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Soaked in Alcohol: Beyond the Female Archetype as Reflected in Djuna Barnes, Dorothy Parker, and Zelda Fitzgerald

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by

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ABSTRACT

This study surveys the use and abuse of alcohol within the literature of Modernist female authors of the Jazz Age, 1920 – 1930. An examination of the works of Djuna Barnes, Dorothy Parker, and Zelda Fitzgerald is conducted to understand their treatment of alcohol consumption by women and how this treatment is more complex than their male counterparts. This dissertation focuses on each author's use of alcohol in developing their fictional female characters and how, when, and why they drink. These questions directly relate to the use and abuse of alcohol to assuage trauma, or as a reaction to trauma. How the state of melancholy informs the way these characters feel and their sense of loss, whether a loss of home, a loss of self, and or a loss of freedom, leads to their use and abuse of alcohol. This dissertation explores how these three authors use textual approaches to investigate and scrutinize why people, themselves included, turn to alcohol to cope with internal and external pressures.

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF PROJECT AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this dissertation is to extensively study the use and abuse of alcohol by women in literature of the post-World War I Jazz Age, 1920 – 1930, also known as the Roaring 20s. There were tremendous changes to the status of women during this time, and alcohol consumption was just a small part of it. Through close readings of three authors making their mark with novels set in this time, I will show how they changed the profile of the women who drink to excess.

This dissertation involves close readings of Modernist Writers Djuna Barnes, Dorothy Parker, and Zelda Fitzgerald. It is organized into four chapters flanked by an Introduction and Conclusion. The first chapter will explore and detail the relationship of alcohol to the female character in earlier literature. Only with an understanding of how alcohol was used in relation to earlier female characters can we appreciate the differences made by Barnes, Parker, and Fitzgerald. The following three chapters will focus on a chosen work from each author.

These close readings are through lenses of trauma and gender and how these two factors are presented about female and, in some cases, male characters and their use/abuse of alcohol. Many characters are determined to be alcoholics, as defined as someone who depends on consuming alcohol daily and needs increasing amounts to get that same “high” or “comfort” they initially feel. Other characters are what would be considered “social” drinkers who only drink in

the company of others. The substantial shift for Modernist writers to their predecessors is that their characters often drank in public.

Barnes, Fitzgerald, and Parker illustrate the difference between the female alcoholic and the alcoholic female. They use drinking alcohol as a conduit for talking about something else through narrative, metaphor, settings, character profiles, relationships and encounters with men and other women. A vital component of this study will be the comparative idea of the way these authors present a more complex female character juxtaposed against the stereotypical depictions of women in the role of Mother, Madonna, or Whore. This complication leads to female characters who drink for several reasons and in various situations beyond what was presented by other women authors from the past. Barnes, Parker, and Fitzgerald also use trauma specifically relating to alcohol to demonstrate how trauma informs and is informed by alcohol use and abuse. Fitzgerald and Parker reveal alcohol as a cultural product of the 1920s, whether as a rebellion against Prohibition, which became law in 1918, or as a product of the "New Woman" stepping out from the morés and values of the Victorian and into the more liberal Edwardian era. Close readings of these stories, chiefly regarding Barnes and Parker, expose how trauma informs women's drinking behavior, its evolution, and how it informs character development, or lack thereof, and behavior in general.

The works of scholars and critics including John Crowley and Laurie Vickroy have been used as starting points for this analysis. Crowley's argument of "White Logic," used in his discussion of Barnes's Nightwood, is extended to encompass Parker and Fitzgerald in this analysis. Vickroy's idea of internalized female trauma relates to the traumas the female characters face, which leads them to alcohol abuse. Biographers Phillip Herring, Marion Meade,

and Sally Cline provide biographical background connections to the authors' drinking habits and highlight how the history of each author plays a role in their writings.

CHAPTER 2: CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 1: Historical Literature Perspectives on Women Who Drink

This chapter offers a brief overview of how writers from the ancient Greeks to early twentieth century authors write female characters who drink. An understanding of what may have influenced the writers in this dissertation is important. Knowing what came before helps readers understand what these authors were fighting against. Male writers tended to write their female characters in a negative light regarding alcohol. Lady Macbeth, for instance, is seen as a villain of the play, rightfully so, because she wants to kill Duncan, the king of Scotland. That she uses alcohol as a way of giving her courage for the deed only serves as another thing against her, reinforcing the negativity of women drinking.

A travel through time shows that there was a change around the time of Shakespeare where alcohol and women were concerned. Women were no longer given the same freedoms as they had been in Ancient Greece or during Chaucer's time when drinking was a normal daily occurrence. Drinking plain water was not recommended because of the sanitary conditions of the time but regardless of the concerns for disease in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, women's drinking habits changed. During Jane Austen's time, women were limited to drinking watered down wine or short beers which was the second fermentation of beer making it weaker than the first fermentation. One consistency from the Ancient Greeks to the time of the women of this dissertation is that women who drank in public were seen as having loose morals. Women in Ancient Greece who drank in public were limited to prostitutes, whether working in a brothel or

considered high-class and entertaining men at drinking parties. This idea of women being of loose morality continued being represented within literature and still prevails today.

Chapter 2: Drowning in Drink: Alcohol Dependence in Djuna Barnes's Nightwood

Analysis of this veiled *roman-à-clef* published in 1936 connects Barnes's background to her work before moving beyond the biographical to explore how this work relates to issues plaguing society in the 1920s. Through four major characters: Nora Flood, Robin Vote, Baron Felix Volkbein, and Dr. Matthew O'Connor, Barnes explores a world of outcasts in 1920s Paris. Through these four characters, *Nightwood* explores Melancholia, now known as Depression, as well as the trauma that brings it on and the resultant use of alcohol. Each character turns to alcohol as a coping and soothing mechanism.

The melancholy experienced by each character due to their traumas, big and small, speaks to what Gertrude Stein dubbed "The Lost Generation," as those coming-of-age post World War I and through the Roaring 20s. It takes it a step further and examines the doubly lost generation of people who were considered "inverts," specifically those people of the night, which included, but was not limited to, entertainers, drug abusers, and prostitutes, and what we would call the LGBTQAI+ community today.

The protagonist, Nora, experiences her own failed relationship with Robin and tortures herself by watching Robin as she wanders the countryside. Robin is incapable of maintaining a successful relationship with her husband and child or anyone else.

Felix, Robin's husband, laments his failed marriage and that his son is troubled and will not be able to carry on the family name and title. Matthew must live as a man in public when his deepest wish is to live as a woman and all that entails. Readers are left to wonder about the

characters and the nature of their lives after the story's end; however, there is no doubt that each character is informed by and forever changed because of their traumas and alcohol abuse.

Chapter 3: Never Noticeably Drunk, and Seldom Nearly Sober: Alcohol as Narrative Conduit in Dorothy Parker's "Big Blonde"

An analysis is through close readings, of this O'Henry Prize-winning short story published in 1929. Another veiled *roman-à-clef,* the story follows the life of Hazel Morse as she goes from being a "good sport" and party girl to a married woman wanting the traditional life of marriage, a happy home life, and children. In typical Parker style she gives with one hand and takes with the other with a savage sort of glee. Hazel marries, but she fails to achieve the home life she wants. Instead, she falls further into alcohol use which quickly turns into abuse as she endures failed relationships repeatedly.

In "Big Blonde" Parker analyzes the traditional desires of wedded bliss which fights against a woman's desire for autonomy and agency to live their lives on their terms, not being beholden to a man to guide them to the life they should be leading. Parker also shows the precariousness of life, ultimately denying her character what she wants most. This denial helps illustrate the capricious nature of alcohol and how it gives and takes at the same time. The story mirrors Parker's life by exploring what comes after a failed marriage. Parker had three failed marriages with two different men. Parker struggled with how to guide her own life with having that traditional home life and used Hazel's story to explore why that was the case.

Perhaps the most interesting fact is that Parker shows Hazel in such a negative light. She shows Hazel as someone to be pitied, but not as someone to condemn for being human. Parker manages to strip away the artifice of what defines a lady in the 1920s and explores what it means to be simply a human, flaws and all.

Chapter 4: Alcohol as Independence and Crutch: The Flapper and Zelda Fitzgerald's *Save Me the Waltz*

Published in 1932, this novel is perhaps the most thinly veiled *roman-à-clef* of the three works discussed. Through close readings, I show how Fitzgerald first uses alcohol as a way for her protagonist, Alabama Beggs Knight, to rebel against her indulgent yet stifling parents. Later it becomes a crutch for Alabama's husband, David Knight, as he comes to deal with what he sees as his wife's defection from their marriage as she immerses herself further and further into ballet.

Alabama, much like her creator Zelda Fitzgerald, first uses alcohol to rebel and gain independence from strict parents who hold traditional Victorian values. Once she's free of her parents, Alabama, again similar to Zelda, uses abstinence from alcohol as a way to gain some independence from a controlling husband. Alabama commits to ballet classes, pushing herself to dance professionally, which only ends as the result of injury. *Save Me the Waltz* shows how women desire freedom and choice and the cost to achieve them. Alabama alienates her husband and child while physically harming herself. Ultimately, Alabama falls back into the cycle of drinking with David and friends to cope with the loss of her independence.

Zelda Fitzgerald wrote this novel in six weeks while institutionalized for schizophrenia, what we would call Bipolar today. Her relationship with her husband, Scott, is widely known. Scott's jealousy of his wife's writing is exposed in the novel. The reader sees this when Alabama returns to her "rightful" place by David's side, at least according to David. Zelda did not have that option as her institutionalizations began while still in France. She spent the last part of her life separated from her philandering husband and in and out of institutions. Zelda died in a locked ward during a fire. Even through these stints in mental facilities, Zelda stayed active and produced art in various forms.

CHAPTER 3: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation focuses on Modernist female writers and their use of alcohol and its abuse regarding female characters. The concentration will be on American women authors writing about and during the Jazz Age, 1920 to 1930. These writers took a significantly different approach to their characters' relationship with alcohol compared to earlier female characters.

Three renowned authors will be surveyed: Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, Zelda Fitzgerald's *Save Me the Waltz*, and Dorothy Parker's short story, "Big Blonde." Each author's works represent her time's varying social/economic groups. Barnes focuses on the expatriate enclave in Paris during the early 1900s. Fitzgerald focuses on characters living abroad and various social/economic characters living throughout the American Northeast and South. Parker's focus is primarily middle and upper-class women living in New York, though a few of her stories are set, at least partially, elsewhere in the United States. Parker depicts drinking as still prevalent in the United States in the 1920s despite Prohibition and how both men and women were actively rebelling against the illegalization of alcohol. Barnes, alternatively, shows alcohol use/abuse on the margins of society and the difference with being outside the United States. Zelda showed how alcohol was used to rebel and gain independence from controlling parental figures.

These three works will also be explored through the lenses of gender and trauma concerning their characters, male and female, and how or why they use and often abuse alcohol. Alcoholism did not gain its notoriety as an illness until the 1930s with the formation of what we know as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Alcoholism before the founding of AA was undefined.

Understanding the societal norms and morés from 1920 to 1933 will cast a light on the acceptance of drinking during this period. Linking the author's use of trauma to the use and abuse of alcohol will be shown in the formation of these authors' female characters.

This analysis will explore society's implications on what the authors were writing about and how their writings informed society. Writers of the 1920s, most likely, would not acknowledge their topic explorations as related to Trauma. Now, after a century's past, it is possible to see how Trauma informed the development of characters and narratives. Writers generally write what they know. For Modernist authors, their world did not make much sense. Cars were becoming more popular, cities were expanding, and factories and businesses were growing. Life was gaining speed, even before factoring in the devastating effects of World War I, which killed millions and left a generation of men and women scarred.

It is crucial to read these particular authors because, among other female writers of the time, they have often been overlooked by the larger literary community. Zelda Fitzgerald is discussed almost exclusively in relation to her husband, F. Scott Fitzgerald. Even within the Fitzgerald Society, Scott receives the lion's share of scholarship. Parker, too, has been mostly ignored, except for her poetry and fame for her acerbic wit. Parker does have a dedicated society. However, it focuses on the social aspects of Parker's life; the parties, the drinking, and the carousing, rather than critically examining her work. Barnes, too, does not receive much discussion in larger literary circles, and scholars still require help to develop a society devoted to her and her literary works. A national or international society devoted to an author is unnecessary to denote success. Although, the existence of a society often means wider exposure and more overall analysis.

On a personal note, which is essential to the why of this dissertation, the subject of alcohol—the various types available, drink mixing, and why people choose to drink has always been an area of fascination. Exploring the reason women, in particular, drink has been the focus of my literature studies for many years. This fascination started early and is longstanding. In fourth grade, I wrote an essay on the dangers of alcohol. Coming from a long line of highly functioning alcoholics has been the driving point of wanting to know why people drink. Within literature, especially American literature, exists countless characters who drink. Delving into their reasons has helped me better understand why my ancestors drank without invading their privacy.

American women writers, especially Barnes, Parker, and Fitzgerald, have had a varied history with alcohol and its use and often describe such abuse within their writing. Women writers show the complexity of why women drink in a way that most male writers do not. This dissertation acknowledges the biographical, but it moves beyond the individual authors' histories and explores how their writings had more significant implications for the society of their time, informing today's readers of the concerns of the early twentieth century.

In Opposition to the Female Drinker

One cause of alcohol use and abuse is the occurrence of traumatic events or circumstances. In scholar and critic John Crowley's definitive work, *The White Logic: Alcoholism and Gender in American Modernist Fiction*, he explains white logic as a general feeling of sadness or despair because of a fundamentally flawed world and little to no hope of it improving.

Throughout *John Barleycorn*, Jack London refers to the "white logic" behind his drinking, an abysmal compulsion that surrounds his brain with a white fog while the alcohol does

the job of blacking out. Also accepted within this idea is that drinking is a purely male, exceptionally privileged white male domain. Crowley explores this idea using specific works by major authors, including Barnes. For Barnes, Crowley explains how she immediately upholds the concept of alcohol and being an alcoholic as a male domain, while also subverting it through her drinking characters. He notes that it is acceptable to be a male alcoholic. However, the idea of being a female alcoholic is improbable:

> Within the ideology of modernism, that is, there might be such a thing as an "alcoholic female," but a "female alcoholic" was something of a contradiction in terms because the "alcoholic" was implicitly or explicitly gendered male. A woman might drink out of sheer wantonness, but no woman was privy to the manly secrets of the White Logic — except, perhaps, one so "manly" she was not "really a woman." If the alcoholic female was oversexed (a slut), then the female alcoholic was unsexed (a dyke). (117-118)

Barnes and other female writers give women the authority and agency to own their alcoholism, though perhaps the characters would not label themselves as such since they do not recognize their drinking as a problem. Barnes puts the 'female alcoholic' into the world with the idea that women are equal to men. This idea was still new and problematic during the 1920s-1930s, during Barnes's primary time of writing Today's readers and women owe a debt of gratitude to Barnes for allowing women to bear the label of *an alcoholic* with all its flaws and its equality. Modernist women knew that you could not have equality with only the good parts. Crowley explains, "Barnes was one of the first female American writers to develop a drinking problem, and *Nightwood* plays off the conventions of male-authored drunk narratives to subvert the gendering of 'alcoholism' itself' (116). It is this gendering, or de-gendering in *Nightwood*, that Barnes explores the use and abuse of alcohol within her characters.

Barnes was not the only writer who gave her female characters agency to own their alcoholism. The idea of the white logic presented by Crowley is also used to explore "Big Blonde" and *Save Me the Waltz*. Parker was a known alcoholic and prolific writer of characters who drink. Fitzgerald was also known once as a heavy drinker. Along with Barnes, they highlight how London's idea that the white logic was a domain of men is short-sighted—going beyond the biographies of each author to show how their characters and stories are relevant not only to the individual, which is the Modernist Way but to society of the early 1900s. Modern readers can use this information to gain a deeper understanding of the struggles of early twentieth century writers and of how these issues are still relevant today. Even today, alcoholism is still a rampant problem, and women are disparaged for it.

The Trauma of It All

Crowley's "white logic" ideology effortlessly coincides with the central tenets of Trauma. The definition of Trauma, as stated in the simplest terms by the American Psychological Association (APA), is:

> Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer-term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships, and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. (https://www.apa.org/topics/trauma)

Further, there are three main types of traumas: Acute, Chronic, or Complex.
Acute trauma occurs because of a single incident. Chronic trauma is repeated and prolonged, such as domestic violence or abuse. Complex trauma is exposure to varied and multiple traumatic events, often of an invasive, interpersonal nature. (https://www.apa.org/topics/trauma)

For further literary analysis, Laurie Vickroy's book *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction,* which connects trauma to gender, will be employed. Vickroy explains how "historical trauma is personalized by exploring its effects in bodily violations and wounds, in sexuality, or in the struggle to achieve emotional intimacy" (168). It is possible to take these ideas to analyze contemporary stories and apply them to the analysis of stories by writers like Zelda Barnes, Parker, Fitzgerald, and many other Modernist writers. Barnes often used her trauma growing up and the adult trauma she experienced as a grist for *Nightwood,* which will be explored in this dissertation. Likewise, Parker and Zelda Fitzgerald used their personal traumas to fuel their work.

Melancholy is often associated with Trauma, although not completely. It is more a response to trauma. Melancholy, in today's terms, would be labeled Major Depressive Disorder. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), "Depression, also known as Major Depression, Major Depressive Disorder, or Clinical Depression, is a common but serious mood disorder. It causes severe symptoms that affect how a person feels, thinks, and handles daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, or working" (nimh.nih.gov). Depression is not simply "gotten over" or "snapped out of." Melancholia is an older term for Depression. Its primary symptom, along with the depressive symptoms listed above, is an inability to move past the triggering factor that led to the issue in the first place. For instance, Hazel Morse in "Big Blonde" by Dorothy Parker cannot move past the defection of her husband, Herbie, and falls deeper into a melancholic or depressive state, which ultimately leads to her attempt at taking her own life. The characters in the stories discussed in this dissertation all suffer from a form of Depression that leads them to use and abuse alcohol as a way of dealing, or not, with their traumas.

Alcohol Is

Americans have a complicated history with alcohol. This history stems from abuse, a period of complete abstinence, back to rampant use/abuse. Today, the term "alcoholic" has negative connotations representing what Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) explains as:

> While there is no formal "AA definition" of alcoholism, the majority of our members agree that, for most of us, it could be described as physical compulsion coupled with a mental obsession.
>
> What we mean is that we had a distinct physical desire to consume alcohol beyond our capacity to control it, in defiance of all rules of common sense. We not only had an abnormal craving for alcohol, but we frequently yielded to it at the worst possible times. We did not know when (or how) to stop drinking. Often we did not seem to have sense enough to know when not to begin." (Alcoholics-anonymous.eu)

This definition resembles Baldwin Research Institute's (BRI), which explains, "As early as 1790, the accepted definition of the word 'Alcoholic' was 'of or pertaining to alcohol.' It was not until the late 1800s that the word alcoholic was connected to drunkenness, and by 1910, it came to mean habitually drunk." (BRI "Definition of Alcoholism and Alcoholic" para 5). Prior to establishing AA, the term "alcoholic" was not as negative as it is today, making it problematic to study early drinkers; case in point, those who drank during Prohibition.

