miranda's is taken to the island by Prospero has been, in fact, the correlative of Persephone's abduction.

In Prospero's world, the only woman allowed is daddy's little girl, fifteen-year old Miranda, who has been without the company of women for twelve long years. And like all seductive fathers, instead of being parent to his daughter, he expects his daughter to provide *him* with emotional sustenance and support, which, of course, Miranda does: "Oh, my heart bleeds/to think o' the teen [sorrow] that I have turned you to" (I.2.63).

Like Titus, Prospero has total control over what Miranda knows about the world, and it is this control that makes it possible for him to dominate her. Shakespeare's Miranda's knowledge of the world has come from her father, her "schoolmaster" (I.2.172). When he doesn't want her to ask any more questions, when he doesn't want her to know what is going on, he simply puts her to sleep: "Here cease more questions./Thou art inclined to sleep, 'tis a good dullness,/And give it away. I know you canst choose" (I.2.185).

Both Titus and Prospero are sadists. But in *The Tempest*, because Prospero defines Caliban as less than human, the audience tolerates, even laughs at, Prospero's brutality: "For this, be sure, tonight thou shalt have cramps, /Side stitches, that shall pen they breath up.../Thou shalt be pinched" (I.I.324). Prospero excuses his treatment of Caliban by stating, "In mine own cell...thou [Caliban] didst seek to violate/The honour of my child" (I.2.345).

There is an enormous similarity between the way Elisa and Dudley brutalize Miranda in *The Antiphon* and the scene in which Caliban has tried to violate Miranda. Just



as Titus has brutalized his sons, so, throughout *The Tempest*, Caliban describes how he has been tortured by Prospero. “For every trifle are they set upon me - /Sometime like apes, that mow and chatter at me, /and after bite me” (2.2.8). Caliban attempts to rape Miranda to get his revenge against his master; yet Caliban and the sons in *The Antiphon* collude with the male in power in the domination and sexual degradation of a woman – he is powerless to enact his revenge on the male who dominates him; but he does have the power to sexually defile a woman.

Ariel tells us that Prospero can see the future. If Prospero can see the future, then we must assume that he foresaw Caliban’s attempted rape of Miranda and that he did not stop it – that he chose not to stop it. Prospero allows Caliban to attempt to rape Miranda for many of the same reasons that Titus has sold or given his daughter to the cockney in *The Antiphon*: using a lower-class, barbaric “other” to rape a daughter demeans her, degrades her even more than when he does it himself; it allows the incestuous father to enact his belief that women are worthless instruments to be defiled. Indeed, even when Miranda is under his thrall and is falling in love with Ferdinand, Prospero describes it in the following terms: “Poor worm [Miranda], thou art infected!” (3.I.31). When he turns Miranda over to Ferdinand, Prospero treats her as if she were a prostitute: Miranda is Ferdinand’s “own acquisition/Worthily purchased” (4.I.13), as Barnes’ Miranda is sold to the highest bidder.

Having Caliban attempt to rape her also satisfies a deep seated desire, a desire to witness someone else engaging in a vulgar act, a bestial act; it establishes, moreover, the father’s complete domination over his daughter’s sexuality by demonstrating that he also controls the sexual behaviour of every other man in his domain. Thus she learns the crucial lesson that the incestuous father seeks to teach his daughter: that every sexual encounter that she will ever have is really a sexual encounter with him. He totally controls her sexuality; her sexuality is his and not hers.

Prospero’s setting up the love affair between Ferdinand and Miranda later in the play is different in degree but not in kind from his allowing Caliban to nearly rape his daughter, or from Titus selling Miranda to the farmer. Prospero, the ultimate voyeur, watches Ferdinand and Miranda just as he had watched Caliban and Miranda. Although Ferdinand and Miranda might think they are courting in private, and although they believe that they have freely chosen to love the other, they are, in fact, merely puppets in a drama

that Prospero has scripted: “It goes on, I see, /As my soul prompts it” (I.2.419), he says, when he sees that Miranda thinks that Ferdinand is “A thing divine, for nothing natural/I ever saw so noble” (I.2.417). Prospero can see whatever they are doing any time that he chooses. In act 5, scene 1, he draws back the curtain to expose them as they are playing chess: not only does he use his powers to watch them himself, but he also uses his powers to expose their lovemaking to other male eyes.