Alcoholism did not gain its notoriety as an illness until the 1935 establishment of Alcoholics Anonymous. Obtaining alcohol-related statistics for the period before and during Prohibition is problematic because of the limited information available. However, in a 1991 article, Jeffrey Miron and Jeffrey Zwiebel of the National Bureau of Economic Research used

data relating to alcohol use and abuse to help understand what was happening. They state, "In particular, we use mortality, mental health, and crime statistics to estimate the consumption of alcohol during Prohibition" (1). They explain:

> We find that alcohol consumption fell sharply at the beginning of Prohibition to approximately 30 percent of its pre-prohibition level. During the next several years, though, alcohol consumption increased sharply to about 60-70 percent of its pre-Prohibition level. The level of consumption remained virtually the same immediately after Prohibition as during the latter part of Prohibition, although consumption increased approximately to its pre-Prohibition level during the subsequent decade. (Mirin, Zwiebel 1-2)

The rebellious nature of the youth culture of the time, primarily those coming out of World War I and labeled "The Lost Generation" by Gertrude Stein, can be blamed for the increase in alcohol consumption during Prohibition. The repeal of the Volstead Act in December 1933, at the height of the Great Depression, added to this. A further potential contributor to the rise of consumption was the increase of women more freely imbibing alcohol post World War I. Women were socializing more publicly and in more significant, numbers which allowed for a more accurate assessment of mortality, mental health, and crime statistics used by Miron and Zwiebel.

Rampant alcohol consumption seems to be a given in the literature of the Roaring '20s, the primary years of Prohibition, yet few saw this as a problem. Books have been written on alcohol consumption by Modernist writers such as Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Jack London, and Donald Newlove, to name a few. Newlove wrote one of the first memoirs on his drinking alone and with other writers of the time. Although there were proponents who supported Prohibition, the numbers Miron and Zwiebel relate show that most Americans

continued drinking. Only through Alcoholics Anonymous, created in 1935, did most of society understand that problematic alcohol consumption was a disease that could be managed.

Current statistics on alcohol use/abuse show that the "problem" with alcohol that proponents of Prohibition saw is not getting any better. According to statistics from the National Center for Drug Abuse:

> Most American adults consume alcohol at least once in their lifetime. Among them, 6.7% will develop Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD). 10.2% of Americans aged 12 years and older had Alcohol Use Disorder in 2020. 24% of people aged 18 years and older reported binge drinking in the last 30 days; this is a 7.0% decline between 2019 and 2020. (https://drugabusestatistics.org/alcohol-abuse-statistics/)

Although numbers decreased between 2019 and 2020, the percentages indicate that there is still a problem with drinking in America.

Can Women Be Alcoholics?

Modernist Female Writers complicate the Madonna, Mother, Whore motif that male writers freely use when writing about women who drink. This limited male worldview denies the female characters' agency to own their alcoholism. Female Writers allow for this agency and ownership. Close readings of the work of Djuna Barnes, Zelda Fitzgerald, and Dorothy Parker will show how this agency helps readers understand the characters in the work and appreciate the larger society of these writers.

Writers have been penning stories about alcohol use since the first grapes were fermented into wine and then of its effect on men. However, writing about American women's imbibing has been largely overlooked. The American literary male character who drinks has mostly been

written as a cautionary tale or to celebrate personal independence. At the same time, female literary characters have served only as cautionary tales, whether as victims of men's abuse of alcohol or as wanton harlots who drink the Devil's juice and lead men astray. Journalist Brigid McConville, in her book *Women Under the Influence Alcohol and its Impact*, explains that "These alcoholic stereotypes are either *sexy*, willing and shameless – *or* ugly, dirty, animalistic and devoid of sexuality" (47). Scholarship has significantly ignored the idea of female drinkers in literature because they were not as prevalent or because it was taboo to acknowledge women who drank. Women, in general, who drank did it in the privacy of their homes and often drank weaker alcohol such as canary or watered-down wine. Until approximately the 1980s, women who drank were overlooked because of their gender, both by their contemporaries and scholars.

The idea of a female alcoholic was not something even considered by most scholars. Crowley explains, "Barnes was one of the first female American writers to develop a drinking problem, and *Nightwood* plays off the conventions of male-authored drunk narratives in order to subvert the gendering of 'alcoholism itself'" (116).

Crowley's supposition may not be accurate, as the male viewpoint could color it. Dorothy Parker, Zelda Fitzgerald, and Janet Flanner, among others, were known for their hard drinking. Perhaps Crowley is comfortable making this statement about Barnes because Djuna Barnes was simply more willing to acknowledge her problem with alcohol openly. McConville suggests, "Male writers—as characters and authors—often do have reputations as drinkers which enhance rather than detract from their images" (48). This detraction extends to writers' other female characters as well; however, the female drinker is especially condemned for their wanton behavior.

According to Crowley's "white logic" which posits that certain individuals use alcohol to ease a general feeling of sadness or despair because they believe the world is, at its core, flawed with little hope for improvement. He further states that these individuals may turn to alcohol as a temporary means of forgetting about the state of the world. However, using alcohol as a soothing balm is a false solution that does not address the underlying problems and only provides temporary relief.

With Crowley's definition in mind, an author can have either an alcoholic female or a female alcoholic. The difference is subtle but telling in the adjective versus noun positioning of the descriptive 'alcoholic.' The distinction is critical to the role alcohol plays in the development of the female character wrestling with alcohol. Using 'alcohol' in the noun position, female alcoholic, allows women the agency to own their alcoholism, usually considered the dominion of men. This position gives women a modicum of autonomy despite continued societal restrictions such as control over their bodies, reproductive rights, and controlling their own money by having personal bank accounts. Many Modernist American female authors had complicated relationships with alcohol use and often explored this within their writings. The idea of the alcoholic narrative, explored by Crowley, was the purview of men. Still, women were just as likely to write an alcoholic narrative as a way of studying and trying to understand society's fascination with alcohol. History Professor Daniel Joseph Singal, in his article "Towards a Definition of American Modernism," explains that Modernism "represents an attempt to restore a sense of order to human experience under the often-chaotic conditions of twentieth-century existence" (8). Modernist artists of many varieties, such as painters, musicians, and writers, used their art to explore their unease with their chaotic and changing world. This is especially true for the three writers who are the focus of this dissertation and their male counterparts, including F.

Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Jack London, Eugene O'Neil, and Ezra Pound—to name a few.

Fitzgerald and Hemingway each experienced trauma during World War I and in the years following. F. Scott Fitzgerald struggled with the idea of the American Dream, working through the promises to the youth of America for a better life and what happens when that dream never appears. Hemingway, similarly, wrote about the aftereffects of World War I and the ways many men returning from the war had to deal with various injuries and disorders. His character, Jake Barnes, the protagonist in *The Sun Also Rises,* must deal with becoming impotent because of a war wound.

Modernist American women writers have been overlooked in scholarship, or the focus has been solely on the biographical. The autobiographical nature of stories is important and vastly interesting to read; however, it limits the understanding of these authors and the larger society their writing explores. While modernism focuses on the individual over society at large, it is possible to take the written work based on the individual and extrapolate broader concerns for society at large.

Drink Drink Drink – An Historically Wrapped Literary Retrospective

Understanding the past helps prepare for the present and look toward the future and the legacy left to future generations. For writers, it's critical to grasp this information. Literature can help readers understand the society of a specific period and why certain boundaries need to be pushed. Barnes, Parker, and Fitzgerald each contribute knowledge that readers today, a hundred years later, might not otherwise have. During this period, many Americans became expatriates in Europe and settled, mostly, in Paris driven by political and social forces. These works can help readers today understand what drove these Americans to leave and, perhaps, why some do so

today. Many issues concerned women in the early 1900s. How they handled those concerns can help today's readers know that the fight does and must continue—the autonomy to pursue one's dreams and aspirations, even within the confines of marriage, is important, as is a woman's right to make choices for her body, access to employment, and a voice in government. These are the same concerns women faced a century ago and continue to face today.

Merely knowing the past is insufficient. Pushing the boundaries regarding what is acceptable for people, particularly women, is crucial. Although not the only marginalized group in today's society, women have endured years of inequality, primarily from men. Books can spark ideas for how people should act, live, and interact with others. Sometimes one example can prompt others to act as well. While these actions are not always positive, the opportunity to improve society should always be addressed. For this study, women should be allowed to drink like men, without negative perceptions.

With today's issues regarding alcohol abuse, it is interesting that its use was even more significant in the past and not seen as problematic as it is today. This study focuses on how female writers convey these changes through male characters, but more importantly, through their female characters. There has always been a focus, primarily by women, on trying to "temper" the usage and abuse of alcohol. The Temperance Movement, steered by various leaders, including Carrie Nation led the charge to convince the country to turn away from the Devil's drink and seek the path of righteousness and salvation instead. Temperance, as well as abolition movements, were tied to religious beliefs.

From America's inception, women were known to be more temperate regarding alcohol. Many outspoken women advocated abstinence not only for women but for men as well. In the nineteenth century,

> "campaigns for personal abstinence and restricted alcohol sales, dry activists confronted the restrictions placed upon women in politics, in public activities, and in the law. Women saw salvation from poverty, domestic violence, and abandonment in temperance." (Murdock 9).

With the initial success of the Temperance Movement women found a level of power they had not had before. Further driven by World War I, women in the 1910s and 1920s gained newfound freedoms, leading to changes in their goals. After successfully assuming male-oriented jobs because of the war, they resisted returning solely to domestic roles at the war's end and demanded more societal freedoms.

This change will help readers understand the world women lived in and what perhaps motivated their writing. It is interesting to see the variation among the writers. Each woman wrote about a different part of the world and a different sect of society. Barnes mainly wrote about people on the margins, mostly Americans. Fitzgerald wrote about the middle- and upper-middle-class American expatriates living in Paris. Parker wrote about what she knew best, the middle- and upper crust, the crème de la crème of New York society. Murdock further explains:

> Today it is a truism that Prohibition was a mistake. According to popular opinion, the attempt by small-minded moralists to eliminate a drug so easily manufactured, so readily transported, and so essential to the national psyche was doomed from the beginning. Yet alcohol abuse in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries existed on a scale Americans today have trouble conceptualizing. (3-4)

Murdock analyzes how women drank during this time as well. She examined how women's drinking shifted from something done in the home, during social gatherings, to more public

drinking by women by the 1920s. This behavior was rebellious and a way of establishing increased rights for women as the New Woman emerged.

During this time, women's fashions underwent extreme changes; they won the right to vote, and they learned about family limitations. Even with this shift, Murdock explains, "the nation's abusive drinking patterns were strictly gendered. At the very most, twenty percent of the alcoholic population was female" (4). At what percentage does women's drinking to excess have to be so it cannot be considered a gendered problem? Why are female alcoholics, with alcoholics being in the noun position, so readily dismissed? Is it because they had not been in the public eye until the rise of the New Woman? Do they hide it better? Are they better able to moderate their consumption? Murdock's study brought forth several questions and so few answers. One has to wonder why these questions are not being explored more in academic circles. How do these findings relate to writers creating characters who drink, which mainly encompasses female writers and female characters.

A deeper look at literary female characters who drink during the Modernist period shows an increase in women's drinking. Some would argue that the shift from drinking as a male-dominated, male-only sphere to including women shows the shift of the public from being a male-dominated area, especially when it concerns being social. "The connection between two concurrent social trends—women's public drinking and Prohibition—appears more than coincidental. […] Women's public drinking represents the dissolution of the male sphere. Alcohol use, like the right to vote, was no longer a uniquely masculine attribute" (Murdock 85). This dissolution to which Murdock refers is seen in Barnes's novels *Nightwood,* and *Lady's Almanac,* and Parker's short stories including, "Big Blonde" and "Just a Little One," among others. Male Modernist writers typically write female characters concerning alcohol as one of

three types: the Whore, the Madonna, and/or the Mother. Conversely, women complicate these types of characters, exploring the gray areas between the margins. According to historian Edward Behr,

> Prohibition remains widely disregarded by historians of gender politics. Elimination of the liquor interests from American life has not merited the same consideration as other reforms such as equal rights, restrictions on child labor, and world peace that align more readily with late 20th-century sympathies. This attitude contrasts sharply with writers from the period, who considered Prohibition the single most important issue affecting women and women's political participation. (115)

Is the relationship of alcohol to women and their rights, disregarded because repealing the Eighteenth Amendment[1] seemed to resolve the problem? The subject is closed—there is no more prohibition, so it is no longer believed to be relatable to current interests. How does today's push to legalize recreational drugs such as marijuana align with current legal interests? Or even decriminalizing drug arrests to help with the overcrowded prison population? Can these reforms be seen as coming from the push to end Prohibition? Indeed, there is something to be learned from that.

Along with the Temperance Movement, the Women's Movement helped further the Prohibition Movement. In *The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920s*, J. Stanley Lemons focuses on feminism in the 1920s and the organizations women created and managed to initiate

[1] The Eighteenth Amendment, by its terms, prohibited "the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors" but not the consumption, private possession, or production for one's own consumption. In contrast to earlier amendments to the Constitution, the Amendment set a one-year time delay before it would be operative. Its ratification was certified on January 16, 1919, and the Amendment took effect on January 16, 1920, starting the era known as Prohibition. (https://constitutioncenter.org)

social reform. Perhaps most interesting is the differentiation made between social feminists and hard-core feminists.

> Especially disruptive and distracting was the persistent struggle between social and hard-core feminists. Hard-core feminists had carried the fight for woman suffrage to a dead end until the growing numbers of social feminists had taken up the issue. Social feminists wanted the vote as a matter of justice, surely; but they wanted it most of all for the good they could do with it. (181)

What is compelling about the divide in feminism between the hard-core feminists and the social feminists is that they were dividing their power base. It is easy to say this from the comfort of the twenty-first century, but one has to wonder if they could have gotten more done with less struggle if they could have found common ground. How did women writers, in particular, manage these struggles? Do the issues that women of this time were concerned with appear in the writing? How did it manifest? Did it help create change? How does alcohol fit into this narrative? Do the struggles women were facing lead them to drink? The other significant issue of Lemons' focus is the shift of feminism after World War I. He explains:

> Pre-war prejudice held that women could not do some kinds of work, but the war proved otherwise. They were originally employed as a "war emergency": they would at least keep the machinery running until the men returned. Then they were admitted to skilled and technical crafts from which women had been previously barred. The war was a splendid test: if the women failed, men would be justified in confining them to specific industries. However, they did not fail; they did as well as or even better than men. At least 77 percent of the firms reported satisfaction with the results of experimenting with female labor. (21)

Once women entered the workforce, however, they refused to give up this freedom. Many feminists, hard-core and social, began fighting for women's rights. The two branches of feminism took different approaches to work for women and differed on what they felt was the most important item on which to focus. Hard-core feminists focused on political change—getting the vote for women—while social feminists focused more on how to make these changes work for women in a broader context. This paper focuses on how female writers may have illustrated these struggles and changes through a lens of alcohol use and how it relates to life trauma.

The Patriarchy – The Imprisonment of Female Autonomy

Barnes, Parker, and Zelda Fitzgerald were trailblazers for their time. They were part of the movements to gain autonomy for women and were not afraid to speak out for their beliefs. This bold fearlessness, known as "moxie," in Jazz Age parlance, did not come easily. There was plenty of backlash to this unfamiliar female behavior. After World War I, men came home and expected to return to their jobs, which women had taken over in their absence. Women, however, were reluctant to relinquish their newfound freedoms and continued to step out into the public sphere in more significant numbers. Women also demanded more equality and managed to get the Nineteenth Amendment[2] passed in 1919, one year after the Volstead Act[3] passed. Along with the new right to vote and more access to birth control, women now had some agency to speak for themselves.

[2] The Nineteenth Amendment, states: The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation. (https://constitution.congress.gov)

[3] The Volstead Act also known as the National Prohibition Act defined the prohibitory terms of the Eighteenth Amendment. Congress passed it on October 28, 1919. The Volstead Act charged the U.S. Treasury Department with enforcement of the new restrictions and defined which "intoxicating liquors" were forbidden and which were excluded from Prohibition (for example, alcoholic beverages used for medical and religious purposes). The Volstead Act set the starting date for nationwide prohibition for January 17, 1920, which was the earliest day allowed by the Eighteenth Amendment. (https://constitutioncenter.org)

Considerable pushback came from men. Women, finally, won the right to keep their wages and property in 1900. However, it was not until 1974 with the passage of The Equal Credit Opportunity Act[4] that women would gain the right to open and own a bank account. Before 1974, women had to keep their wages in cash, which made them vulnerable to theft. More often than not, women still turned their wages over to their husbands to put into his account.

Women writers received even more pushback when they wrote about topics such as abortion, drinking, and having affairs outside of marriage, which was particularly true for Dorothy Parker. Her "friend" Ernest Hemingway penned a scathing poem about her entitled "To a Tragic Poetess," the subtitle reads, "Nothing in her life became her like her almost leaving it." He read this to a group of mutual friends. Fortunately, several of these friends expressed their displeasure over the poem and ended up losing Hemingway as a friend. Zelda, too, suffered for her art, especially her writing, because of jealousy from her husband, F. Scott Fitzgerald. Scott's jealousy is discussed in more detail in chapter four of this thesis.

Male writers Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald are particularly known for creating female characters who fall into one of three categories: the Madonna, the Mother, or the Whore. We see these tropes manifest in F. Scott Fitzgerald's character Daisy from *The Great Gatsby,* who becomes all three stereotypes throughout the novel. Gatsby sees her as this Madonna figure and puts her on a pedestal where she cannot remain. Tom makes her a Mother by being her husband and the father of their daughter. Both men, Gatsby, by making Daisy his

[4] The Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA), [15 U.S.C. 1691 et seq.] prohibits creditors from discriminating against credit applicants on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, because an applicant receives income from a public assistance program, or because an applicant has in good faith exercised any right under the Consumer Credit Protection Act. (https://www.justice.gov/crt/equal-credit-opportunity-act-3)

mistress, and Tom by calling her out for the affair with Gatsby, put her in the role of Whore. Unfortunately, there is little else about the character of Daisy. Gatsby and Tom fight over her as if she were a toy. Daisy is written to be what each man wants, saying all the right things. Daisy, ultimately, stays with Tom while Gatsby ends up floating in his pool, a bullet in his chest.

Hemingway, too, creates wild, wanton female characters. Lady Brett Ashley in *The Sun Also Rises* is a prostitute who relies on men to maintain her lifestyle. She smokes, drinks excessively, and despite saying she loves Jake, has two affairs while being engaged to a third man. Through her actions and dialog, Brett finds faults with herself and her behavior, though she does nothing to change her situation. Portrayed as a model of the New Woman, Brett should be celebrated. However, Hemingway portrays her as something to be pitied and or scorned.

Another example of a drinking woman, not necessarily wild and wonton, is Jig in Hemingway's short story, "Hills Like White Elephants." According to scholar and critic Philip Sipiora, both main characters within the story would be considered legally drunk with Jig's "Blood alcohol level at least .134% and his is .131%" shows there was no way to consider Jig competent to decide anything in her "delicate" state. Sipiora continues by stating,

> In announcing to her lover "I feel fine …. There's nothing wrong with me," Jig reflects her inebriated condition and is not assenting to having the operation. This peaceful ending, rather than indicating a reconciliation between these combatants, suggests a respite from the anxieties of twentieth century living purchased with a few pesetas' worth of alcohol. In becoming intoxicated, Jig and her lover are able to secure only a brief interlude of tranquility, and nothing is resolved. (50)

The intoxication from the alcohol in this case serves to hold off having to deal with the situation the two find themselves in, principally, an unwanted pregnancy. Still, according to Sipiora's article, only one of the pair wants the abortion, the unnamed American male.

Natalie Clifford Barney, another Modernist author, reinforces the stereotype of the Whore trope regarding alcohol. By contrast, and in other significant ways, she plays with genre and form, pushing the boundaries of Modernism. Within her book, *Women Lovers, or The Third Woman*, Barney uses alcohol-related words only five times. Two of those times concern religious sacraments, as seen in the following quotes. "The sentimentality of a young girl taking her first communion—which serves her interests well" (Portrait of L). "She had drunk from the cup discarded by Christ" (Portrait of M). In both cases, Catholic sacraments appear to be enacted, meaning that the "first communion" and "discarded" cup would be with wine. However, as a sacrament, drinking would not be perceived as a "bad thing" because of its religious context.

Two other times Barney uses the word "drunk" with something other than liquor, being "drunk on–" filling in the last word with that thing, for example, "drunk on life". The only time she directly mentions alcohol, she does so, reinforcing the Whore trope. In the Film chapter, Barney explains, "And at Le Select, she was the one who spotted a drunk and foul-smelling English woman poet mumbling pure miracles." This moment is a contradiction. On the one hand, she calls the woman drunk and foul-smelling, things not associated with a person whose company one would desire. However, she calls her mumbling "pure miracles," which would indicate that reveal her disheveled state, the drunk woman has some worth to her being.

Barney does not portray alcohol use in her stories even though she was friends with many of the women of the Left Bank who drank excessively. She was, at one time, lovers with Djuna Barnes, who is a part of this dissertation because of her use and abuse of alcohol both within her

stories and within her own life. Barney is an outlier in that her few mentions of alcohol within her works, other than *Women Lovers,* speak to the tropes of male Modernist Writers.

CHAPTER 4: HISTORICAL LITERATURE PERSPECTIVES ON WMEN WHO DRINK

The female Modernist writers surveyed in this dissertation changed how the female character was portrayed in terms of their use of alcohol. To more fully understand how they changed the portrayal of the drinking woman, it is crucial to understand the drinking habits of characters in earlier literature. This chapter briefly examines some key literary female characters and their relationship to drinking alcohol. This is in no way an exhaustive listing. It is also important to note that since there were not many female writers, most women's drinking habits were prescribed by men who also dictated the ideals of each century. From the earliest days of fermented grapes, a stark contrast has existed between men's and women's drinking habits. Men have enjoyed the freedom to drink as they please, wherever and whenever. In stark contrast, women were confined to private consumption and limited to certain beverages, often diluted wines.

The Greeks to the Middle Ages

Greek culture had a much more feminist sensibility than later literature. In Greek literature, especially Greek Romances, women often had more freedoms within their sphere, their section of the home, even though they could rarely move beyond that sphere. Men seldom, if ever, entered a woman's domain, giving their wives nearly total control of the household. In later literature, the restrictions of women in society and the family are depicted from their clothing to their ability to make their own decisions.

Greek women drank alcohol, but they never drank in public. Only prostitutes or high-class hetaerae drank in the company of men. A hetaera was a paid companion to men. She was trained to dance and sing, not just for sex. The hetaerae were often the entertainment for all male drinking parties known as symposia. Wine was the most common drink for men and women. The wine was usually watered down, and public drunkenness was frowned upon. So prevalent was drinking in Ancient Greece that the time between the 11th of February and the 13th of March was "(according to the Greek calendar): Anthesteria was one of four Ancient Greek festivals healed yearly. This festival was in honor of the god Dionysus. Held when the wine reached maturity in the spring, the first wines of the season were opened" (Greek Women and Wine).

Another occasion where women were connected with alcohol involves the nymph Methe. According to the website, Theoi Greek Mythology, Methe, the goddess-nymph of drunkenness was a companion to the god Dionysos. In *The Anacreontea, Fragment 38,*

> "Let us be merry and drink wine and sing of Bakkhos (Bacchus) [Dionysos] … thanks to him Methe (Drunken[n]ess) was brought forth, the Kharis (Charis, Grace) was born, Lupa (Pain) takes rest and Ania (Trouble) goes to sleep" (Theoi.com).

This moment illustrates that even when women have permission to drink, or in this case, birthed into drunkenness, it is still because of men. Yet this is not seen negatively, at least not during celebrations. In Greek culture, getting drunk in public, especially on Fridays, was not seen in a positive light.

Like the Greeks, the Roman culture had double standards for women and men about drinking. Roman women, mostly, had more freedom but, drinking was seen negatively. Stuart Fleming, in his book *Vinum: The Story of Roman Wine*, explains,

> "when it pertains to women and drinking the great fear was that drunken women would be more likely to commit adultery shaming the family and casting doubt on an heir's legitimacy. Laws were created to discourage heavy drinking among women. Male counterparts had no such laws placed upon them for their drunken behaviors" (70).

It was common for men to be encouraged to drink excessively to appear more manly. Women, however, were severely punished for drinking as discussed by Valerius Maximus in *Memorable Deeds and Sayings,* written about 30 A.D.

> The crime of these women was great, that aroused severity to so sharp a revenge: but Egnatius Mecennius exercised his severity in a much lesser matter, when he beat his wife to death for drinking wine. For this act, he was so far from being accused, that he was not so much as reprehended. Everyone believed, that for good example's sake, she had undergone the punishment for insobriety very justly. For indeed, whatever woman covets the immoderate use of wine, shuts the door to all virtues, and opens it to all vices. (https://www.attalus.org/translate/valerius6a.html#c3 6.3.9)

That a husband could beat his wife to death merely for drinking wine seems excessive society today; however, there are still nations where this behavior is more than acceptable.

The Canterbury Tales, written by Geoffrey Chaucer from 1387 to 1400, told tales from the viewpoints of various travelers on a pilgrimage. As they traveled many in this mixed group drank alcohol, which was typical in this period, though some travelers drank to excess. Their drink would, most likely have been honeyed wine or beer.

Surprisingly, three storytellers were women: The Second Nun, The Prioress, and The Wife of Bath. The Second Nun's tale is what one would expect from such a lady. She told the "Golden Legend" about the conversion of St. Cecilia's husband and his brother. The three performed miracles until the Roman authorities executed them.

The Prioress's tale is an anti-Semitic tale about Jews kidnapping the young son of a devout widow. Satan supposedly tells the kidnappers to kill the young boy to keep him from singing the hymn "O Alma Redemptoris" to the Virgin Mary. Even though they slit the boy's throat, he continues singing until his family finds him. This is a bloody and morbid tale, unexpected from a woman of the cloth.

The Wife of Bath's tale is the mildest. It is about courtly love, and no one is harmed during the tale; however, the other travelers look down upon her because of who she is. In the Middle Ages, women could have one of three roles: a maiden, a widow, or a wife. As a widow, five times over, the Wife of Bath is in a unique position in that she has control over her money because she has no son to inherit from her deceased husbands. She has no children at all. This allowed her more autonomy to travel and speak her mind. She was considered a "loathly lady" because she remarried four more times after her first husband's death. Loathly ladies were considered women who remarried to satisfy their sexual desires and, therefore, were condemned by the church, which considered this bigamy.

These three women drink continually, and oddly, the mores during this time were less restrictive of women. These three are traveling unaccompanied. Although they are part of the traveling group, no one is monitoring or controlling their drinking.

Who Is That Under the Stage Makeup—The Seventeenth Century Drinker

In the seventeenth century, women could not perform in any Shakespearean play. Men played all the female roles. One can see the evidence of the carousing woman in *Macbeth*, the witches brewing a hideous concoction at the beginning of the play, for example, and the negative effects of women drinking in the character of Lady Macbeth because she is using the drink to give her courage to go forward with the assassination of Duncan. "That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold; what hath quenched them hath given me fire" (2.21-2). Most often, though, readers see the refined woman who drinks nothing stronger than watered wine, a typical beverage of the time. What Lady Macbeth considers encouragement would be seen by the men as something to avoid. Allowing women to drink, as Lady Macbeth does, would be the destruction of men.

Another publication where drinking is deemed a significant negative is Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's play, *The Bloody Banquet*. In this play, the king forces his queen to eat her dead lover, whom she had murdered, to prevent her affair from coming to light. Another scene shows the King of Cilia's daughter and son at odds. Amphridote, upon learning that her lover has been led to his death by her brother, Zenarchus, schemes to kill him with poisoned wine.

> AMPHRIDOTE. (Aside) Oh, me, my soul will out!—Some wine there, ho!
>
> ZENARCHUS. Wine for our sister, for the news is worth it!
>
> Enter LODOVICUS with wine.
>
> AMPHRIDOTE. (Aside) It will prove dear to both.—So, give it me; now leave us.
>
> Exit LODOVICUS.
>
> […]

(They drink)

[…]

ZENARCHUS. I'm sick of thy society, poison to mine eyes!

AMPHRIDOTE. 'Tis lower in thy breast the poison lies.

ZENARCHUS. How?

AMPHRIDOTE. 'Tis for Mazeres.

ZENARCHUS. Oh, you virtuous powers, What a right strumpet! Poison under love?

AMPHRIDOTE. That man can ne'er be safe that divides love.

(She dies.)

ZENARCHUS. Nor she be honest can so soon impart. Oh, 'ware that woman that can shift her heart!

(Dies.) (Scene Vi.)

This short scene shows how wine was often used as a weapon. It also shows how women were viewed as being treacherous and alcohol serves them as a tool to use against men.

As a show of defiance, in Dekker's play, *The Honest Whore*, Viola, wife to Candido, who owns a fabric shop, purposely dumps her wine on the floor instead of drinking to the gallants' health. This is to show her ire at their request to have a penny's worth of fabric cut from the middle of the roll.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, drinking was not seen as a big deal in British culture. Drinking plain water could kill you, so British citizens would drink small beer, the second fermentation of a batch of brewed beer, wine, and watered-down wine. Small beer was often served to children. They also drank mulled wine, which was boiled with spices on

special occasions. They would also drink negas, which was usually port or sherry with citrus, sugar, and nutmeg thinned down with hot water.

Wait, You Want Me to Do What—The Eighteenth Century Drinker

In the eighteenth century, women could drink socially while attending dinner parties and balls. Most drinking at balls and parties included alcohol-based punch that was heavily diluted with sugar and fruit juices, which was appropriate for women, however, it was consumed sparingly. The idea of a woman getting drunk was considered vulgar and only for the lower classes or those who were morally deficient. In Samuel Richardson's *Pamela,* published in 1740, a housemaid, Nan, befriends the eponymous character and through the manipulations of her employer, Mr. B, becomes Pamela's bedfellow. Mrs. Jewkes, the housekeeper, and Mr. B conspire to get Nan drunk and use her intoxicated state to allow Mr. B to ruin Pamela. His plot to replace Nan as Pamela's bedfellow fails, as do his other attempts to ruin Pamela. Mr. B, finally, becomes so frustrated that he proposes to Pamela outright. She agrees and they, supposedly, live happily ever after. At least they think they do. *Pamela* proved very popular in society. She sparked several parodies and sequels, such as *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews*, more commonly known as *Shamela* by Henry Fielding, and *Pamela's Conduct in High Life* by John Kelly.

Moll Flanders is the eponymous character of William DeFoe's novel published in 1722. She leads a hard life from her birth to imprisonment in Newgate Prison to exile to the Americas as punishment for thievery. She survives her indenture and returns to England with a husband and money to spend. Moll's philosophy on life is also created because of her childhood, as she prefers to be called a whore rather than a wife or mistress.

Perhaps the notable scene within the story is when Moll encounters a baron who has been drinking too much at a fair. They sleep together, and Moll steals his gold watch and gold purse. Her landlady makes a deal with him to keep quiet for a price. Moll, eventually, meets the man and refuses to become his mistress, but one night, they get drunk and fall into bed again. She agrees to become his mistress for a year. Moll's questionable morals are compromised further by introducing her to alcohol. This moment of weakness shows how alcohol serves as a negative influence on both the man and Moll. It is a cautionary tale. DaFoe presents only unpleasant results from Moll's drinking and, in this case, on the man. Nevertheless, it is a tale warning of the horrors of drinking.

John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure,* commonly known as *Fanny Hill,* published in 1748, is known as one of the first pornographic novels for its explicitness and was banned by most countries in the past. The novel was the polar opposite of conduct novels such as Richardson's *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded,* in which virtue was celebrated and compensated. *Fanny Hill* focused on the idea that "sexual deviance" was an act of pleasure rather than shamefulness. Drinking is a way of coping while working in a brothel, a means of securing a customer, and also as a celebratory act for a job well done.

Francis Burney's *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World,* published in 1778, is another novel of manners told through letters exchanged between Evelina and Mr. Villars. Throughout the book, Evelina learns to behave in England's polite society. Though she stumbles through several faux pas before making an appropriate match, a husband who will continue to guide her on behaviors befitting a woman of quality. For drinking in public spaces, this involved limiting alcohol consumption to watered-down wine or port and mulled wine on special occasions. In private, a woman had an increased opportunity to drink more;

however, this was often done in secret. Eliza Haywood is best known for her novel *Love in Excess or the Fatal Inquiry,* published in three parts in 1719 and 1742 in six editions. It was the day's bestseller. Haywood also wrote a pamphlet entitled *A Present for Women Addicted to Drinking,* which is a sort of intervention for women who drink urging them to quit. "Such as are barely touched therewith, rather through Custom or Compliance, than any Inclination of their own to so dangerous a Practice" (Qtd in Allred).

While this is not fiction, it shows that women were concerned with other women's drinking habits. Interestingly, the term "addiction" within the title does not have the same medical connotation that it does today. It wasn't so much a diagnosis of a disorder or disease as it was a "stand-in for the still-hazy relationship between persons and their habits" (Allred)[5].

But I am a Lady—The Nineteenth Century Drinker

A typical punch served at balls or parties, made with citrus fruit juice, sugar, alcohol, and water with a smattering of nutmeg or other aromatics. Often, the punch was alcohol-free or very diluted, especially when there were a lot of innocent and impressionable young ladies newly "coming out" into society present. Even this type of diluted punch would have been a temptation to over-indulge, creating the potential for scandal, something to be avoided at all costs.

Alcohol use and writing about alcohol use was nothing new for European writers, even for female writers such as Jane Austen, who published from 1811 to 1816 and authored six novels, including *Mansfield Park, Persuasion, Sense and Sensibility,* and more. In *Mansfield Park*, she writes, "But she thought it a very bad exchange, and if Edmund were not there to mix the wine and water for her, would rather go without it than not" (Austen *Mansfield Park* Chapter

[5] A full study of this pamphlet can be found in Nicholas Allred's article, Rutgers University Alcohol Studies Archive. (https://sites.rutgers.edu/alcoholstudies-archives/from-the-archives-haywoods-present/)

VII). The significant difference here is that the alcohol in question is watered-down wine, a known drink for women of the time. In *Sense and Sensibility,* there are endless cups of tea. At balls and parties, there is always punch, but the reader rarely experiences even a sip. In *Pride and Prejudice,* Mrs. Bennet becomes tipsy at the Netherfield Ball. She was exuberant and chatty, which was held against her by Fitzwilliam Darcy. In his eyes, this behavior made her daughters ineligible for a marriage match with his best friend, Charles Bingley.

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847 under the male pseudonym Currer Bell. Brontë created the iconic character of Grace Poole. Poole is the caretaker for Bertha Mason, Rochester's first wife, who was prone to drinking before she went mad. She later becomes the embodiment of violence and unbridled sexuality. It could be argued that her penchant for drinking leads to this behavior. Grace Poole is also a drunk who often falls into a stupor while drinking, which allows Bertha to escape her prison in the attic and create havoc in the household. Mrs. Poole is also blamed by Rochester for these transgressions and others, making Jane think she has imagined things and keeping herself from Mrs. Poole.

William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, published in 1848, sets his two central characters, Becky (Rebecca) Sharp and Emmy (Amelia) Sedley as polar opposites. Becky is a conniving and manipulative young woman who will not stop until she reaches her goal of rising in the ranks of English society. She is not above using her feminine wiles on men to not only gain a marriage contract but also to help her eventual husband cheat others at cards. Becky loses her husband when he is sent to be the Governor of a pestilential and disease-ridden Coventry Island. She falls on hard times living among card sharps and con artists. Becky drinks heavily and recklessly gambles, eventually, she meets Emmy and her friends and persuades them to allow her to join their group. She manipulates Jos, Emmy's brother, to sign over money to her

before he dies suspiciously. She returns to England, where she lives a respectable life, although all her friends from the past refuse to acknowledge her.

It is not only the upper-class society that looks down on drinking for women. People from all walks of life, whether of high, low, or middle station sneer at women who drink excessively. Thackery employs several scenes containing detailed discussions about drinking that have a clear negative perspective regarding women who drink. The first is between the Rector's wife, her husband, and Mrs. Bute Crawley, and the trio discusses Aunt Matilda's excessive drinking. The scene's atmosphere depicts English society's disdain for excess, but Matilda's wealth frees her from accusations of immodesty. Plus, she has no heir and has yet to name one.

> "I think she's going," said the Rector's wife. "She was very red in the face when we left dinner. I was obliged to unlace her."
>
> "She drank seven glasses of champagne," said the reverend gentleman, in a low voice; "and filthy champagne it is, too, that my brother poisons us with—but you women never know what's what."
>
> "We know nothing," said Mrs. Bute Crawley.
>
> "She drank cherry-brandy after dinner," continued his Reverence, "and took curacao with her coffee. I wouldn't take a glass for a five-pound note: it kills me with heartburn. She can't stand it, Mrs. Crowley—she must go—flesh and blood won't bear it! And I lay five to two, Matilda drops in a year." (Chapter 11)

If Aunt Matilda had not been older and eccentric, she would have been labeled differently. The men, too, are reviled for their drinking habits, which is unusual for male writers. The narrator looks down upon Mr. Sedley because he habitually goes around to his tenants and drinks heavily.