Prospero’s Miranda is “my gift, and thine own [Ferdinand’s] acquisition” (4.1.14), just as Titus’ Miranda is his gift to the farmer and the farmer’s own acquisition. And it is clear why, at the end of *The Tempest*, Prospero is so world-weary, so depressed, so vexed. He has lost his possession, his Miranda. He has demonstrated to his satisfaction his utter control of Miranda’s sexuality by using his powers to have her fall in love with Ferdinand, he has transferred his ownership of her to a man whom he has chosen; yet this very act has removed her from him, and now she belongs to another man who will exert his right of ownership over her. In the incestuous subtext of the drama, his statement that “We are such stuff/As dreams are made on” (4.1.156) becomes bitterly ironic, for Miranda is nothing more and nothing less than the physical embodiment of her father’s fantasies, her father’s dreams, her father’s wishes. And we, as audience, become co-conspirators to Miranda’s enslavement because we choose to misapprehend her marriage to Ferdinand as cause for joyful celebration.

Miranda’s enslavement in Prospero’s kingdom is precisely the enslavement experienced by a daughter in an incestuous household like Hobbs Ark – and, to a lesser extent, by any girl in a patriarchal household. Prospero’s world and Titus’ world are the same world: The kingdom of the patriarchal family where the sexuality of girl children is controlled absolutely by the father; where initiation into sexuality is the right and prerogative of the father, unless he is stopped by a strong wife; where a girl is an object of sexual exchange, to be used to bring the father fame, fortune, or privilege; where girls are mesmerized into submission and held in thrall by their father’s absolute power over them. Barnes’ allusions to *The Tempest* (and to a score of other tragedies) serve to redefine the function of tragedy in a patriarchy, and she claims that form for women dramatists. She suggests that the tragic form forces us to elevate to the status of hero the most reprehensible males our society has produced. On one very important level, Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, like Barnes’ *The Antiphon*, enacts the takeover of every woman’s power by a

man; it teaches the culture's ideal of total male dominance over women. And whereas Barnes criticizes this idea, *The Tempest* supports the idea that usurping a woman's power is a man's right, an event to be celebrated within the cultural form of comedy rather than criticized and deplored through tragedy, which Barnes uses to treat the same issue. Indeed, Barnes suggests that if a play enacts the takeover or diminution of feminine power (as through marriage), the patriarchy will celebrate it through comedy; but if a play enacts the loss of male power, the patriarchy will mourn the loss through tragedy.

The title of *The Antiphon* is apt: when a girl cries out for a mother's aid, the only response she can expect, the only antiphon she will ever receive, is betrayal. And in the Black Mass that is the climax of *The Antiphon*, Barnes substitutes the murdered and molested body and rape-blood of Miranda for the body and blood of Christ.

*The Antiphon* is Barnes' antiphon to *The Tempest*, and to every other patriarchal text in which the drama of the submission of daughters to fathers is celebrated rather than condemned. Barnes' tale is Shakespeare's tale told from Miranda's point of view. It is a woman's text; it is Miranda's text. It is the antiphon.

## CONCLUSION:

As Western man struts and frets through the 21st century, and whatever destiny he faces, it is apparent to many that, writers of this century have had an extremely challenging task. Their position, whether they like it or not have been transitional. They have shown their awareness of the past when the change was slow and hopeful. They have looked back at the past with every kind of response: they have been nostalgic, hurt, lost, angry, alienated. The twentieth century artist has been entrapped in change. Moreover, he has seen the abandonment of the forms that art once used. The artist who has experimented during this century has made both slight and radical changes. The pressures of this era demanded such innovations. As his world was fragmented so has his art. And he has often found himself torn between odds and ends, pieces of the past, arranged together in a mosaic all glued together with the frustration of the new century. This study of Miss Barnes with special emphasis on her verse drama *The Antiphon* has tried to stress three considerations: her consistently naturalistic vision, her almost unpredictable explorations with form and with style.

In *The Antiphon* Miss Barnes's annoyance with the modern world achieved its profound expression. In defiance of modern values, she sought the most archaic language to be found and created with its poetry of such intensity as to guarantee the play's popular failure - only the most dedicated of her readers even attempt to understand her work - while she assured its success as a demonstration of her power over language. For her dramatic structure, she also looked backward and used Elizabethan diction to show the modern world that it has neither true values, nor permanence. Miranda, artist and actress, is too well aware of the condition of her world. And she can only counsel man to live up to the values he once set for himself. To respond to the vesper's bell's call. But all her intent is vain, for in the world of global war, the family of man is itself hopelessly divided, and the artist is to be perished.