And poor Jos is killed off by a poisoned drink. *Vanity Fair* is a satirical look at English society and its customs and 41ores. Much of the novel's characters, places, and actions are exaggerated, so perhaps the drinking shouldn't be looked upon unfavorably.

Kate Chopin's novel, *The Awakening,* was published in 1899 and set in New Orleans. Initially it appears that women, especially the Creole ones, have the freedom to drink as they please. The protagonist Edna does not understand this freedom. This behavior is in contrast to Edna's upbringing in a more traditional mid-western family where alcohol was limited to watered wine with dinner or a small drink after dinner.

> "Creole women participated fully in the sensual atmosphere surrounding them: drinking wine, enjoying music and literature, wearing bright colors, and entertaining lavishly. Although Creole culture was patriarchal in the extreme, women enjoyed life in ways that Edna could not" (63-64).

The last sentence highlights why this is only partial freedom. While Creole women were allowed to drink, they were monitored and controlled by the men in their lives, so was it true freedom? Interestingly, Chopin, championed as a feminist writer, wrote such a willful female character, a prototype of the New Woman who would flourish in the early part of the twentieth century. This shows a shift from expected behaviors to new ones women adopted. These behaviors include, but are not limited to, drinking the same drinks as men in public, riding around in cars, cutting their hair, and shortening their dresses.

The Twentieth Century Woman—Coming into Their Own

Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence,* published in 1920, revolves around New York's Victorian society of the American Gilded Age, the period from about the 1870s to the late 1890s. Although published during the Roaring 20s, Wharton artfully crafts a novel of a society strained by conventions of the time, not only in dress and mannerisms but also in how one behaved in society, including what is acceptable for a woman to drink. "'Women ought to be free—as free as we are,' he [Newland] declared, making a discovery of which he was too irritated to measure the terrific consequences [regarding Madam Olenska]" (Wharton, book 1 Chapter 5). Newland has learned that Madam Olenska, with whom he had a quite innocent affair, had exiled herself to Lausanne. Olenska spends most of the novel being ostracized because of perceived misbehavior by her peers. She does not countenance her society's beliefs or lies about her. She offers no defense because she does not believe it is required. Newland courts her platonically but is thwarted by his wife, who seems virtuous but is quite duplicitous. Alcohol plays a small but key role as it accompanies lavish dinners of multiple courses and, therefore, several wines. But we see the divide between men and women as the setting time dictates; after dinner, the men sit at the table to enjoy port and cigars, while the women retire to a comfortable salon for tea and cakes.

Conversely, Zelda Fitzgerald's Gay, from "The Original Follies Girl," "learns to drink absinthe" because that is the acceptable drink for a woman. Parker has an unnamed character in "Just a Little One" who drinks "little" scotches because it is less jarring to her companion than a regular one. That she drinks several little ones is of no consequence. Barnes was not as informed by Prohibition since she lived in Paris during those years; however, she would have known about the volstead Act and how it affected society within the United States and beyond. Barnes, Parker,

and Fitzgerald also use trauma explicitly relating to alcohol to show how trauma informs and is informed by alcohol use and abuse. Close readings of these stories, especially regarding Barnes and Parker, show how trauma informs women's drinking behavior and shows the behavior evolving and how it informs character development, or lack thereof, and overall behavior.

CHAPTER 5: DROWNING IN DRINK: ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE IN DJUNA BARNES'S NIGHTWOOD

An American in Paris

Djuna Barnes was born in a log cabin in Storm King Mountain, New York, on June 12, 1892. She died on June 18, 1982, in New York City. Her parents were Wald (born Henry Aaron Budington) and Elizabeth J Barnes (née Chappell). Barnes's paternal grandmother, Zander Barnes, greatly influenced Djuna's early life, and not for the better. Her father practiced polygamy and moved his mistress, Frances Clark, into the home when Djuna was five. There were nine children between the two families. Elizabeth gave birth to five, and Frances gave birth to four children, with one dying at a young age.

Barnes's grandmother struggled to support the family and often wrote letters to friends and family begging for money. Barnes spent her early life caring for her younger siblings. She was also possibly raped by her neighbor with her father's consent, or it was perhaps her father who raped her. It is unclear even when reading her first novel, *Ryder*, which was autobiographical about her early life with her family. Her grandmother wrote sexually explicit letters to Barnes, with whom she shared a bed for much of Barnes's life. At the urging of her father and grandmother, a seventeen-year-old Barnes married Frances Clark's brother without the benefit of clergy.

In 1912, Elizabeth left her husband, divorced him, and moved to New York City with four of her five children. Djuna studied art at the Pratt Institute for approximately six months but

withdrew to help support her family. Barnes became a reporter for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* and wrote interviews, features, theatre reviews, and various news stories for *New York Press, The World,* and *McCall's*. She also published short fiction in the *New York Morning Telegraph's* Sunday supplement and *All-Story Cavalier Weekly,* a pulp magazine.

She supported progressive suffragists, but she felt that conservative suffragists did themselves a disservice. Barnes believed that by not joining forces with other like-minded feminist groups, conservative suffragists split the focus and split the vote. This discord is still seen today in politics where advocacy groups refuse to work with other groups, splitting the vote, and resulting in getting nothing accomplished. Barnes immersed herself in risky situations like boxing to access experiences denied to women. In writing about such experiences, she gave women a front-row seat to things thought to be the purview of men.

In 1915, she moved to Greenwich Village and entered a thriving community of artists and writers. This bohemian lifestyle only fueled her writing further. She took her first trip to Paris in 1921 on an assignment for *McCall's* and ended up staying and meeting Thelma Wood. Although Barnes preferred to label herself as bisexual instead of lesbian, she began living with Wood in 1922. Their relationship was tumultuous and lasted nearly a decade before they broke up over Wood's refusal to be monogamous. It is easy to understand how Barnes' struggle to accept her true self coupled with her discordant relationship with Wood would fuel her alcoholism. In a letter to Emily Coleman, quoted in biographer Phillip Herring's *Djuna … The Life and Works of Djuna Barnes,* Barnes explained,

> "I know from my experience with Thelma, that *no one* could have thrown me into any other arms, not even for the months when I had nothing whatsoever to do with her, not

> even after we had separated for a number of years, how many? Two three? I simply had no room for any other 'terrible attractions.'"

Not so for Thelma. As Barnes went on to write, Wood wanted her "along with the rest of the world." (Herring 160)

In 1936, Barnes wrote *Nightwood* while spending long months with her dear friend, Peggy Guggenheim at her Devon country home, Hayford Hall. The driving scene in the novel is of Robin wandering through the cafés of Paris, getting drunk and seeking sex partners, was a direct memory of Barnes from when she would search the Paris cafés for Wood, often getting as drunk as Wood herself. The fact we get so little of Robin's inner workings makes sense because Robin is a veiled version of Thelma Wood. Barnes as Nora tries desperately to understand her lover and entice her back to her home and bed, however, there's something within Robin/Thelma that prevents her from committing to Nora. Nora/Djuna spends the latter part of the novel trying to figure out Robin/Thelma.

During World War II, Barnes returned to New York City. She sequestered herself in her apartment, working on her autobiography, which was never finished. Barnes became a recluse, refusing to speak with anyone unfamiliar. She even avoided admirers of her writing. Barnes was known for crossing the street when Anis Nin was nearby because she could not handle the admiration.

Beyond the Biographical

It is crucial to consider an author's background and life when analyzing his or her work. For Modernist Writers who often wrote from and about their own life experiences, an analysis of their writing goes hand in hand with examining their personal lives. Analysis of alcohol use and abuse within works by an author is complicated without at least considering the biographical

information, particularly Modernist Writers whose drinking was closely tied to their work. Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Jack London are known equally for their drinking narratives as they are for their personal issues with alcohol. Barnes's inclusion in John Crowley's *The White Logic* signifies that Barnes was in the company of these men regarding drinking. Historian Andrea Weiss in *Paris Was a Woman* explains, "The twin emphasis on drinking and sexual exploits dominates the image we now have of Paris in the twenties. Yet the women's experiences of both of these 'freedoms' were very different" (xxiv). This difference helps to explain the complexity of Barnes's *Nightwood* characters regarding their overall relationship to drinking and alcohol. Such is the case when analyzing Barnes's *Nightwood.* According to biographer Phillip Herring, Barnes considered some publishers and biographers as her enemies. Herring writes, "Next on [Barnes's] list of enemies were Juliana Bordereau's 'publishing scoundrels,' biographers who pried into her life or critics who interpreted her work while ignoring her presumed intention" (6). Some Modernist Writers expect critics to use biographical information as a means of analysis and to consider the original intent of the novel when criticizing the validity of the work. An artist's work, regardless of genre, has a life beyond the artist's life. Crowley, in his *The White Logic Alcoholism and Gender in American Modernist Fiction*, analyzes Barnes's *Nightwood* through the lens of Barnes's alcoholism. He explains, "The novel came out of the hell of Barnes's relationship with Thelma Wood, which was made over into fiction and placed within an imaginative landscape so nightmarish that it seems to have been inspired by delirium tremens" (123). While the novel may shed light on Barnes's life, it is possible, and even necessary, to look beyond this biographical analysis when evaluating the continuing legacy of this work.

Alcohol abuse is rampant through much of early twentieth century American literature. Many male authors of the time litter their writings with characters who run the gamut from social drinkers to raging alcoholics however, this is not necessarily how these characters would label themselves. These male writers use alcohol within their own lives as much as within the pages of their novels and short stories as a way of dealing with or reflecting upon their conflicting life issues. F. Scott Fitzgerald, for example, often wrote about his frustration with not having "been to war" despite enlisting in the Army. Hemingway, too, explored his problematic relationship to war within the pages of his novels. The changing morés of society, and in particular, personal struggles in coming to terms with the aftermath of World War I, drove many to drink, whether in seeking solace for injuries, absolution for sins or to find answers to unanswerable questions at the bottom of the bottle. One needs to look no further than Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* or *A Farewell to Arms* to understand that no one came out of the war unscathed. Crowley explains the drunk narrative that emerged during the early twentieth-century modernist period, stating:

> Within the ideology of modernism, that is, there might be such a thing as an "alcoholic female," but a "female alcoholic" was something of a contradiction in terms because the "alcoholic" was implicitly or explicitly gendered male. A woman might drink out of sheer wantonness, but no woman was privy to the manly secrets of the White Logic – except, perhaps, one so "manly" that she was not "really" a woman. If the alcoholic female was oversexed (a slut), then the female alcoholic was unsexed (a dyke) 11 (117-118).

Crowley lauded Barnes as "one of the first female American writers to develop a drinking problem, and *Nightwood* plays off the conventions of male-authored drunk narratives to subvert the gendering of 'alcoholism' itself" (116). It is this gendering, or de-gendering, in *Nightwood*,

that Barnes explores the use and abuse of alcohol within her characters. By giving women the authority and agency to own their alcoholism even if their characters do not acknowledge it, fellow alcoholic Barnes promotes the idea that women are equal to men in all things, the good and the bad. Women today can own their alcoholism, yet there is still more room for improvement. Women can now drink like men and even drink the same drinks. Even today, women are still plagued with a bad-girl reputation for being drinkers and alcoholics.

Far less has been written on the subject of alcohol relevant to female Jazz Age authors and their use and abuse of alcohol within their own lives, particularly when it pertains to their writings. Barnes and *Nightwood* are an exception to the general lack of scholarship for female writers compared to Barnes's male counterparts. Women's Studies scholar Dr. Bonnie Kime Scott believes male writers distill female characters down to narrowed archetypes familiar to readers. She explains the general treatment of women, "Though male Modernists should not be lumped together for their treatment of women in relation to nature and culture, they have left a heritage of women characters now famous for their primitive, unconscious manifestations of nature" (43). This primitive nature extends to the way male Modernists treated women who drank. Many male writers have all created women who fall into the archetype of the Whore, the Madonna, or the Mother.

Barnes complicates these archetypes by creating her characters with shades of gray rather than making them, purely, good or bad. Instead, Barnes's characters have tangled lives and relationships, "both parod[ying] and appropriat[ing] the modernist culture of drinking and the genre of the drunk narrative" (Crowley 133). Like other Modernist women writers, Dorthy Parker and Zelda Fitzgerald included, Barnes allows her characters to drink and act without using the archetypical labels found in other works. For example, Hemingway has the character

Lady Brett Ashley, a free-spirited character answering to no one, as a prostitute. She is paid to be Jake Barnes' companion in *The Sun Also Rises*. Likewise, F. Scott Fitzgerald has the character of Daisy in *The Great Gatsby* embodying the three female archetypes of the story. Daisy is wife to Tom, mother to their daughter, and a whore, in a technical sense, to Gatsby even though, ultimately, she stays with her husband. Adjectives are alternately used to describe Daisy's characteristics as troubled, deviant, or fun, yet no singular classification is affixed to her. It is notable that nurturing or maternal are not mentioned because, the one time we see Daisy with her daughter, Daisy treats her as an object to be displayed rather than cuddled and coddled.

In *Nightwood,* androgynous Dr. Matthew O'Connor, a respected ladies' doctor, presents as a man in public but lives as a woman in private. Barnes subverts the traditional gender binaries society struggled to understand in the early twentieth century, mainly leading up to and immediately after World War I. The world was changing, and typical male or female societal roles started to blur. This blurring was notably apparent in the job market as women took over traditional male jobs during the war that they did not want to relinquish once the war was over. Scholar Margaret Bockting, PhD, explains, "Because women are traditionally associated with tenderness and nurturing and with attachment to private concerns, to describe them in terms typically associated with masculine activities … is to write against conventional ideals of femininity or myths of women's subversive or peaceful demeanor" (33). This traditional association comes at a cost for Barnes's characters, both the men and women, which leads to excessive drinking, thought to be a strictly masculine trait. *Nightwood's* Robin Vote's drunken escapades provide a good example.

It is almost impossible to separate Barnes's troubled relationship with alcohol from her characters' various ties to drinking. Each main character in *Nightwood* has their private reasons

for using and misusing alcohol. An analysis of these characters, including Baron Felix Volkbein, Dr. Matthew O'Connor, Nora Flood, and Robin Vote, shows that each character has a relationship to alcohol tied closely to personal circumstances. These characters also represent many of Gertrude Stein's Lost Generation, those individuals who rebelled against their parents' strict moral codes and came out of World War I unsure of where to go or how to process what they had experienced. Understanding these characters helps readers realize that women of the early twentieth century had connections to alcohol just as complex as their male counterparts. Perhaps their connection to alcohol is even more fraught than men's when considering societal views on female drinkers. Barnes reinforces the societal stereotypes of the time and those of male writers, if their writings can be judged as evidence of their beliefs, that women who drink are of lower moral standing. However, Barnes subverts these ideas by complicating the female characters illustrated through her male character, Dr. O'Connor, who longs to be a woman with everything that, stereotypically, entails—marriage, children, and a home—hence, he dresses as such in private.

Nightwood is about the binary, day vs. night, homosexual vs. straight, and moving beyond those binaries that trap Barnes's characters within their chosen place. Four of the principal characters of the novel slip between these binaries, complicating already traumatized lives. Nora, Robin, and even Jenny Petheridge (a secondary character) all live between the straight and homosexual worlds. Each has had husbands yet live outwardly as lesbians. Nora loves Robin, who has a child with Felix, and later runs off with Jenny, leaving Nora to either follow or sacrifice her love for Robin and try to move on. Felix lives beyond the binary by playing mother and father to his son Guido after his wife, Robin, runs off. O'Connor's entire world is about life beyond the binary. In the persona he shows to the world he is a man, a doctor

treating women and others who live outside the societal binaries, while his internal life longs for what he cannot have—life as a fully realized woman. Each character pushes beyond the pigeonhole in which society places them, yet this slipping between right and wrong causes them the most grief. In their grief, they become stuck, unable to find any way of navigating the new path successfully, which leads to increased drinking to combat their feelings of inadequacy.

Each character suffers from internal and external traumas: Nora must watch her lover turn to others. Robin, by the birth of her son, was suffering from what we now call Postpartum Depression. Felix, by his Jewish ethnicity and in failing to live up to his noble aspirations, along with his son's mental health issues. O'Connor is perhaps the most traumatized of all, living with his experiences and wounds from World War I and the unfulfilled desires of his personal life. These traumas lead them to or are perhaps a result of living between binaries. Nora suffers from Acute Trauma resulting from the single incident of her lover, Robin, leaving her. The men, Felix and Matthew suffer from complex traumas. Both men suffer from Chronic Trauma, which the American Psychological Association defines as repeated and prolonged trauma.

Regardless of which comes first, Scott expresses that those living beyond the binaries, animal vs. saint, for example, are doomed to be "tortured and damned" (42). The question thus becomes, does living in the space between these binaries lead one to drink, or does drinking lead to living between the binaries? It may be a combination of the two that leads to a vicious cycle of habitual drinking and drunkenness.

The hallmarks of Melancholia, what today would be known as Major Depression, are two-fold; torture and a feeling of being damned. Torture does not need to be physical. People can do the most damage to themselves without adding a mark. Internal torture is getting inside one's

head and internalizing all the negative barbs one has absorbed. It is this form of torture with which many Modernist Writers would be familiar, having experienced it themselves. As for being damned, many felt damned by the repercussions of the war. The men who were diagnosed with Shell Shock, what is known today as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, the men and women who lost husbands and brothers, who came home feeling that they had sunk to the lowest level of humanity. It is this Melancholia that Dr. Katherine Fama says, "Barnes put[s] to work at the very center of [*Nightwood*]: displacing 'proper' narrative form, revealing fundamental compulsions to retell, read, and know" (39). Every character, even Felix, drinks excessively by the novel's end. However, again, the question remains: Is the use and abuse of alcohol an attempt to find a cure for Melancholia or a symptom of the disorder? Or is it both? Alcohol use provides a way to keep other symptoms at bay, a way to deny the truth. As the Melancholic falls deeper into depression, alcohol use turns to abuse, and the cure becomes a symptom: alcoholism.

Nora's Love Story

At the novel's beginning, Nora, like Felix, does not appear to have a problem with drinking. One might label her a social drinker, someone who drinks during social occasions and in moderation. Barnes's first comment regarding Nora is, "The strangest 'salon' in America was Nora's" (55). The salon is described as "the 'paupers' salon for poets, radicals, beggars, artists, and people in love; for Catholics, Protestants, Brahmins, dabblers in black magic and medicine; all these could be seen sitting about her oak table before the huge fire" (55). While these individuals may have some political sway in the world, they are, mostly, people on the margins. According to Literary critic Carissa Foo, in her article, "Bent on the Dark: Negative Perception in Djuna Barnes's Nightwood," proclaims, "seeing the world of *Nightwood* through a negative lens is a queer [homosexual] response to being excluded from a heteronormative narrative while

also existing within it (325). They are often overlooked or even looked down upon by polite society. The night acts both as the best time for marginalized people to be social and as a veil to hide what society sees as deviant. While none of these marginalized characters, the circus folk, drug addicts, or prostitutes, all considered creatures of the night, are ostracized by Dr. O'Connor, neither are they the mainstream people of daylight hours nor the noble society Felix wishes to call his own. Does this shame, sorrow, and physical need to "bow down" (Foo 330) lead to the characters' drinking habits? Or do they drink to forget their lack of connection with normal society? It is a bit of both.