Miss Barnes's themes have consistently taken the modern world to task, but her techniques reflect her natural study of the past. As the linear plot and realistic characters of the nineteenth century are displaced by the challenges of the frighteningly changing times and people, we can anticipate that more and more readers as well as writers will follow Miss Barnes's works for instruction.

ATTACHMENT: SYNOPSIS OF THE ANTIPHON

ACT 1

The play begins with the arrival of Miranda and 'Jack Blow' actually Jeremy, at Burley Hall. They find the building, devastated by recent bombing, to be empty, but they had expected others to be awaiting them. Jack makes an allusion to Miranda's acting talents by applauding her 'entrance'; and throughout the drama, he is playful and seemingly inconsequential, while Miranda's attitude is somber.<sup>††</sup> .....At his entrance he is holding his billycock straight up over his head, as though he expected applause from the gallery. His manner is racy.....'

If his Miranda named for Shakespeare's Miranda in the *Tempest*, she is much altered since she left the magic island of Prospero. From Miranda we learn that at Burley Hall her mother had imbibed her taste for the great names of royalty and legend, and also her yearning for fame she and hoped to achieve by mothering greatness. Instead she married Titus Highboy Hobbs of Salem, an American, and gave birth to her own discontentment. The sons she favored disappointed her and Augusta rejected her daughter and her accomplishments.

Titus had been, in his youth, a stylishly dressed ladies man, a believer in polygamy, and a lover of an entire horde of women. He had come to England with his mother, Victoria. Titus was something of a composer and a musician for the family that *The Antiphon* dramatizes is essentially the one whose history is humorously recorded in Ryder.

Miranda is clearly afraid of her brothers, whose arrival as she anticipates; and Jack Blow makes the thematic connection between Miranda's fears and the upsetting of all order which foresees at the start of World War 2. He prophesies, in fact, a future totalitarian world led by power mad men who are not unlike the brothers Dudley and Elisha who will end by destroying civilization because of their own gluttony. In a soliloquy, Jack compares himself with Esau; he observes that all men betray themselves; but he regards his outcast state as kingly.<sup>‡‡</sup> .....but then what motion but betrays oneself?

Esau's heel trips every man his running.

---

<sup>††</sup> Barnes, Djuna, *The Antiphon Act 1* Faber and Faber, London, 1956

Do I so entirely slip from custom?

That I sprawl in any place, a king?

Why then, so be it.

If crouching on a throne is called sitting

I'll sit this out. ....'

Ominous and threatening is the first appearance of Dudley and Elisha who conceal themselves to observe Jack and the aged caretaker, Jonathan Burley. Yet, when Jack and Jonathan depart, the brothers' entrance loses its sinister quality. Symbolic, even Absurdist, technique quickly replaces the almost Jacobean threat when Dudley\_ watch in hand and grasping his open umbrella- enters through the window. Elisha, younger and more stylish, characteristically eats almonds and tosses the shells about. With their idea manner and absurd appearance they are more like Vladimir and Estragon in Samuel Beckett's *waiting for Godot*. The two brothers suggest, visually, a time-ridden, wasteful self-indulgence. On the other hand, Dudley is cautious and conservative (his open umbrella suggests the unreality for him of all that Burley stands for); on the other hand, Elisa is a man of a fashion conscious and wasteful consumerism. The American way of life which is based on time, Money and power is portrayed in the two brothers.

Dudley and Elisha have never seen their mother's birthplace, nor do they understand the artifacts of their civilization. The two brothers almost symbolize The American culture and the mother Augusta stands for the traditional, conservative England to me. Their ignorance causes them to react violently against the objects lying around them. This could be interpreted as the interference of United States in the affairs of Europe and Middle East. The fact gradually reveals itself that the two have thought of this call to Burley as an opportunity for themselves. To put it more plainly they have come to Burley to their mother into grave. The opportunity is right, Dudley assures Elisha; and the upset of war will hide their deed. Besides, since Augusta is very old, her death would surprise no one.

§§ Dudley: 'We' all never have so good a chance again;

Never, never such a barren spot,

Nor never again such anonymity as war.

All old people die? F death, remember?

---

†† Barnes, Djuna ,The Antiphon Act 1 Faber and Faber ,London ,1956

§§ Barnes, Djuna ,The Antiphon Act 1 Faber and Faber ,London ,1956

§§

We're strangers here; they people that estrangement.  
Good, here's innocence, let's taste it.  
Landscapes alter everything. The sea  
Will wash us. Monday we were men, but Tuesday?  
Undaunted! Swing in my stability.  
The ground they stand on, let's uncover it,  
Let us pull their shadows out from under them!'