Nora has problems with love and a desire to be in a bastardized heteronormative relationship with Robin, where each plays a role. Upon first meeting Robin at the circus, Nora is unaware of the extent of Robin's troubles. The development and, more importantly, the eventual breakdown of their relationship leads Nora from a social drinker to something worse. Remaining connected to Robin is of the utmost importance to Nora. She follows Robin's meanderings through nighttime Paris, visiting various bars, and drinking excessively. Barnes describes Nora as someone who "robbed herself for everyone; incapable of giving herself warning, she was continually turning about to find herself diminished" (57). This compulsion to be there for others to her detriment is specifically true when looking at Nora's relationship with Robin. Nora following Robin is a story taken unambiguously from Barnes's real-life romance with Thelma Wood. Biographer Phillip Herring explains, "As Thelma slid deeper into alcoholism, she would cob the cafés, apparently looking for casual partners of either sex, while Djuna went from place to place in pursuit, often ending up as drunk as her quarry" (12). Nora's behavior is a case of art imitating life, although there is disagreement among scholars that *Nightwood* is a *roman-à-clef* of Barnes's tragic relationship with Wood. Professor John Clegg believes, "Barnes never exposes

herself within *Nightwood*, the writer is not a character, and as such the replacement of the sexual propensity cannot be vocalized in the same way" (para 26). Yet, Clegg quotes a letter written by Barnes in which she explains, "I really love her, but I know her now – she should be damned glad for *Nightwood*, and to what I made her" (17) (Qtd in Clegg para 8). It is unclear how a writer can portray only one part of a relationship, especially when using real-life events when it takes two to be in a relationship. If Wood is Robin, then it would stand to reason that Nora is a stand-in for Barnes herself.

Early in their relationship, Nora understands that Robin's attempts to find some sense of belonging without being tied down are torturous. Barnes explains, "To keep her (in Robin there was this tragic longing to be kept, knowing herself astray) Nora knew now that there was no way but death. In death Robin would belong to her" (63). This notion of death being able to contain Robin, which would allow Nora to keep Robin from leaving physically, emotionally, and mentally, is a fallacy Nora has created because she is so desperate to keep Robin's love for herself. As Nora goes to greater and greater lengths to maintain her hold on Robin, she falls victim to a fate similar to Felix's. Nora takes up drinking, and in moving from bar to bar at night, she tries to connect with Robin. In a conversation with O'Connor, Nora attempts to explain how and why she cannot quit her relationship with Robin, even if she is tortured by the life that Robin must be living out in the night:

> "Time is not long enough," she said, striking the table. "It is not long enough to live down her nights. God," she cried, "what is love? Man seeking his own head? The human head, so rented by misery that even the teeth weigh! She could not tell me the truth because she had never planned it; her life was a continual accident, and how can you be

> prepared for that? Everything we cannot bear in this world, some day we find in one person, and love it all at once. (Barnes 143-144)

Readers can, now, see how in love Nora is with Robin. However, it is also the moment when Nora understands the hopelessness of the relationship. Without a future, there is no hope. She realizes that Robin's impulsive actions result from not thinking things through which makes Nora uncomfortable as she likes to control her life. She "cannot bear" what Robin represents, yet simultaneously believes, "love[s] it all at once." She cannot go forward without Robin in her life, but she also cannot go back to the time before Robin's betrayal with Jenny.

For Nora, drinking is a way of staying connected to Robin. Following Robin's nightly wanderings through the streets of Paris allows Nora to stay in Robin's life. Unfortunately, this type of love is doomed to failure. Later, when Nora goes to Dr. O'Connor to try to gain another perspective on her relationship with Robin to understand it better, the doctor explains:

> "You never loved anyone before, and you'll never love anyone again as you love Robin. Very well – what is this love we have for the invert, boy or girl? It was they who were spoken of in every romance that we ever read. The girl lost, what is she but the Prince found? The Prince on the white horse that we have always been seeking. And the pretty lad who is a girl, what but the prince-princess in point lace – neither one and half the other, the painting on the fan." (Barnes 145)

At this moment, the doctor is trying to explain what Foo describes.

> [Scholar] Judith Lee more specifically relates the lack of closure to the 'myth of romantic love,' that *Nightwood*'s 'anti-fairy tale' denies not only happy endings. But also femininity and non-heteronormative love (1991, 208, 212). Undergirding such negations

> of self and love is a queerness that estranges the women from themselves, the love from the beloved, and also the reader from the text. (Foo 329)

The doctor also explains his belief that inverted relationships are doomed to fail because the prince, traditionally male in romances, also has stereotypical feminine traits, such as gentleness or kindness. The girl who loses herself identifies with the prince because she does not see herself in traditional feminine roles. Thus, she will never attain the happily-ever-after children have striven toward from a young age.

It is unclear where Nora ends up regarding drinking by the end of the novel. She watches as Robin communes with Nora's dog in the chapel on Nora's property:

> Then she began to bark also, crawling after him — barking in a fit of laughter, obscene and touching. The dog began to cry then, running with her, head-on with her head, as if to circumvent her; soft and slow, his feet went padding. He ran this way and that, low down in his throat crying, and she grinning and crying with him; crying in shorter and shorter spaces, moving head to head, until she gave up, lying out, her hands beside her, her face turned and weeping and the dog too gave up then, and lay down, his eyes bloodshot, his head flat along her knees. (Barnes 179-180)

For Nora, Robin has become something to possess, something Nora can point to and say, "Mine!" While there may still be feelings of love between them, their relationship has deteriorated into an unhealthy place for both women. Perhaps Nora believes she can possess Robin again, if only through her dog. Since Barnes does not provide Robin with an internal monologue, it is only through Robin's actions that the reader can even speculate about the broken state of her mind or her thoughts and feelings toward those in her life.

Robin's Nocturnal Meanderings

Robin appears to be the protagonist of *Nightwood*; however, she is the one character both readers and her fellow characters know the least. She is an enigma, worried over, studied, and owned, but she never finds her way. Foo suggests, "Although Robin is the central figure around which the narratives of each chapter and character revolve, her presence is vague. The alternative to knowing her is through the negative" (332). Understanding Robin through a negative lens is seen most clearly in the scene when Felix sees her for the first time:

> On a bed, surrounded by a confusion of potted plants, exotic palms and cut flowers, faintly over-sung by the notes of unseen birds, which seemed to have been forgotten — left without the usual silencing cover, which, like cloaks on funeral urns, are cast over their cages at night by good housewives — half flung off the support of the cushions from which, in a moment of threatened consciousness she had turned her head, lay the young woman heavy and disheveled. Her legs, in white flannel trousers, were spread as in a dance, the thick-lacquered pumps looking too lively for the arrested step. Her hands, long and beautiful, lay on either side of her face. (Barnes 37-38)

Robin is reduced to an animal, something to be viewed and studied but never truly known. Her relation to the animal world, exotic as it seems, helps characterize her as an "other." She is human, but all her traits are animalistic, hinting at what will come when her instincts compel her to flee from her husband, child, and, later, Nora.

Robin is fighting more than her desire not to be a wife and mother. It is more likely that she is fighting against her queerness in a society that does not understand or accept those who are "othered." Foo explains, "The women [Nora, Robin, Jenny] inhabit the world as queer: instead of

being straight, they are bent and do not experience the world in a straightforward manner. Theirs is a slanted perception of the world. The bent bodies resist straight forms of experience: 'bent' is postural as well as political" (Foo 333). Robin's body is bent as she stumbles down the Paris streets in a drunk stupor.

Robin tries to reconcile her queerness with her relationship with Felix and their son. Her inability to do this drives her to drink. She is struggling to find her place and a sense of belonging. This emptiness leads her into damaging relationships and, ultimately, odd wanderings throughout the countryside. The final scene in the chapel on Nora's property is the most telling. In a break with reality, Robin finds comfort, connection, and perhaps even identity while rolling around on the floor with Nora's dog. She has been reduced, or reduced herself, to the animal she has been described as throughout the novel. Crowley believes,

> As "a woman who is faithless and drunken," Robin both reinforces and subverts the stereotype of the drunken harlot/alcoholic nymphomaniac. By perceiving Robin in this misogynistic way, Nora aligns herself with [Jack] London, Hemingway, and other male writers who propagated the Modernist culture of drinking. However, Robin's bisexuality calls the stereotype and its underlying heterosexist assumptions into question, for although Hemingway might have imagined a Robin Vote getting drunk with a Brett Ashley [from *The Sun Also Rises*] in the Left Bank bars of the 1920s, he would have found it unimaginable for them to go upstairs together. There was a difference, after all, between Djuna Barnes and Jake Barnes. (129-130)

Barnes, in this complication of the stereotypical harlot/alcoholic nymphomaniac, which is itself a complication of the Mother—Madonna—Whore trope, instantly broadens the character of Robin while concurrently keeping her inner life hidden. Felix, Nora, and Jenny are all drawn to Robin,

wanting to cast her into the role of Mother/Madonna figuratively and literally. They want desperately to find the more profound truth of Robin's life and purpose, yet they are only given glimpses of Robin's complexity, as when she drunkenly hands money to the old beggar woman:

> She stumbled, and I held her, and she said, seeing a poor wretched beggar of a whore, "Give her some money, all of it!" […] "They don't want you to drink. Well, here, drink! I give you money and permission! These women—they are all like her," she said with fury. "They are all good — they want to save us!" She sat down beside her. (Barnes 153).

As scholar Dr. Laura Winkiel details, Robin becomes a spectacle, "Robin's forgetfulness allows her to be absorbed into the bubonic culture of the spectacle" (19). As Robin allows herself to become a public spectacle, she becomes less human and more like the animals with which she is often associated. In essence, Robin becomes something to be viewed, observed, and placed on a pedestal. Her admirers stifle her growth, denying her agency to embrace her personhood. It is no wonder she wanders off likened to Nora's dog in the end.

The Fabricated Baron

Felix's narrative arc is unusual in that he does not drink alcohol when the reader first encounters him. By the end of the novel, however, he, like so many other characters, relies on alcohol to help him forget his changed circumstances or at least numb the pain of the situation.

> "… You know what man really desires?" inquired the doctor, grinning into the immobile face of the Baron. "One of two things: to find someone who is so stupid that he can lie to her, or to love someone so much that she can lie to him."
>
> "I was not thinking of women at all," the Baron said, and he tried to stand up.

"Neither was I," said the doctor. "Sit down." He refilled his glass. "The fine is very good," he said.

Felix answered, "No, thank you, I never drink."

"You will," the doctor said. (Barnes 22-23)

At this moment in the story, O'Connor is already well acquainted with alcohol, while Felix is just at the beginning of what will become a troubled relationship with drink. This moment also serves as a foreshadowing of future events. His life is about the past, and in preserving the created family connections to royalty, Felix has reinvented himself. O'Connor's comment, "to find someone who is so stupid that he can lie to her, or to love someone so much that she can lie to him," (23) hints at what Felix will find with Robin. In Robin and his relationship with her, Felix thinks he has found someone who will accept his created past and help him preserve the fake barony he created for himself and his ancestors. Instead, Felix falls so deeply in love with Robin and what he thinks she represents that he also tumbles headlong into drinking, to dampen his feelings or at least forget them for a time. Felix is deep "in the cups" by the novel's end. He has lost what he holds most dear— his connection to royalty—because he knows his son Guido will probably never marry to carry on the family name. Losing this connection leads Felix to drink even more than the loss of Robin. Before leaving Paris with his son to resettle in Vienna, Felix has one final revealing conversation with O'Connor, showing that what Matthew had predicted back in the first chapter of the novel proved true. Felix would eventually "come to" drink.

Felix ordered a fine. The doctor smiled. "I said you would come to it," he said and emptied his own glass at a gulp.

> "I know," Felix answered, "but I did not understand. I thought you meant something else."
>
> "What?"
>
> Felix paused, turning the small glass around in his trembling hand. "I thought," he said, "that you meant that I would give up." (Barnes 128)

This scene illustrates Felix's deep fall into drinking, as O'Connor predicted at the beginning of the narrative. While it is never stated exactly why Felix drinks, it is without difficulty to determine throughout the novel that he is responding to the loss of Robin and his son's mental health issues. In "Melancholic Remedies: Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, as Narrative Theory," Katherine Fama speaks of Melancholia, Major Depression today. Within the novel, Fama believes Melancholics are formed by what they have lost, creating a cycle of depression. She explains, "Barnes situates insistent identity pursuits within structures of narrative compulsion and finds in melancholia a source of resistance." She later suggests, "Barnes […] blends melancholias, but her melancholics are formed by their losses" (41-42). Felix, who was first introduced to alcohol by O'Connor as a way of coping with life, later uses alcohol as a crutch to cover his loss of his wife and his fears that his son will be the last Volkbein. Alcohol is used as a depressant that only functions to heighten the melancholic feelings and serves to drive the melancholic to drink more to stave off the depressive feelings. The alcohol's depressing function creates a vicious cycle of more drinking and more depressive feelings.

Felix surrenders to these feelings, and by moving to Vienna with his son and his friend Frau Mann, he only falls deeper into a depressive state, leaving readers concerned about his, and, by extension, Guido's, future. "Felix drank heavily now, and to hide the red that flushed his

cheeks, he had grown a beard ending in two forked points on his chin. In the matter of drink, Frau Mann was now no bad second. Many cafés saw this odd trio with the child in the midst …" (Barnes 130). By binge drinking to excess in front of his child, an alcoholic Felix has perhaps doomed his son to the same awful fate.

Dr. O'Connor foreshadows this demise during his conversation with Felix in the first chapter. "'The last muscle of aristocracy is madness — remember that' — the doctor leaned forward — 'the last child born to the aristocracy is sometimes an idiot, out of respect — we go up — but we come down'" (Barnes 44). Although this discussion occurs before Guido is even thought about by his future parents, the doctor's words are meant as a warning. O'Connor believes Felix's desire for a son will lead him into a rushed marriage with Robin, if only to satisfy his need for someone to carry on the traditions Felix holds so dear. Felix might attain many of his heart's desires: a wife who provides him with a son, a title to pass down, and the social standing to garner invitations to the best parties. Eventually, life has a way of giving with one hand and taking with the other. One might attain their deepest desires, but at what price? By the end of *Nightwood*, no one attains their heart's desire. Felix no longer has Robin, nor does he have an heir to carry on his family name. Nora watches helplessly as her lover, Robin, walks into the forest with Nora's dog. Robin is still struggling to find her place. Instead, she wanders constantly from place to place and from romance to romance. While able to express his true self in private, O'Connor must continue to live as a man in the public eye.

Tell Me About the Night

Among scholars, Robin is believed to be the central figure in *Nightwood*, but Dr. Matthew O'Connor is a touchstone for every character, large or small, within the book. As a

gynecologist, O'Connor cares for the nobility and the deviants alike. His capability to move between both worlds emphasizes his importance to the story.

> "Have I not shut my eyes with the added shutter of the night and put my hand out? And it's the same with girls," he said, "those who turn the day into night, the young, the drug addict, the profligate, the drunken, and that most miserable, the lover who watches all night long in fear and anguish. These can never again live the life of the day. When one meets them at high noon, they give off, as if it were a protective emanation, something dark and muted. The light does not become them any longer. They begin to have an unrecorded look. It is as if they were being tried by the continual blows of an unseen adversary." (Barnes 101)

This connection and affinity with the people of the night serves O'Connor in several ways. It allows him to be of service to a community often overlooked. Through O'Connor, the marginalized have a voice, allowing the telling of their stories. By drinking excessively and using drugs, they *choose* to indulge, attempting to cope with what they dislike or do not understand about themselves. Openly self-destructive, these groups appear miserable and pitiful. The darkness within overtakes them, never allowing them to find their way to the light. When O'Connor tries to explain to Nora what drives Robin to the streets and bars at night, he may also be revealing his own personality and proclivities. Alcohol has become a medication, a panacea to help the people of the night with their problems and relationships.

O'Connor is drawn to these people of the night because he, too, is a member of the night. O'Connor calls himself an "invert" because his desires and needs do not match what normal society has deemed appropriate. Like those he serves, O'Connor also uses the night as a cover for his true self. A doctor by trade, although his education is dubious, he has dedicated himself to

caring for the marginalized and forgotten because he is one. In yet another conversation with Nora on a different night later in the novel, O'Connor says,

> "And do I know my Sodomites? "the doctor said unhappily, "and what the heart goes bang up against if it loves one of them, especially if it's a woman loving one of them. What do they find then, that this lover has committed the unpardonable error of not being able to exist — and they come down with a dummy in their arms." (Barnes 100)

He is sexually attracted to men and seeks them out yet is incapable of deriving any pleasure from his interactions with them, which underscores his internal struggles. First, he wrestles with his sexuality in his attraction to men, seeing himself as an "invert." Second, he is clear in differentiating what it means to love a gay man as a man versus what it means to love a gay man as a woman. This difference is problematic to him because O'Connor wishes to be a woman in every sense of the word: mind, body, and soul. The night he speaks with Nora, she finds him dressed in women's nightclothes and wearing makeup in his room. He yearns to feel his body swell with a child and longs for the domestic life only available to women. In the 1920s and 1930s, there was little differentiation between one's biological sex and gender. If someone had a penis, they were male, and if someone had a vagina, they were female. There was no language or understanding of gender dysphoria. Therefore, the best way O'Connor can explain his feelings and desires is to call himself an invert. Crowley clarifies,

> As we have seen, the Modernist culture of drinking gendered the alcoholic "male" and figured the "female alcoholic," insofar as she could be imagined to exist at all, as a "manly" woman, a dyke […]. Barnes deconstructed this role in *Nightwood*, where she represented the female alcoholic through a clever and ironic double displacement by

> imaginatively cross-dressing herself as a man who cross-dresses himself as a woman. (131)

Barnes is reinforcing yet also subverting the traditional drinking narrative of the Modernist period. Male Modernist writers believed that to be a drunkard, or to drink in the world, were the acts of a manly man; as Hemingway described, "'I like to see every man drunk. A man does not exist until he is drunk'" (Crowley 44). Crowley also writes,

> Because O'Connor is a man, he qualifies as a true "alcoholic," but because he is a "womanly" man, he seems also to stand for the "female alcoholic." However, since O'Connor's notion of the womanly role is of a conventional and housewifely sort, he also represents what the manly Modernists dread: the infiltration and violations of a male preserve by hated feminine influences. Barnes thus appropriated the Modernist idea of the alcoholic as part of her overall scheme of inversion. O'Connor's "degenerate" status as a homosexual transvestite [author's language] undercuts the Modernist ideology of gender that constructed the alcoholic as a rugged man among men. In fact, none of the drunken characters in *Nightwood*, especially Robin Vote, fits this type. The novel thus undermines the security of the culture of drinking; male bonding itself becomes irrevocably problematic because, in *Nightwood*, same-sexuality and alcoholism have become interchangeable rather than antithetical. (131)

This subversion of the norm for the Modernist period regarding alcohol does not offer the characters', and perhaps not even the author's, any clarity about their reality. Drinking becomes a way to escape the uncertainty and keep the monsters, actual and imagined, at bay, at least for a little while.