But why do these men seek their mother's death? Here are men of wealth and position. Simple greed cannot be the motive. Dudley has a thousand and more employees over whom he can lord it. Yet only by attacking the roots of his own existence can he hope to rise to a sense of autonomous selfhood. Only by destroying his own inheritance can man stand among the ruins he has made and announce himself to be his own creator.\*\*\* Dudley. 'So I'll tell you what I wish:  
I wish I'd built a Mouse trap, bigger than creation,  
And caught myself\_ as Master and the Man.'

His intentions are based upon immaturity, childishness, and hatred and envy of the truly adult. When his sister is unexpectedly present, Dudley extends his destructive intentions to include the equally hated Miranda; he proposes a double murder. The conspirators, Dudley and Elisha again conceal themselves when Jack returns with Burley. By now thoroughly curious, Jonathan demands that Jack identify himself. There follows a riddling speech –one comic and hidden behind Jeremy's denomination of himself as ' Tom-O'Boyle' and ' Lantern Jack' – as he keeps his Fool's disguise while telling how he and Miranda fled Paris.

†††Jack.' But to tell you, fret by fret, would wear you.  
Therefore call me Tomboy- Bedlam, Lantern jack;  
We are the look-outs of the fear blue city Paris-  
Orphans of the war.'

---

\*\*\* Barnes, Djuna ,The Antiphon Act 1 Faber and Faber ,London ,1956

††† Barnes, Djuna ,The Antiphon Act 1 Faber and Faber ,London ,1956

Acting as if Jonathan does not know his own niece, Jack explains that Miranda is an actress, a member of the Odeon Theaters, who has played the Comedies- Française. Now, he says they are taking a ship in the morning, evidently for America. Jack says he met Miranda in Paris, but he has apparently been 'shadowing' her for years, looking after her, and taking bit parts in some of her productions. He was, he mentions, a spear carrier in one of her plays.

Jonathan concludes that, since Jack looks after Miranda, he will therefore betray her. Jeremy's reply that she will 'undo' herself is prophetic. She has a royal bearing but is a 'bumpkin'; she is bold enough but essentially helpless. Jeremy's description of her sister forms a dramatic anticipation to the climax of the play when Miranda and Augusta, each imaged in the other, will undo themselves. Jeremy's 'Therefore let us begin it....' suggests not only the inevitability of Miranda's undoing but also that the first act has been the Prologue to the action of the play; for as the act ends, Miranda appears on the upper balcony, and Dudley and Elisha make their presence known. As the curtain closes, the tapping of a cane is heard as Augusta approaches Burley, and Miranda's protesting 'no, no, no, no!' forms the dramatic but mysterious climax to this act.

## Act 2

The first-act action of *The Antiphon* leads directly to that of act 2. Dudley is sitting at the head of table; his hat on, and his open umbrella is still upraised. Elisha, leaning against the dressmaker's dummy, continues to crack almonds and to scatter the shells. Both brothers are positioned to cast an ironic light upon their life roles and their family relations. Miranda remains on the balcony, Augusta old and gaunt, is dressed in severe black, even to her flat crowned hat. Having been called to their father's house by Jeremy, she wants to know where he is. She recognizes Dudley and Elisha, as well as her daughter, but without enthusiasm. She doesn't know Jeremy nor, until he identifies himself, her brother Jonathan. Augusta is a talkative, disappointed woman. Her arrival can be said to complete the family reunion, but ironically for, as soon as they gather, they begin to start their long held enmity. The aged Jonathan is proud of his niece Miranda as she has made a name for herself as an actress in France and as a writer in England. Dudley will hear no praise of his sister; to him she may have some slight credit in Berwick but she would be unknown in



New York. Augusta is critical of Miranda's dress, for she doesn't understand that Miranda fled to Paris still wearing the costume of her last performance. Miranda, garbed in velvet and wearing an elaborate feathered hat is dressed as though there were no God.

Augusta, who is so critical of her daughter not only admires Miranda's rings but also asks for them. Miranda gives her the rings and thus begins to transfer of costume which is completed in Act 3. As mother and daughter intermix possessions and identities, each is on the way to becoming the objectified Self of the other.<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

Augusta: 'Do not affront her; she's that part of me  
I can't afford.'