A lack of understanding and acceptance for Dr. O'Connor is what leads him to drink, similar to the people he tries to help. Both O'Connor and the night people are traumatized not only by not being understood or accepted by society but also by suffering from the pain of not being able to understand or accept themselves. This lack of understanding often leads everyone to excessive alcohol use endeavoring to drown or at least temporarily forget their inner unease. *Nightwood* is a challenging book to understand. As Crowley suggests,

> [*Nightwood's*] reputation as one of the most forbiddingly difficult and allusive of high Modernist texts is certainly deserved, [it] does reward close and patient reading with its poetic majesty and tragic force. To some extent, the novel has been held hostage to the stories that circulate about its author. (116)

Often read as a *roman-à-clef* regarding Barnes's fractured relationship with Wood, this type of reading limits the reach and understanding of the novel and the world of the 1920s, the novel's setting. It is a queer narrative, exploring the nuances of a queer life not only in America but, more importantly, in Paris. It is a drunk narrative with all the principal characters each having a fractious relationship with alcohol. The novel also complicates the traditional drunk narrative of the Modernist male writers by allowing for female alcoholics, giving them the agency and authority to tell their own stories. *Nightwood* includes a trauma narrative as well where alcohol becomes the panacea against the traumas affecting early twentieth century society. As a queer narrative, *Nightwood* serves to give queer characters the chance to tell their stories. Nora must confront the dissolution of her relationship with Robin, who struggles with her sexuality, among

other things. Dr. Matthew O'Connor, too, struggles with his *invertness*[6], perhaps most of all because he is not only queer, but he is also what society today would call a trans individual wanting to live his life as a woman instead of a man.

As a drunk narrative, the novel reinforces the idea that the term alcoholic in the noun position is a solely male domain through the character of Baron Felix Volkbein. However, it also subverts this idea, as Crowley explains in *The White Logic*, by Dr. Matthew O'Connor's character, who is male and equally female. This duality provides support for the idea that women, too, can be alcoholics. Nora is the one character of the four who appears to not suffer from being an alcoholic, though she could have quickly gone that way. Nora is a social drinker who follows her lover, Robin, through the countryside as Robin meanders from place to place. They both move in and out of various drinking establishments, Nora helplessly watching as Robin drinks excessively until she can no longer take the pain and stops following Robin around.

As a trauma narrative, the story tackles the personal traumas of individual characters and explores societal concerns of the 1920s and 1930s. On a personal level, each character must come to terms with failing relationships. No one's choices are easy. Each character has choices to either embrace life as is or sacrifice their desires, sever relationships, or abandon the things they each hold dear. In this case, Nora must decide to continue following her lover or finally give up the relationship that torments her. Felix is forced to face the truth that his son will never be the man Felix had hoped. We are not privy to Robin's internal thoughts even through dialogue, yet she must also make a choice. More than the others, Robin has multiple choices at her

[6]Invertness is not a word that will be found in any dictionary. It was created by Barnes and used by O'Connor to explain his feelings and desire to be female in a male body.

fingertips; however, these choices are between two women, her husband and son, or none of them. At the story's end, Robin's final choice is to leave Nora. Dr. Matthew O'Connor can expose himself as the "worst kind of invert" or hide his true self and feelings from his dearest friends.

Each character's traumas are spurred by the same societal issues that would concern readers at the time. The more substantial concerns for society are dealing with the aftermath of World War I and putting lives, nations, and locations back together. The societal concerns were not just about physical things, including body damage from the war, but also psychological issues known as Shell Shock in the 1920s, and today's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Society also had to deal with a rapidly changing world where cars and other technological advancements were inundating cities at an alarming rate.

At the story's end, as Nora watches her lover wander into the forest, she is abandoned with no emotional support, and the reader is left to determine Nora's fate. Crowley believes, "The worst horror of this nightmarish novel may be that nothing finally matters; but however hopeless their search for an answer may be, Nora and Matthew ponder whether drunkenness offers any advantage either in understanding Robin or in overcoming the pain of losing her" (132). However, Barnes leaves it up to interpretation for the reader whether Nora or O'Connor, for that matter, find their answers.

Does Nora, like Felix, give in to her grief inside a bottle, or does she somehow escape the drunken fate that befalls the rest of the cast? Herring explains, "The revenge of *Nightwood* was not simply against an unfaithful lover, but against the conditions of life itself, in which the fulfillment of all desire seemed an impossible goal." (17) Not only does Barnes seek revenge on Wood, but she also shows how men turn to alcohol as a coping mechanism against an unfulfilled

life. But what of the female characters she created? The final scene leaves readers to determine that while Robin is likely to continue wandering and drinking, Nora's fate is less clear. The end of the novel leaves the reader asking if Nora has finally found the inner resources to give up on her relationship with Robin. Alternatively, will Nora continue following Robin's path? Will she keep hoping for a love Robin seems unable or unwilling to give to anyone? While these questions can leave the reader wanting answers, the end is just as satisfying without them.

The Night Has Spoken

Nightwood simultaneously embraces and critiques a "carnivalesque modernity," even though the characters can never see themselves beyond being "othered." They often careen from one chaotic situation to another like ping-pong balls hit off course, never to find their way.

Scholar Debra Parsons in her article, "Women in the Circus of Modernity: Djuna Barnes and *Nightwood*." determines,

> The novel attempts an alternative evaluation of sexuality beyond conventional norms of identity and sexual difference but cannot seem to overcome the social codes that define otherness as debased and identify the night community as abnormal, freakish, and degenerate. […] Although *Nightwood* itself makes a reaction-ally comment, [Barnes's] 'monstrous' characters themselves are unable to see past the negative connotations of their identifications. (276)

Three of the four central characters, Dr. O'Connor, Robin, and Felix, all turn to alcohol to forget their otherness and drown in it, unlike the circus performers who perform for an audience and then continue their lives without the guilt of their monstrousness. There is an adage that writers should write what they know. Many modernist female authors followed the adage and writing

about their lives became second nature. Barnes concerns herself with a niche section of society, a community that includes her. Dorothy Parker, who most often wrote about upper-middle-class and upper-class New York society, did the same.

Life on the Left Bank in Paris in the early 1900s, primarily in the 1920s and 1930s, was a cultural hotbed for feminine literary types. Historian Andrea Weiss explains, "It was not that Paris was culturally more 'liberated' than England or America in its attitudes towards women, but simply that it left its foreigners alone. Asked why she liked to live among the French, Gertrude Stein wrote, 'Well the reason is very simple their life belongs to them so your life can belong to you …'" (xxvi). New York City was also a hotbed for literary types. The difference was that there was little segregation of the sexes. Men and women commingled in groups like The Algonquin Round Table, often called The Vicious Circle, that counted members including Robert Benchley, Harpo Marx, Harold Ross, Robert Sherwood, were among the many men. On the female side of "The Table," Dorothy Parker was joined by influential women including Edna Feber, Jane Grant, and Margaret Pulitzer to name a few. Parker, like Barnes, often wrote about the social circle of which she was a part, upper-middle- and upper-class New York society. The principal difference between Paris and New York society was the bohemian nature of the Paris salons versus the more conservative nature of New York's upper crust.

CHAPTER 6: NEVER NOTICEABLY DRUNK, AND SELDOM NEARLY SOBER: ALCOHOL AS NARRATIVE CONDUIT IN DOROTHY PARKER'S "BIG BLONDE"

Miss Parker Joins the World

Dorothy Parker (née Rothschild) was born August 22, 1893, to parents Jacob Henry and Eliza Annie Rothschild. Eliza died in July 1898, shortly before Parker's fifth birthday. Her father remarried, but Parker refused to call Jacob's new wife anything but the housekeeper. Some people believe Parker hated her father because he "allegedly" physically abused her; conversely, Biographer Marion Meade insists Parker's home life was indulgent and speaks of summer trips to the shore.

In 1917, Parker married her first husband, Edward Pond Parker II, and divorced him roughly eleven years later. However, she kept his last name even when she married her second husband, Alan Campbell, in 1934. They moved to Hollywood, where she became a scriptwriter for several film studios. She and Campbell were nominated for an Academy Award (Oscar) for best screenplay adaptation for *A Star Is Born* in 1938. She divorced him in 1947, only to remarry him in 1950. They separated again in 1952 and reconciled once again in 1961. When Alan died in 1963, Parker moved back to New York City, living in a series of residential hotels before her death in 1967. These two relationships, along with several affairs, helped fuel her writing. The failed relationships led to numerous suicide attempts.

After her father died in 1913, Parker got her first job playing the piano for a dancing school. In 1914, she sold her first poem to *Vanity Fair* and later became an editorial assistant for

Vogue. In 1918, she subbed for the theater critic of *Vanity Fair.* By this time, she had become a founding Algonquin Hotel Round Table member while lunching with Robert Benchley and Robert E. Sherwood. Other members included novelist Edna Ferber and actor Harpo Marx.

In the 1920s, this group of highly artistic individuals could be found most afternoons laughing, carousing, offering sympathy, and making fun of each other for not completing some challenge issued by another member the previous week or month. Challenges ranged from writing to personal challenges of "go tell so-and-so such-and-such" to a version of Truth or Dare, where there were no truths and the dares were salacious, though likely tame by today's standards. It would not be surprising to find *regular partne*r Parker leading the charge in giving someone grief. Quick-witted with a razor-sharp tongue and the confidence to say what was on her mind, Parker was often outspoken on many subjects through her poetry, short stories, screenplays, and articles in magazines such as *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Home Journal*, chiefly on gender-related topics.

Often touted as one of the first feminists of the twentieth century, when anything other than motherhood and marriage for women was looked down upon or considered outright shameful, Parker championed the independent woman. In *Bobbed Hair and Bathtub Gin*, biographer Marion Meade describes her, "As a civic watchdog on behalf of her own sex, a Twenties everywoman, [Parker] was concerned in particular about encouraging her sisters to give men the finger whenever possible" (170). She addressed notions of what a perfect family should be, abortion, and even sex in and outside of marriage, supporting the idea of open marriages. Her male peers often critiqued her, but fortunately, she did not let this criticism bother her and continued forging her own path until she died in 1967 at age 73. One of her short stories, "Lady with a Lamp," explores abortion, though the word itself is never uttered. In her short story, "Mr.

Durant," Parker's focus is on an extramarital affair between a businessman and his secretary and his insistence that she abort when she becomes pregnant. The idea of forced abortions is indirectly related to alcohol use and abuse, but they do help illustrate that Parker was unafraid to delve into thorny and controversial topics.

Putting Pen to Paper, A Feminist Voice

Parker's most prolific writing and publishing period was during the 1920s when she published three hundred poems and free verses in addition to her first short story collection, *Laments for the Living,* at the end of the decade. "Big Blonde" was part of the collection, although it was first published first published in 1929 in *The Bookman* collection. Parker took particular delight in exploring alcohol use, mainly by creating female characters who drink. She also enjoyed looking at how alcohol consumption was encouraged or discouraged based on one's gender. Women were often encouraged to drink when out with her beau to appear as good sports when out with a group of men or as just one of the guys.

Meade explains, "When 'Big Blonde' appeared in February 1929, it brought her unanimous praise" (196). Unfortunately for Parker, she suffered for, or because of, her art, like many of her peers. Known as a dedicated drinker, Parker spent much of her life as an alcoholic, though, again, the terms used were different in the 1920s. The website Prohibition: An Interactive History states:

> When discussing alcohol, some Prohibition slang terms are going to sound pretty familiar since many still exist in the American lexicon, such as bent, canned, fried, plastered, or blotto to describe an intoxicated person. Spifficated, zozzled and boiled as an owl are terms that mean the same but are no longer common. ("Gold Diggers, Snuggle Pups and the Bee's Knees.")

At least one of these terms is used in Parker's "Big Blonde."

For many artistic types, the use/abuse of alcohol often goes hand in hand. According to media and journalist scholar Doug Underwood, "For many of the journalist-literary figures [including Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Parker], drink served as the lubrication for their journalistic and artistic lives" (188). Dorothy Parker was so well known for her drinking that her publisher, George Oppenheimer, was reported to have "had to lock her in a room in the house of a mutual friend with a bottle of whiskey at her side to get the corrected proofs out of her" (Frewin 146). Parker's drinking helped rather than hindered her writing, although, like many of her peers, this would not always be the case.

In "Big Blonde," however, a woman drinking alone, in secret, is disdained. Parker's stories were known to "t[ake] fiendish pleasure in boring into picture-perfect relationships to show how they were actually rotting from within" (*Bobbed Hair and Bathtub Gin,* 170). She was not afraid to delve into topics such as alcoholism, although the term did not exist until 1935 with the creation of Alcoholics Anonymous. Such is the case for her most famous and critically acclaimed story, "Big Blonde."

Parker's drinking, much like that of other famous female alcoholics, goes unexplored except to say that she drank heavily. Journalist Michelle Dean, in her article "Drunk Confessions" for *New Republic,* further explains, "Male writers get careful interpretation of the role of alcohol in their creative lives; women writers are alcoholics, pure and simple" (60). This chapter will shed light on the drinking of Dorothy Parker, expanding on Crowley's *The White Logic*, which explores the works of famous Modernist writers and how their drinking affected and was reflected in their writings.

Crowley's idea of the White Logic, specifically, his belief that Barnes used the idea of the drunk narrative, previously thought to be a male trope, is used to subvert the idea that a woman could be an alcoholic female but not a female alcoholic. As mentioned in the chapter on Djuna Barnes, the White Logic allows the term alcoholic to be in the adjective position, but not in the noun position when analyzing and discussing female drinkers. This distinction denies women the agency to own their drinking. Women could be described as drinking females; however, this came with negative associations not associated with their drinking male counterparts. Brigid McConville in *Women Under the Influence Alcohol and its Impact* explains, "The basic "given" is that [women] are valued as mates and mothers, and time and time again the drinking woman is portrayed with hostility and/or disgust as a deviant from that role" (42). Again, drinking women, with certain exceptions, were perceived negatively, whereas their men were not. "To get drunk is to threaten our prescribed female role and to bring condemnation upon ourselves" (43).

Crowley focuses on the biographical connections between Barnes and her novel *Nightwood*. The biographical nature of Parker's writing is obvious throughout her *oeuvre*. Biographers acknowledge that "Big Blonde" is Dorothy Parker's attempt to handle her failing remarriage to her second husband. Components within "Big Blonde" also speak to a larger societal narrative of loss. Loss, as explored in Parker's writing, includes a loss of connection with the past, Victorian ideals and 76ores, a loss of the sense of self, notably after World War I, and a loss of connection to others. Male Modernist writers, Hemingway among them, also addressed the same sense of loss felt by soldiers during and after WWI. Hemingway, for example, explores the traumas experienced by men returning from the war injured (see Jake Barnes in *The Sun Also Rises*). Parker, too, explores similar ideas but from a feminist perspective. Instead of dealing with an injury candidly, Parker's focus would be on the women

who interact with these men, dealing with the emotions expressed or repressed by their men regarding the war.

Many Modernist writers' lives often served as a foundation for their fiction, giving their writing, voice, and characters a unique quality. This biographical slant provides opportunities to understand partially the role of alcohol in the lives of these authors and how it corresponded to their fictional characters. Books have been written exploring and expounding on the achievements of male authors as well as their use of alcohol. F. Scott Fitzgerald and Hemingway are only two renowned writers equally famous for their works and drinking. For women, there is very little criticism about alcohol use and their works except for Zelda Fitzgerald, and only because of her more famous husband and the legendary stories of their alcohol-fueled escapades.

Parker's "Big Blonde" explores this through protagonist Hazel Morse's desire for a settled life, with a husband, a flat, and nights of conversation instead of constant partying and drinking. Literary theorist Peter Brooks speaks about how desire either pushes forward or begins the plot of stories. In his book *Reading for Plot: Design and Intent in Narrative,* he explains, "Desire is always there at the start of a narrative, often in a state of initial arousal, often having reached a state of intensity such that movement must be created, action undertaken, change begun," (38). This idea applies directly to Parker's "Big Blonde."

Happily, Ever After Not the Fairytale

Hazel, the protagonist of "Big Blonde," is described as a "good sport" who drinks "with the guys" and always seems to be the life of the party. In reality, Hazel is seeking what most women of the time wanted: a husband, a home, and, perhaps, children. She meets her husband, Herbie, and within six weeks, they are married. Hazel thinks she will settle easily into the life she secretly wants. However, Herbie wants the "good sport" he first knew and leaves her when she is

unwilling, or unable, to continue as they had before marriage. Hazel's desire for a settled life leads her away from partying and being a "good sport" to life with her husband, Herbie. Parker uses alcohol, something meant to be comforting, as a plot device to bring Hazel through the narrative, showing how life does not always work out the way one plans.

Throughout the story, Hazel falls deeper and deeper into drinking. Initially, a social drinker who imbibes with the guys and later with her neighbor, she turns into an alcoholic who drinks in secret and is powerless to go a day without gin. Ultimately, she attempts suicide to escape a life she hates, but that, too, fails her. Her final hope at the end of the story is that "whisky would be her friend again" (Parker 124). Whisky has been her companion for so long, helping her forget her troubles. When she cannot get the same feelings from drinking, she determines that alcohol has forsaken her, just like the men in her life,.

Parker explains that Hazel "wanted to be married. She was nearing thirty now, and she did not take the years well. […] And she had had a couple of thousand evenings of being a good sport among her male acquaintances. She had come to be more conscientious than spontaneous about it" (106). To Hazel, being a good sport meant going out at night, spending time with male admirers at various drinking establishments, and always pretending to be happy. Parker describes Hazel's relationship to alcohol as, "She had never needed to drink, formerly. She could sit most of a night at a table where the others were imbibing earnestly and never droop in looks or spirits nor be bored by the doings of those about her. If she took a cocktail, it was so unusual as to cause twenty minutes or so of jocular comment" (109). Hazel's lack of interest in drinking is intriguing because her nightlife is spent in forced gaiety. Her choice not to drink is juxtaposed with her constant drinking by the end of her story, which coincides with Parker's life.

When Parker first began lunching with the Algonquin group, she was "content to observe, had scarcely uttered a word. She looked meek and fragile in every way, childlike, not quite five feet tall with a mop of dark hair […] She had never smoked a cigarette or drunk more than a sip of a cocktail. The taste of liquor made her sick" (xvi). Like Hazel, Parker learned to love alcohol until it became a necessity in her life, ultimately interfering with her career, which, again, also speaks to a broader social conundrum for women of the 1920s. While they wanted to be considered new women and equal to men—and allowed to drink in public—they were still drawn to the same Victorian ideals of their parents, which included marriage, home, and stability. Parker, too, constantly sought to balance these opposing dreams.