The brothers' comments about Miranda reflect more about themselves than their sister. Elisha scorns her as a 'Duchess' an evident aspersion of Miranda's dignified carriage. To Dudley, however, Miranda is 'Queen of the Night' a remark that implies an immoral life, or possibly that Miranda is being referred as an author who has written something like *Night wood* that expresses knowledge of intimacy with the night. Augusta's remarks have the same attitude. Miranda is too 'ambiguous'. However Augusta prefers sons, and her deprecatory attitude toward women is expressed when she asks 'What's a woman?' When Dudley replies her with the definition, 'avow sitting on a crumpled grin.' He indicates that Augusta cannot really turn to her sons for like Dudley, they ignore her throughout the play. The family hatred turns to its original source, Titus the father who estranged himself from society with his love of polygamy, free love, and 'free everything'. Titus at this point stands for Barnes's father who also believed in polygamy and shared the ideas of Titus over marriage. Titus who brought Augusta to America, went from New York to Penury Cove to Sputum Duyvil and finally to Hobbs Ark, his home. Like Wendell Ryder, he built his own home but did not farm the land. Dudley and Elisha reconstruct from memory of Titus's women a typical scene when Augusta would be scrubbing the floors while Titus's women sat drinking coffee and while Titus' mother Victoria knitted. Titus himself meanwhile would most likely be reading his Bible to find passages that would affirm his opinion of himself as a great father figure.

---

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> <sup>\*\*\*</sup> Barnes, Djuna, *The Antiphon Act 2* Faber and Faber, London, 1956

§§§ Dudley:’ Come down! The biddies drank their coffee black.

All in the selfsame sty, except of course Augusta

Down on her knees, with holy –stone and soap

Scrubbing ‘round grandmother, missionary,

Knitting ‘little things ‘for the Swahili.’

‘Father, marking in the book of Genesis:

‘Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served thee, and

Let me go.’

Hypocrite and Emperor. Sufficient

To a thousand geese, like Abraham.’

The catalogue of Titus’s women contains so many that even his family quarrels about their identities. Jonathan points out that Titus began his practice’ in Beewick with a woman who dressed entirely in red. But Dufley confuses this woman with ‘Louise’ and Elisha complicates the discussion by supposing that they are really speaking of a girl Titus found on a Lake Erie barge. This comedy of cross-purposes over nothing is increased by Augusta who corrects everybody.

Titus’s mother Victoria kept a salon and was a compelling woman. The mother influenced his son just like Barnes’s grandmother influenced her father. Both mothers clearly influenced their sons with their own liberated attitudes both wren in love with knowledge, but were faulty scholars. Married life for Augusta forty years later is viewed with bitterness for she thinks she married Titus because of her romantic storybook attitude as a young woman. She was apparently able to reconcile herself to Titus’s sexual principles by convincing herself that, since he would truly father greatness, she would achieve that nearness to rank and fame she longed for through her children. Her hope was in the sons she would have but they disappointed her by preferring money to greatness. And, because of her disposition to deprecate women, she can see no credit to herself in Miranda who is after all only another self to Augusta.

The instant Jack and Burley leave to carry in the doll’s house, the two brothers now alone with Augusta and Miranda, physically attack them. Dudley wears a pig’s mask, and Elisha

---

§§§ §§§ Barnes, Djuna ,The Antiphon Act 1 Faber and Faber ,London ,1956

an ass's. Elisha, striking Miranda 's cane, pins her arms behind her, manhandles her , kicks at her and subjects her to a vilification that reflects his and Dudley's lifelong resentment of their sister and all she represents. She is accused for her spinsterhood and for trying to live up to Titus's 'Grand Conception.' She is accused of drunkenness. And Elisha rudely proposes a rape and ends by tripping her. Miranda, who retaliates within the limits of her dignity, will not abandon herself on her ways to achieve the 'slum' of her brothers' good opinion. The pig's head unmask the avaricious Dudley and the ass's mask does the braying of the publicity agent Elisha. The brother's attempt on these women's lives is tempered by their own lack of strength and resolution. Dudley makes use of Jeremy's carriage whip to make Augusta dance; but as Augusta declares she is a cold 'mouse' at eighty and cannot. Augusta is so mistaken about her son's intentions that she believes they are playing with her.

This macabre scene of horror ends abruptly as it begins. The brother's unmask when Jeremy and Jonathan carry in the doll's house replica of 'Hob's Ark'. Augusta is lifted to the table where she sits before the house and draws forth a stick with dolls attached that represents Titus's mistresses. When she opens the roof, another doll pops out that represents Titus. In a scene reminiscent of Hamlet's conversation ' where be your gibes now?' is replaced by Augusta's curiosity about the diminution to the sliver of a mere stick of Titus's 'stallion yard' of which he was so proud \*\*\*\* ' Augusta:

'She pushes the lock on the roof of the doll's house, and up pops a doll

Why, it's your father, Titus, tamed! An imp,

A midge, a tick, a peg, a bob, a gnat,

A syllable all buttoned up in a cypress!

A chip, a doll, a toy, a pawn,

A little man soon cooled. A nothing!

Now he has struck a size that suits him!

Was this the stick that leapt me, gentlemen?

Where now the stallion yard laid beating on the turf

It's whistling vent? So proud of it he was

---

\*\*\*\* Barnes, Djuna ,The Antiphon Act 2 Faber and Faber ,London ,1956

He asked to be but lay beside it in the grave....’ Augusta answers her own question about how ‘Jack Blow’ could build the replica by assuming that he has been told everything by Miranda. Her answer is incorrect, for it is completely out of character for Miranda to reveal anything.

The tale of this family’s history now turns into an oedipal sublimation and of Electra complex. For as Augusta peers into the replica of her daughter’s bedroom, she recoils from the memory of the day that may have transformed Miranda’s entire personality. Miranda herself relates the scene when sixteen years old she was raped by an Englishman who was three times her age. †††† Miranda:

'Howling 'Glory, Glory! For the god  
In the cinders of that blasphemy.  
And beneath her, in a lower room,  
Her father rubbing down his hands. '

As part of the principles of his ‘credo’ Titus had urged his daughter to the deed. And Augusta, who knew what was happening, had done nothing to prevent it. Earlier Dudley had referred to Miranda’s childhood relationship to her mother as having been built upon guilt. There had been a many whippings, and Miranda has come to welcome them and to furnish her mother with tithe means to give her own masochistic punishment. Just as Miranda had submitted to her mother’s whippings as atonement for the puritanical and senseless guilt feelings instilled in her, she submitted like sacrifice to her father’s wishes. Act 2 ends as the family goes to diner, quite as though nothing had happened. Miranda alone with her uncle, requests that he not be present for what is to follow, for she sees tragic consequences to this reunion†††† Miranda:

‘A moment, Uncle.  
For the rest I do absolve you of the company.  
For your part in it, I thank you.  
You've seen us shaken by diminutive  
And brought down low, like Hector, by the heel;  
But then of course, Hector is always dead.  
Here is a rate too special for your years;

---

†††† Barnes, Djuna ,The Antiphon Act 2 Faber and Faber ,London ,1956

I ask you, am not present, be prevented....'

### ACT 3

After dinner Miranda is sleeping on the circus griffin, the two halves of which have now been brought together to form a bed and lace curtains shroud the bed tent-fashion. The 'boys' as Augusta calls them, are presumed to be asleep in the upper gallery. Actually they are very much awake, and they trigger by their departure the tragic events that end the play. When Augusta climbs upon the griffin, she evinces a playful mood which takes years away from her and causes her to behave like a girl again. She wants to play. The epilogue she says is over, suggesting that the two acts have constituted the 'real' play. For the 'boys' are in bed, just as in the early days of motherhood; and it is time for make-believe. But, if the play is over, then there is a double meaning of the word 'play' for Augusta wants to play now, in the sense of sport; and the real play, the drama of the 'antiphon' is about to begin.

Miranda is not in a mood for play. Her quarrel with her mother is futile and she cannot stop it. And when Augusta would pretend that the griffin upon which both are now mounted can carry them away to imagined places, Miranda resists. She blames her mother for having conceived her. She regards herself as a victim of her parents' passions. And because she was created, she must suffer the pain of death. Bitter that she was born at all, Miranda sees conception as death, and even worse as murder. Augusta's recourse to the childhood world of fantasy and make-believe seems to be the answer to the realities Miranda presses upon her. Augusta imagines herself to be an empress; a singer of fame a legendary 'sea-hag' and the sleeping beauty. Still disillusionment and disappointment inform much of her speech; she would like something to make her life meaningful. Her search for her own significance combined with her tendency to see herself in her daughter, provoke her to demand more closely of Miranda who or what she is. But Miranda's only remark is that she lives by a 'hard-won' silence. She has elected a monastic existence. She will have nothing to do with the world and its ways. A kind of hermaphroditic image, 'My daughter is winged serpent and the urn ..' suggests that to Augusta's sensibilities Miranda has in some way denied

---

\*\*\*\* Barnes, Djuna, *The Antiphon Act 2* Faber and Faber, London, 1956

nature or perhaps embraced it wholly by taking both male and female natures to herself. She presses upon Miranda the rumor of her forty lovers, which Miranda angrily refuses either to confirm or deny for Miranda will have no part in worldly gossip<sup>§§§§</sup> Miranda:

‘Bridge of asses! Would you cross on me?