Forced gaiety and drinking with her male admirers allows Hazel to meet her future husband. Fama, speaking of Melancholia within *Nightwood*, believes Melancholics are formed by what they have lost, creating a cycle of depression. She explains, "Barnes situates insistent identity pursuits within structures of narrative compulsion and finds in melancholia a source of resistance," and later suggests, "Barnes […] blends melancholias, but her melancholics are formed by their losses" (41-42). While Fama's quotation addresses Barnes and *Nightwood*, this idea also applies to Parker's protagonist as she similarly experiences melancholia and loss. Parker explains, "[Hazel] liked him immediately upon their meeting. She was enormously amused at his fast, slurred sentences, his interpolations of apt phrases from vaudeville acts and comic strips; […] He was as promptly drawn to her. They were married six weeks after they had met" (106). Their whirlwind courtship, unfortunately, does not allow time for either to get to know each other honestly. Since they met in a speakeasy, Herbie assumes Hazel's "life of the party" personality is her true personality. However, Hazel's public persona is not the complete story. The story's narrator explains, "Even in her "good sport" days, she had been known to weep

lavishly and disinterestedly on occasion" (106-107). Hazel's crying jags are so frequent and exuberant that her friends often laugh at and comment on them. Once secure in her marriage, Hazel becomes the self she wants to be, leaving behind the drink. "Wedded and relaxed, she poured her tears freely" (107), which angers her husband, who often "slam[s] out of the flat and come[s] back late and drunk" (107). This behavior, on Hazel's and Herbie's parts, shows the cracks within the marriage.

At this point, Hazel's desire for a relaxed, perfect home life begins to crumble. Parker reveals,

> "She loved the flat, she loved her life, she loved Herbie. In the first months of their marriage, she gave him all the passion she was ever to know.
>
> She had not realized how tired she was. It was a delight, a new game, a holiday, to give up being a good sport." (106)

To her eventual dismay, Hazel's delight in her holiday from her "good sport" days is short-lived. She and Herbie are at cross purposes and unable to find common ground to build their marriage.

Scholar Ellen Lansky suggests in "Female Trouble: Dorothy Parker, Katherine Anne Porter, and Alcoholism," that,

> Hazel Morse must feel enraged that her marriage, with its promises of economic and emotional security, practically dissolves overnight, but a good sport does not show her rage. She is caught in a fierce, double panoptic gaze, one that disciplines alcoholism and one that disciplines women, sometimes sequentially, sometimes simultaneously. In this

> situation, she cannot exhibit appropriate "female" behaviors, and she is punished by all of the inspectors. (222).

Hazel is stuck in an untenable situation. After refusing to return to the days spent drinking with Herbie and his friends, her dream disintegrates.

When Herbie pushes a drink on Hazel, saying, "'Atta girl,' he would approve of her. 'Let's see you get boiled, baby.'" (109), indicating he prefers her to be the intoxicated good sport like she was when they first met. Once Herbie decides he has had enough of Hazel's downer moods, she offers to have one last drink with him before he leaves for good. Herbie approves. "'Cockeyed again for a change, aren't you?' he said. 'That's nice'" (Parker 112). If Hazel had maintained her drinking ways instead of wanting the well-established ideal of womanhood, she might have been able to keep her husband. Instead, she loses her dream and ends up in a series of relationships with men, each relationship worse than the last, before seeking to end her Depression/Melancholia by committing suicide.

Hazel drinks to comfort herself for losing the "terrific domesticity" (108). Despite "want[ing] a sober, tender husband, prompt at dinner, punctual at work," she agrees to go out to make Herbie happy, trying to save her marriage. "So, they would go out to chop houses and the less expensive cabarets. However, it turned out badly. She could no longer find amusement in watching Herbie drink. She could not laugh at his whimsicalities; she was so tensely counting his indulgences" (108). All this nightlife leads to more and more fights between the spouses. As Hazel's Depression/Melancholia deepens, so does her drinking. She starts by going out with Herbie, which makes her nervous, then to drinking with her neighbor and other admirers, to

drinking alone. This constant drinking only heightens her Depression. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH),

> The multiple actions of alcohol on the CNS [Central Nervous System] result In a general effect of psychomotor depression, difficulties in information storage and logical reasoning and motor incoordination, in addition to stimulating the reward system, a fact that may explain the development of addiction. (https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26466222/)

It is this psychomotor depression, or slowing down of mental and physical activities, which causes Hazel to try becoming the life of the party once again, though she merely pretends to be having an enjoyable time. This behavior creates a vicious cycle that ultimately leads Hazel to attempt to end her life. That her "friend" alcohol has deserted her is troubling for Hazel in a way she cannot handle. She no longer gets the "high" from the alcohol, affecting her reward system because of the prolonged use, and so she drinks more to compensate. Hazel goes from drinking only with Herbie or her neighbor and the men at the neighbor's apartment to drinking throughout the day to maintain those positive feelings from the alcohol. She has reached a point where she cannot drink enough to feel fuzzy, so she is not hurt by the various defects of the people in her life.

Hazel falls into what scholar Peter Brooks calls "The female plot […] tak[ing] a more complex stance toward ambition, the formation of an inner drive toward the assertion of selfhood in resistance to the overt and violating male plots of ambition" (39). Hazel's idea of selfhood depends on her relationship with her husband and, later, her relationships with the men she becomes attached to. Briefly, "[Hazel and Herbie] resumed friendly relations only in the brief

magnanimity caused by liquor, before more liquor drew them into new battles" (109), and Hazel could live the life she dreamed of; however, that dream life was short-lived. The power within the relationship has shifted, and Hazel drinks "not able to recall the definite day that she started" (108). Dean explains, "It is power, somehow, that makes us see men and women drinkers differently" (58). Parker does not comment on the various male characters' drinking habits or criticize Hazel or her neighbor, Mrs. Martin. In "Big Blonde," men drink to be social, but women drink to find a husband or forget the life they want but cannot quite grasp. Intensely autobiographical, "Big Blonde" speaks bluntly to Parker's desires for a husband. She married one man twice and attempted another marriage on top of that one, but it also speaks to a more comprehensive audience.

As the "good sport" Hazel would fit the ideals of the era's Flapper. The basic idea of the Flapper[7] is of a young, vibrant woman. Aging Flappers seem to fall back on what their Victorian mothers wanted: husband, home, and family. Hazel drinks alone during the day to forget all that is wrong in her life. "She commenced drinking alone—little, short drinks all through the day. It was only with Herbie that alcohol made her nervous and quick to offense. Alone, it blurred sharp things for her. She lived in a haze of it. Her life took on a dream-like quality. Nothing was astonishing" (Parker 110). This "blurring" of sharp things initially allows Hazel to cope with her situation. Alcohol becomes the panacea covering the pain she feels at Herbie's defection. Alcohol is a depressant, and ultimately, it makes Hazel fall deeper into her melancholy until she cannot think of life continuing without end.

[7] For further commentary on the Flapper, read Zelda Fitzgerald's "Eulogy on the Flapper," First appeared in Metropolitan Magazine, June 1922 and "What became of the Flappers?" First appeared in McCall's in 1924.

It is at this point that Hazel goes from being a social drinker to an alcoholic, what today's vernacular would call someone with a substance use disorder. According to *mentalhelp.net*, "Regardless of the particular substance, the diagnosis of a substance use disorder is based upon a pathological set of behaviors related to the use of that substance." The website explains the criteria necessary to diagnose someone with substance use disorder, starting with impaired control, where a person begins "using for longer periods of time than intended or using larger amounts than intended." Social impairment involves continuing to use a substance, in Hazel's case, alcohol, despite interpersonal problems with others. Interestingly, Herbie would have loved for Hazel to continue to drink with him and his friends, but she gets "nervous" and "quick to offense," which causes their interpersonal problems. Risky use is "the failure to refrain from using the substance despite the harm it causes" (Mentalhelp.net). Hazel is aware of the psychological issues alcohol is causing her, but by this point, she cannot stop drinking. Pharmacological indicators for someone with a substance use problem are discussed on the website, *mentalhelp.net*. The site explains tolerance and withdrawal, two of Hazel's struggles.

> For many people, tolerance and withdrawal are the classic indicators of advanced addiction. As such, these are particularly important concepts. This criterion refers to the adjustment the body makes as it attempts to adapt to the continued and frequent use of a substance.
>
> Tolerance occurs when people need to increase the amount of a substance to achieve the same desired effect. Stated differently, it is when someone experiences less of an effect using the same amount. The "desired effect" might be the desire to avoid withdrawal symptoms. On the other hand, it may be the desire to get high.

> Withdrawal is the body's response to the abrupt cessation of a drug, once the body has developed a tolerance to it. The resulting cluster of (very unpleasant and sometimes fatal) symptoms is specific to each drug.

This idea of what defines a person as an alcoholic can be applied equally to Hazel and her creator. By the end of her life, Parker was living alone in the Volney Residential Hotel in New York City with only her dogs and alcohol for company. Parker had fallen so far into depression and alcoholism that she did not care about her hygiene or the needs of her dogs.

Hazel's descent into alcoholism, although it would not be labeled as such during the 1920s and early 1930s, occurs as she tries to salvage her marriage. As quoted above, drinking with Herbie again "made her nervous" and further angers him. At the end of his patience, Herbie decides to leave for greener pastures. Amazingly,

> Hazel takes this defection in stride, asking Herbie,
>
> "Like a drink before you go?" she asked.
>
> Again, he looked at her, and a corner of his mouth jerked up.
>
> "Cockeyed again for a change, aren't you?" he said. "That's nice. Sure, get a couple of shots, will you?" (Parker 112)

This defection by Herbie only makes Hazel drink even more. As Lansky points out, "With no visible spouses, […] Hazel Morse [is] watched even more carefully. They are expected to be charming and entertaining in public — good sports. […] Sometimes being a good sport means drinking with the inspector, but only if the inspector approves" (221). The inspector or

inspectors, in this scenario, are the men visiting Hazel's neighbor's apartment. For a time, she becomes what she could not be with Herbie: the life of the party. "Drinking with them, Mrs. Morse became lively and good-natured and audacious. She was quickly popular. When she had drunk enough to cloud her most recent battle with Herbie, she was excited by their approbation. Crab, was she? Rotten sport, was she? Well, there was some that thought different" (Parker 110). For a while, Hazel connects with Ed, who finds her a new apartment and provides her with an allowance before he, too, leaves her. She then goes through a series of men, each staying for a time before moving on.

Hazel's drinking and her continued melancholy eventually leave her to face life alone. Even Ed leaves her once she is no longer the life of the party. When her continued alcohol consumption no longer provides the haziness she wants, she goes to desperate ends to find something to alleviate her unhappiness. In her case, suicide. But just as she fails to save her marriage as she is still legally married to Herbie, the pills she takes fail to end her life.

> Mrs. Morse looked into the liquor and shuddered back from its odor. Maybe it would help. Maybe, when you had been knocked cold for a few days, your very first drink would give you a life. Maybe whisky would be her friend again. She prayed without addressing a God, without knowing a God. Oh, please, please, let her be able to get drunk, please keep her always drunk.
>
> She lifted the glass.
>
> "Thanks, Nettie," she said. "Here's mud in your eye."
>
> The maid giggled. "Tha's the way, Mis' Morse," she said. "You cheer up now."

"Yeah," said Mrs. Morse. "Sure." (Parker 124)

Hazel uses "Here's mud in your eye," which, sadly, serves as a flashback to her last conversation with Herbie before he leaves for Detroit. It is also a reminder of how their marriage pushed her into alcoholism. This phrase serves as a callback to what she lost, her marriage and hope for a traditional home life, that drove her to alcoholism.

He took his highball.

"Well," he said, and he gave a sudden, uncertain laugh. "Here's mud in your eye."

"Mud in your eye," she said.

They drank. He put down his glass and took up the heavy suitcases. (Parker 112)

In a moment, Herbie is gone, leaving Hazel to fall deeper into her drinking, both alone and with Mrs. Martin and her male friends. Without fully understanding her predicament, Hazel falls back into the old habit of drinking throughout the day alone. As Brooks says,

> Narratives portray the motors of desire that drive and consume their plots, and they also lay bare the nature of narration as a form of human desire: the need to tell as a primary human drive that seeks to seduce and to subjugate the listener, to implicate him to the thrust of a desire that never can quite speak its name — never can quite come to the point — but that insists on speaking over and over again its movement toward that name. (61)

Hazel loses her greatest desire, a husband who loves her and wants the same things she does. In this instance, Hazel cannot articulate her longing and never realizes her dream home life. Instead, the drinking speaks for her frustrated desire.

Hazel laments the failed suicide attempt, and she begins to think, "Whisky [could] be her friend again," meaning if she could once again turn to alcohol to make her life fuzzy around the edges, she would not have to focus on her lack of a husband and family. Harvard Researcher Nancy K. Mello explains the biology of alcohol addiction:

> In addition to behavioral tolerance for alcohol, the alcoholic shows pharmacological tolerance in that consistent consumption of a quart of bourbon per day may result in unexpectedly low levels of alcohol in blood as measured by an enzymatic method (Mendelssohn et al., 1971; Mello and Mendelssohn, 1970a). Similarly, the alcoholic may show cross-tolerance for other CNS [Central Nervous System] depressants such as morphine and barbiturates (cf. review by Seevers and Deneau, 1963). (222)

This acquired tolerance explains why Hazel does not die after swallowing Veronal, a common barbiturate of the period. Fortunately, her maid finds her before the pills do their worst. It is more that Hazel's tolerance for alcohol extended to the barbiturates, and she did not take enough. Perhaps her forced abstinence from alcohol will enable her to feel the effects of her beloved whisky once again, at least for a time. Eventually, Hazel will once again achieve a high enough tolerance for the drink that she would not be able to enjoy the feelings of numbness she depends on. She will no longer live in a haze where the edges of her life are fuzzy. Hazel was already a textbook alcoholic by the time of her attempted suicide. However, flushing her system of alcohol, a forced detox, serves only to reset the bar of her tolerance. In due course, she will find

herself back where she was, needing increasing amounts of alcohol to get that same high in order to feel better about the shambles of her life.

Hazel Morse finds herself in a no-win situation because she did not die. Yet, is she truly living? Lansky, quoting Dr. Jean Paul Sournia, explains, "'Female drunkenness has always been seen as more serious and degrading than the equivalent male excess.' Because an alcoholic woman—then and now—transgresses her culturally determined role, she is a threat to a power structure invested in gender roles" (218). If Hazel drinks, she is a "good sport" until she is not. Indulging her melancholy while being a "female" trait drops her from being a "good sport" once the men in her life begin criticizing her behavior. Drinking alone, she seems to think, takes her out from under their constant, critical gaze. Instead, she becomes doubly or even triply gazed upon because even Hazel cannot keep from gazing and critiquing herself in the bathroom mirror before swallowing the pills. Readers are still eyeing and critiquing her as well.

So much pressure, combined with Depression, sends Hazel spiraling. She sees suicide as her only option. Her maid finds her, however, preventing her success.

> "Tha's no way to ack, takin' them pills," said Nettie. "You can thank you' stars you here at all. How you feel now?"
>
> "Oh, I feel great," said Mrs. Morse. "Swell, I feel."
>
> Her hot, painful tears fell as if they would never stop. (123)

Because she failed to kill herself, Hazel continues asking Nettie for a scotch in the end. Lansky says,

> To her inspectors, her suicidal notions signal a thought disorder. To her, suicide is a logical consequence. It is an escape from a life that keeps her under constant, punitive surveillance. […] It is clear that violence is not the solution to the panoptic problem. The alcoholic woman remains under the disapproving surveillance of her associates, her narrator, her readers — herself. (224)

Lansky's use of "alcoholic woman" shows how even female scholars are not immune to denying female characters their agency to own their drinking by being called female alcoholics (see Crowley). Hazel's life going forward is uncertain. Readers are left to wonder if she will attempt to commit suicide again or simply continue as she has, drinking both privately and publicly, going through her days in a haze until her time comes to an end.

Is Parker, with "Big Blonde," really disapproving of Hazel's lifestyle choices, given that Parker herself lived a similar life? Perhaps it is not so much a tale of disapproval but an attempt to help society understand the double standards that surround men and women, specifically when it comes to alcohol use and abuse. "Big Blonde," while not a celebration of a woman's right to drink "like a man," does explore what life is like for women who choose to drink. While 1920s and 1930s-era readers might think Hazel deserves condemnation for the ruin of her marriage, today's "inspectors" would be more sympathetic. Modern readers may not like her much, but they at least understand her plight of nearly drinking herself to death because she did not get the fantasy life she wanted with Herbie.

Parker's Alcohol Descent

Like many of Dorothy Parker's stories, "Big Blonde" is not a "happy" one. However, it is realistic for the 1920s and 1930s. Parker's stories are still relevant today, given that women who

choose to drink, some to the point of drunkenness, are still looked down upon, while men who drink, if not praised, are at least not demonized. Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, London, and many other male writers of the Modernist period were well known for their drinking and carousing. Much of their lives were incorporated into their work, celebrating a macho, hard-boiled life. Parker's attitude, along with that of many other female writers of the time, was "if he can do it, I can too." According to Lansky, Parker "preferred the company of men, even though this company often left [her] in a solitary and precarious social position" (212). Like her protagonist, Hazel Morse, Parker found life challenging and sometimes problematic. She serves, however, as a forerunner for future feminists. Her outspokenness and willingness to tackle tough topics, such as abortion and alcoholism, helped pave the way for future writers, such as those who write about their journey with alcohol. Known today as "drunk narratives," women can fully own their alcoholism like men have been able to do from the beginning of time. Even though society has come a long way, there is still a stigma for the female alcoholic. "Still, the canon is for the most part seriously dented by the effects of what you could call the Hemingway attitude — this idea that a woman is contaminated by self-destructiveness, and contaminated in a way that slurs her art" (Dean 60). Perhaps this idea of women as self-destructive is perpetrated to slur their art and is one reason that women like Dorothy Parker are often left out of the canon. The adage that men are revered for their vices while women receive condemnation for those same vices shows up again. Nearly one hundred years later, women continue to fight the same battles for equality, even in their writing. According to Joan Acocella in her article "After the Laughs: Under the. Cover of her withering wit, Dorothy Parker nursed a deeper talent" from *The New Yorker,*

> Her stories are about the relations between men and women, but in the stories, she is forced to supply details. She cannot just say there's a sucker born every minute; she has to say which sucker and how, and in the process, the situation deepens and intensifies. Basically, she is held back from wit. Possibly for that reason, something curious happens to her vulnerability — cruelty formula. Instead of deploying the two forces sequentially — buildup, then letdown — she works them simultaneously. Heroines are all vulnerability, but from the very start they are observed with a cold precision. (Acocella para 14)

Even when Parker gives Hazel her deepest desire with one hand, she takes it away with the other: Herbie does not like that Hazel is no longer a "good sport" and leaves her. Parker hones this "vulnerability—cruelty formula" onto Hazel when Herbie departs soon after their marriage. Giving and taking shows what Acocella explains is Parker's enduring message in her writings: "Hope will always be disappointed" (para 10). Hazel ends up with nothing when she cannot reconcile her competing desires. Many of Parker's other female characters share the same fate. Even when a woman thinks her life is perfect and comments on it, she is in a precarious position because she cannot read her husband's thoughts about how he wishes he could escape his life. Hazel attempts to leave her life, but Parker denies that respite by having her maid find her. Cruel indeed.