So it’s I you stung for winter feast?’

Augusta tries to weep in order to touch her daughter but she admits that she has no tears because she has ‘grinned’ them all away in a vain effort to please her sons. Miranda herself speculates about the relationship between Oedipus and his mother and she wonders what she saw after he blinded himself.

In rapid succession August inquires of Miranda who ‘Sylvia was; whether a woman was indeed so loved that she could lie peacefully in death beneath a ton whether finally a legendary mermaid truly emerged from the sea to take a lover. These mysterious questions that seem out of context make some sense if Miranda is regarded as a persona for the author herself, for there is the little girl Sylvia of *Night wood* and there is the poem ‘Crystals’ that describes a king’s daughter who is lying ‘wax-heavy’ in her tomb.

Augusta reverts to the family’s violent and public end when Titus, yielding to the law’s demand that he lead monogamous life, abandoned his family for one of his mistresses in order to make his life ‘respectable’. Miranda is still puzzled by her father’s collapse after he had so long presented himself as a man of strength. For out of fear he denied the called response. Miranda’s puzzlement evokes the title of the play for the ‘called response’ the antiphon underscores the ought morality or the sense of responsibility to self that the play urges. Miranda is not calling into question the absolute rightness or wrongness of Titus’s views of life. Rather; she seems to insist upon a notion of justice to self and to others which fails when a person denies his convictions.

Augusta insists that every woman keeps a ‘battlement’ ‘in her heart to resist her husband.

\*\*\*\*\* Augusta: ‘ Daughter,

There's a battlement in every woman's heart

Whereon she keeps perpetual patrol

To scape the man she married, for that man

---

<sup>§§§§</sup> Barnes, Djuna, *The Antiphon Act 2* Faber and Faber, London, 1956

\*\*\*\*\* Barnes, Djuna, *The Antiphon Act 3* Faber and Faber, London, 1956

Heward scratching on the wall....’

Miranda was born into this ‘lost equation’ as id to mend the economy. The suggestion is that Miranda would have transferred herself into her mother has she been able, but this incestuous alternative was not possible for her. Again Barnes suggests sublimated incest between father and daughter. Mother and daughter are now in completely exchanged costumes. For Augusta now have hats, boots, cloak and rings of Miranda. Thus as the two women begin circling each other in mounting hostility, each becomes symbolically the other’s lost identity.

Augusta still demands of her daughter that she rectify Augusta’s life. ‘ ..Make me something!’ she demands. Miranda points out that both her mother in her generation and Miranda in hers are beset by discontentment and that both must accept their estrangement as a kind of bond. By now the mother and the daughter are at the foot of the stairs, Miranda is fending off her mother with her skirts outspread, and Augusta is following. Since Augusta is so identified with Miranda and is now wearing her clothes, Augusta confusedly becomes Miranda chasing Miranda. Each is pursuing and following, simultaneously the other. When Miranda points out that Augusta’s is a ‘key-gone’ generation, the musical figures of her speech refer to a generation which has lost the ‘key’ to meaning. And as a result, its random sounds have dissipated themselves into the air. Because mother and daughter have exchanged identities Miranda is also accusing her own generation. But she tries to be objective and philosophical. Augusta, who characteristically takes Miranda’s words personally, thinks her daughter means that because of her advanced age. Augusta will soon die. When Augusta retaliates that a grave awaits Miranda as surely for herself, the grave is hardly a threat to Miranda for death is the ‘rate’ by which she measures all she does.

During these exchanges the two women have been steadily ascending the staircase; and Miranda is in the higher position. As they approach the top landing, Miranda tries to stop Augusta, in order to prevent her mother’s reaching her brothers who, as she has explained before have murderous intentions. At this moment, the brother are heard fleeing and when the mother and daughter descend by the other staircase, Miranda is still in thru front and is seemingly in the way to prevent Augusta from reaching her sons. The entire figure of the rise and the descend suggests that Augusta has always blamed her daughter for coming

between her and her sons. Augusta cannot accept the reality that the brothers care nothing for her and in fact are morally corrupt. Miranda caught between her mother and brothers must necessarily see herself as the victim who catches blame for everything.

When Augusta commands Miranda to get out of her way, Miranda responds by asking her mother to abandon her sons just as they have abandoned her. When a sudden blast of the car horn signals the departure of the two brothers, the women have reached the foot of the stairs and Augusta transported by the loss of her sons begins ringing the heavy bell as she waves it threateningly at Miranda. She charges Miranda with her son's departure, with her own impending death, even with her old age, and with her sense that is lost. The climactic moment of the play occurs when Augusta brings the bell down upon Miranda's head, and as both fall across the griffin they pull down the curtains and heavy ornate crown upon themselves. The two women have died in a love-death embrace of misapprehensions. Nevertheless, their death may be the true antiphon of the play. Death as it is suggested, is Not the calamity; life is.

Jonathan appears on the balcony; and Jeremy, who reenters, blames himself for having vainly attempted to mend his family's troubles. But Jeremy knows that all has been lost from the beginning.

'This is the hour of the uncreated  
The season of the sorrow less lamenting.'

Jack appears indifferent as he leaves the stage and ends the play.



## REFERENCES :

- Albee, Edward, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Pocket Books, New York, 1969
- Altman, Meryl, *The Antiphon ' No audience at All'*, Silence and Power, S. Illinois University Press, 1991
- Anderson, Margaret (edt.), *The Little Review Anthology*, Anderson quotes from Richard Aldington's letter to the Little Review, New York, 1953
- Asimov, Isaac, *Asimov's Guide to Shakespeare*, New York, Avenel Books, 1978
- Barnes, Djuna, *The Antiphon* Faber and Faber, London, 1956
- Barnes, Djuna, *Nightwood*, New York: Faber& Faber, 1963
- Boal, A., *Ezilenlerin Tiyatrosu (Theatre of the Oppressed)*, İstanbul, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2003
- Broe, Mary Lynn, *Silence and Power*, edited by Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1991
- Candan, Ayşın, *20. Yüzyılda Öncü Tiyatro*, İstanbul, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2003
- DeSalvo, A. Louise, *To Make Her Mutton at Sixteen*, Silence and Power, S. Illinois University Press, 1991
- Douglas, Messerli, *Djuna Barnes*: reprinted from New York Native Issue 44 August 16-29 1982, A Bibliography, 1975
- Eliot, T.S., *The Wasteland*, The Oxford Anthology of English Literature Volume Two, Oxford University Press, New York, USA, 1973
- Evslin, Bernard, *Heroes, Gods and Monsters of the Greek Myths*, New York, Four Winds Press, 1968
- Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 14-05-2001 Nr. 111, S65
- Hartnoll, Phyllis, *The Theatre, a Concise History*, London, Thames&Hudson, 2003
- Herman, Judith Lewis, *Father- Daughter Incest*, Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press
- Herring, Phillip, *Djuna: The Life and Work of Djuna Barnes*, New York: Viking Press, 1995
- Innes, C., *Avant-Garde Tiyatro 1892-1992 (Avant-Garde Theatre 1892-1992)*, Ankara, Dost Kitabevi yayınları, 2004

- Kott, J., Çağdaşımız Shakespeare (Shakespeare, Our Contemporary), İstanbul, MitosBOYUT Yayınları,. 1999,
- Larabee,Ann, *The Early Attic Stage of Djuna Barnes*, Silence and Power, S. Illinois University Press, 1991
- Retallack, Joan, One Acts. *Early Plays of Djuna Barnes*, Silence and Power, S. Illinois University Press, 1991
- Scott, James B, *Djuna Barnes*, Boston, Twayne Publishers,1976
- Scott, James B, *Reminiscences*, Silence and Power, S. Illinois University Press, 1991
- Şener, S., *Dram Sanatı*, Ankara, Dost Kitabevi Yayınları, 2003,
- Shakespeare, W., , *The Tempest*, London, Penguin Books, 1986

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
ABSTRACT .....	vi
ÖZET.....	vii
1. PREFACE .....	1
2. EARLY LIFE.....	2
3. CHARACTERISTICS OF BARNES'S LITERARY WORKS.....	6
3.1 MEN & WOMEN .....	7
4. THE ANTIPHON, THE ULTIMATE SYNTHESIS OF POETRY AND DRAMA .....	8
5. THE ANTIPHON'S INDICTMENT .....	11
7. IMAGISM and THE ANTIPHON .....	12
8. POETIC LANGUAGE .....	14
9. THE POWER OF SILENCE IN THE <i>ANTIPHON</i> .....	21
10. RAPE, INCEST AND CHILD ABUSE IN <u>THE ANTIPHON</u> AND HOW IT IS COMPARED TO SHAKESPEARE'S <u>THE TEMPEST</u> .....	34
11. CONCLUSION .....	53
12. ATTACHMENT .....	55
13. REFERENCES .....	65