Hazel, like Parker herself, is trapped between the culture of the 1880s and 1890s and the emergence of the New Woman in the 1910s and 1920s. While Dorothy Parker received much acclaim during the 1920s and 1930s for her writing, she was often dismissed because of her gender and Devil-may-care attitude, even after winning the prestigious O'Henry Award for "Big Blonde." Because her attitude was so different from what women "should" think for her time, it

is precisely why today's society should read Parker's works. Parker, brutally, shows all sides of life, most notably about issues surrounding alcohol.

CHAPTER 7: *SAVE ME THE WALTZ*LCOHOL AS INDEPENDENCE AND CRUTCH: THE FLAPPER AND ELDA FITZGERALD'S

Zelda, The Cat's Meow

Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald was the youngest of five children born into a prominent and wealthy Montgomery, Alabama, family. Her mother was a known socialite who doted on her youngest child, counterbalanced by her strict and remote father, a state Supreme Court Justice. Zelda lived a privileged yet traumatic life. As a well-heeled Montgomery social set member, she became known for her beauty and high spirits. On the surface, Zelda would have appeared to be the quintessential Southern Belle, demure and genteel, she was nothing like the stereotype. Instead, she altered her persona from Southern Belle to embracing the New Woman concepts. Actively seeking attention, her antics of drinking, smoking, and open flirtation with boys fed the gossip and shocked the community. Zelda's mother, Minerva, known as Minnie to most, sharply disapproved of her daughter's rebellious behavior. "When [Zelda] came home riotously late one night, 'stewed' on whisky and on the arm of another man, Minnie left her a pained little note accusing her of 'developing the habits of a prostitute" (153). The censure felt in this comment makes one wonder if Minnie was so displeased with her daughter's behavior as a teen, what would she think of Zelda and Scott's behavior later in life? Zelda's teen rebellions were relatively innocent by today's standards. Her daughter's later public displays of drunkenness must have disappointed Minnie.

Meeting of Like Minds?

Zelda met F. Scott Fitzgerald at the Montgomery Country Club in 1918 after he dropped out of Princeton upon his rejection by a Chicago socialite. He had enlisted in the army and was stationed just outside of Montgomery. He began dating several women before actively courting Zelda. The beginning of the budding relationship was rocky since he did not share her Confederate sentiments, and she did not believe in his ambition to become a famous novelist. F. Scott's infatuation with Zelda motivated him to redraft the lead character in an unpublished short story. They grew apart for over a year, but after F. Scott wrote *This Side of Paradise* and had a publishing promise from Scribners, Zelda agreed to marry him. They were married on April 3, 1920, in New York City in a Catholic ceremony.

It is unclear if this was a love match or if other factors played into their relationship, however, they enjoyed their time together, particularly the party atmosphere they encountered in New York. Alcohol increasingly fueled their evening escapades of riding atop taxi cabs, frolicking in fountains, and riding bicycles down the deserted streets in the wee hours of the morning, Zelda on the handlebars while Scott pedaled. They were delighted when the New York Papers dubbed them *les enfants terrible* of the Jazz Age. However, they eventually became a cautionary tale.

Zelda is often remembered for being the muse for her husband's ideal flapper as a:

> redefinition of the New Woman. [Newspapers and magazines] agreed that "the flapper has grown up in F. Scott Fitzgerald's latest book." Acknowledging that a twentysomething wife could still be a flapper if "she is graduated from the bright, trivial, careless atmosphere of vulgarity, is borne into an older world made unromantic by the super-sophistication of the people in it." (Zeitz 63)

Zelda herself writes about the Flapper and the culture that surrounded these women. She views the original Flapper "as an involuntary and invaluable cupbearer to the arts. The flapper as an artist in her particular field, the art of being—being young, being lovely, being an object" (Buccoli 398). Zelda further explains, "The first Flappers are so secure in their positions that their attitude toward themselves is scarcely distinguishable from that of their debutante sisters ten years ago. They have won their case. They are blasé" (391-392). On the other hand, she believes "the new Flappers galumping along in unfastened galoshes are striving not to do what is pleasant and what they please, but simply to outdo the founders of the Honorable Order of Flappers: to outdo *everything*. Flapperdom has become a game; it is no longer a philosophy" (392). Intriguingly, Zelda differentiates between the first and new Flappers, marking one as a bastion of change for women. At the same time, the other takes on the trappings of the Flapper without the responsibility of the weighty implications of feminist ideas.

This new version of the Flapper and her irreverent actions are the very things the first Flappers were trying to elude. Scholar Judith Mackrell agrees with Zelda's summation of the Flapper, "At the beginning of the decade, the fascinating, defiant flapper was a type more read about in novels and newspapers than encountered on the street, but within a few years, she'd become the image to which hundreds of thousands of ordinary young women aspired" (6). She continues, "All these women lived many of their private moments on the public stage" (10). Life on the public stage was a concept previously introduced to Zelda. Much of her life with Scott became fodder for the tabloids but not just for the press. Zelda and Scott used their personal exploits, big and small, to fuel their fiction. For example, in *The Great Gatsby,* Scott uses a comment Zelda made in the hospital after giving birth to their daughter, Scottie, when Daisy tells

Nick, “I’m glad it’s a girl. And I hope she’ll be a fool—that’s the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful fool” (16).

The Zelda and Scott Mystique

The time immediately after the war, 1919 moving forward, was a time of not only rebuilding lives, locations, and nations but also excess. As Mackrell states:

> The 1920s had been greeted as a decade of change. The Great War might have detonated the optimism of the early century, shattering millions of lives, damaging economies and toppling regimes, yet out of its carnage the modern world seemed to be reinventing itself with astonishing speed. Fueled by the rising American stock market and the ferocious gearing up of industry, the Twenties was emerging as a decade of mass consumption and international travel, of movies, radios, brightly coloured cocktails and jazz. It was a decade that held out the promise of freedom. (2)

The 1920s was a time of decadence and excess where the morals of the youth differed vastly from those of their Victorian parents. Morals such as modesty, thriftiness, and sexual repression, already under attack at the turn of the century, were pushed even further. For example, women shortened their dresses, cut their hair, spent copious amounts of money on the little extras that were considered too precious to buy in earlier generations, and kissed boys and drank alcohol with them in public.

Newly married, Scott and Zelda were fully embracing this time of excess. “Scott […] believed the early 1920s was a charmed era. ‘It was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of stature,’ he wrote later. It was ‘an age of miracles’ and he and his generation were ‘the great believers’” (Mackrell 157-158). The duo was frequently in the spotlight attending

parties and drinking the night away. The Amazon Prime show, *Z: The Beginning of Everything*, took liberties with the story of Scott and Zelda. Still, the two led a well-known legendary party lifestyle. Writer and critic Terry Teachout explains, "Part of what makes it hard to separate legend from fact is that we know almost too much about the Fitzgeralds" (59). He later adds:

> He and Zelda thereby acquired the financial wherewithal to set themselves up as a high-living celebrity couple whose flashy doings were regularly chronicled in the popular press. Within a few years, they were living exemplars of the excesses of the era to which Scott gave a name in the title of his second story collection, *Tales of the Jazz Age* (1922). They also acquired a reputation for being heavy drinkers, and Scott soon became dependent on alcohol in order to function, remaining so for the rest of his life. (59-60)

The parties the couple attended were so outlandish that at one famous party at a friend's house in the French Rivera, Zelda fell from a second-floor balcony because she was so drunk. This moment highlights the excesses of the time and reveals how little Scott and Zelda thought of drinking and partying.

Many people felt Scott and Zelda were living too lavishly, though many kept those feelings to themselves. Others were more inclined to chime in with displeasure and censure. For one, Dorothy Parker was not a fan of either Fitzgerald:

> [thinking] there was a new petulance in [Zelda's] expression and an element of strain in her desire to shock. She disliked the self promotion exhibited by both Fitzgerald's, and her resentment at its effectiveness showed in her satirical squib 'The Flapper': 'All spotlights focus on her pranks./All tongues her prowess herald./For which she may well render thanks/to God and Scott Fitzgerald.' (Mackrell 159)

This poem's last two lines introduce a problem Zelda would experience her entire life. She was constantly in Scott's shadow, the latter heralded as a novelist of great acclaim. Teachout, quoting Ring Lardner, a friend of both Fitzgeralds, stated, "'Mr. Fitzgerald is a novelist and Mrs. Fitzgerald is a novelty'" (58). This idea was expressed before Zelda wrote *Save Me the Waltz;* however, the sentiment was reiterated in various forms from critics and friends alike even after she was better published. Her husband joined the others in disregarding her writing. In a transcript of a therapy session with Zelda's therapist, Scott says, "You are a third-rate writer and a third-rate ballet dancer…I am the professional novelist, and I am supporting you" (Qtd in Teachout 60). This harsh remark comes after years of Scott using Zelda's private writings. He was known for lifting passages from her diary for his novels in progress, and often put his name to her work or as a co-author. History speculates that these last two actions happened because Scott was the better-known writer and would garner a larger commission for the piece. Biographer Sally Cline, in her acclaimed biography *Zelda Fitzgerald: The Tragic Meticulously Researched Biography of the Jazz Age's High Priestess,* explains,

> In her first published signed article, 'Friend Husband's Lates,' she [Zelda] remarked acidly: 'On one page I recognized a portion of an old diary of mine which mysteriously disappeared shortly after my marriage, and also scraps of letters, which though considerably edited sound to me vaguely familiar.'
>
> In her review, Zelda pointed out pleasantly: 'Mr. Fitzgerald … seems to believe that plagiarism begins at home.' (123)

Though this last bit could be considered tongue-in-cheek, there is still an element of bitterness underneath the sarcasm.

This disregard for his wife's work shows how strained their relationship became in the final years of their life. Zelda was often institutionalized, relying on Scott for support, while Scott had at least one affair in Hollywood. F. Scott's behavior potentially led Zelda to write *Save Me the Waltz*. The novel became a way of exploring all the things that could have led to her eventual breakdown. Adding Scott's name to Zelda's published work came with heavy editing of her original text. He likely, also, took the lion's share of her pay, providing her with enough allowance for her ballet lessons costing Zelda her autonomy. She had her ballet, which was hers alone, but it cost her the ability to point to her writings and say, "Mine." Access to the original galleys for her novel would be necessary to know how significant the changes were and what Scott made Zelda take out of *Save Me the Waltz* for the sake of his novel, *Tender is the Night*. It took nine years for Scott to write *Tender is the Night.* The publication of Zelda's novel caused F. Scott to call his wife a "third-rate writer."

This borrowing from life perhaps caused the greatest upheaval between the spouses. Modernist writers were known for taking life events and writing about them. To varying degrees, many authors borrow from their own lives to make sense of situations they often find confusing and stressful. Modernist writers, in particular, had reason to examine their lives through their writing. Rebellion against conservative parental morals and ideals would be enough fodder for stories, paintings, music lyrics, and the like. Adding to this, Modernist authors also had the effects of The Great War, later known as World War I, to contend with and the many physiological and psychological issues stemming from the war, like seeing friends and strangers getting blown to pieces, and dealing with their own physical and psychological injuries.

Critic Joanna Scutts opens her article "Team Scott vs Team Zelda" with the legend that Scott and Zelda are "the brilliant, self-destructive golden boy tethered to a golden girl" before

going on to explain, “The accretion of myth makes it difficult to access the Fitzgeralds’ work on its own terms, not least because from the very start, the couple treated each other, and their life together, as a story” (31). Because so much of their life was fodder for stories, this would prove problematic on many occasions as Zelda came to resent Scott’s habit of lifting pages from her private diary and their life in general for use in his work. Scott often felt the same although he did not, by all accounts, keep a diary. This heated argument stems from Zelda’s novel *Save Me the Waltz,* written in six weeks while institutionalized. Scholar Debra Pike, in her book *The Subversive Art of Zelda Fitzgerald,* explains,

> Scott was furious. In a rage, he wrote to Dr. Squires a long list of reasons why Zelda should not publish her work. […] “Zelda’s novel, or rather her intention of publishing it without any discussion, has upset me considerably. First, because it is such a mixture of good and bad in its present form that it has no chance of artistic success, and second, because of some of the material in the novel.’ Later he complained, “My God, my books made her a legend and her single intention in this somewhat thin portrait is to make me a non-entity.” (118)

Did Scott have Zelda’s best interests at the forefront of his mind when he wrote this letter? Or was it his sense of competition, and perhaps frustration at being unable to produce work as quickly as his wife that drove him to write to Zelda’s doctor? At this time, Scott had been working on *Tender is the Night* for nine years, his version of *Save Me the Waltz*, and told from a masculine point of view.

Whatever the source of ire, Zelda finally acquiesced to his request to read and revise the novel before sending it to publishers. Of course, Zelda could not let the situation go without one parting shot. “Of course [*sic*] I glad[ly] submit to anything you want about the book or anything

else…However, I would like you to thoroughly understand that my revision will be made on an aesthetic basis[,] that the other material which I elect is nevertheless legitimate stuff which cost me a pretty emotional penny to amass" (Qtd in Pike, Pike's emphasis 119). Once again, the cracks in the relationship were showing and getting deeper. At this point, Zelda was institutionalized, so drinking was not an option as a way of coping.

In contrast, Scott was drinking heavily. McConville states, "drinking in men is often associated with creativity, talent, and self-expression—and from "unhappiness," for which Zelda was to blame. The implication is that she has "driven him to drink" (49). Being institutionalized meant Zelda wrote while sober. One must wonder if she would have agreed to Scott's changes if she, too, had been drinking. Would she have had the "false courage" that comes when inebriated, the lack of inhibition that allows one to be stronger against another. It is not hard to imagine that the conversation would have been much more volatile had it taken place face-to-face and with them both drunk.

The Flapper: Zelda as Seen Through Her Character, Alabama

Zelda Fitzgerald's *Save Me the Waltz* is a very thin *roman-à-clef* in which the character, Alabama Beggs Knight, is the protagonist. Readers are introduced to Alabama when she is still a privileged child of a judge in the South before World War I. She is very spoiled and the antithesis of the quintessential Southern Belle as she grows into adulthood, taking on the trappings of what it means to be a New Woman. Described as "the wildest of the Beggs [yet] a thoroughbred," which Alabama took to "meaning that [she] never let[s] them down on the dramatic possibilities of a scene – [she] give[s] a damn good show" (Fitzgerald 29). These possibilities include, but are not limited to, smoking, kissing, and riding in cars with boys, as well as drinking. Alabama's behavior gets to the point that her father has to step in. He accuses her of corrupting others.

"Joe Ingram told me his daughter was brought home scandalously intoxicated and she admitted that you had given her the liquor."

"She didn't have to drink it – it was a freshman lead out and I filled my nursing bottle with gin."

"And you forced it on the Ingram girl?"

[…]

"Nothing to do but drink and make love," she commented privately. (31)

Alabama wanted to be more than what was in the past. She illustrates an entire generation that Gertrude Stein dubbed "The Lost Generation" partly because they were restless, wanting to escape the ideals and morés of their parents. After World War I, this generation became even more lost as they tried to figure out life after the causalities and horrors of the war and the increasing pace of society in general as the Industrial Revolution exploded.

The above scene shows a surface innocence as Alabama rebels by drinking and, at least to herself, how far she is willing to go with boys. Here, though, things become cloudy. The phrase "make love" here, most likely, did not mean what it does today. According to the Letters Republic website's definition of making love "from the eighteenth century through the first quarter or so of the twentieth century, 'making love' was the formal term for flirting." By today's standards, this innocent behavior would have scandalized many a parent in the early 1900s.

However, Alabama is wise enough to keep her thoughts to herself, having angered her father, a teetotalist[8], enough by admitting to drinking and providing alcohol to others.

Alabama soon escapes her father's restrictive house when she meets and later marries Army officer David Knight. Alabama and David first settle in New York City, partying with David's artist friends, before settling in the country outside the city. Partying and drinking are still a regular part of their lives, though it does not seem to be a problem until Alabama's mother and father visit. In a series of short scenes, Alabama tries to deal with a pair of drunken friends when the gardener, Tanka, points out the two men on the hammock.

> "Look!" Said Tanka. With a gesture of negation, he indicated the hammock swung between the columns of the house where two young men lay uproariously asleep with a bottle of gin by their sides.
>
> […]
>
> "What's the matter?
>
> "Matter! There are drunks in the hammock. If Daddy sees *that* there'll be hell to pay!"
>
> "Send them away."
>
> "They can't move." (Fitzgerald 51)

This particular scene shows how commonplace drinking is for the couple, along with drunk friends, however, the pending visit by the judge causes grief for Alabama, who wishes for her

[8] Teetotalism is the practice or promotion of total abstinence from alcoholic drinks. It became popular as part of the temperance movement of the early nineteenth century in Great Britain and North America. Practitioners known as teetotalers or teetotalists, abstain from all alcohol, including beer and wine. (https://www.britannica.com/topic/teetotalism)

parent's approval even though she no longer lives at home. The drunken friends, perhaps for the first time, are a source of embarrassment, at least for Alabama.

Roughly two pages later, the friends appear again. The extended scene shows Alabama resigned to dealing with their drunken friends while David simply finds humor in the situation, as illustrated here:

> It was three o'clock in the morning when the Knights were awakened by a stentorian whispering on the lawn.
>
> An hour passed after David dressed and went down. The noise rose in increasingly uproarious muffles.
>
> "Well, then, I'll take a drink with you if you'll try to make a little less noise," Alabama heard David say as she meticulously put on her clothes.
>
> […]
>
> "Tomato juice. It sobers you up. I've just been giving some to the guests," explained David. "First I give them tomato juice and then I give them gin." (54)

Alabama is resigned to, once again, dealing with the friends who were drunk earlier and lying in the hammock when Alabama returned with her parents from the train station. The farcical scene becomes even more painfully humorous when Alabama manages to give herself two black eyes when the kitchen door hits her in the face. The friends want to continue the party while David vacillates between keeping his friends quiet and joining in on the fun by first giving them tomato juice to sober them up, quickly followed by gin, which negates the juice.

This scene can be interpreted in many ways. Some readers view it in a comedic light, a drunken farce to be laughed about later. Scholar Debra Pike sees this scene in a more sinister light. She explains,

> There is no mention of David directly perpetrating the violence himself, as any such reference would have been expunged by Scott. However, there are hints throughout the text of alcohol-inspired violence. Seemingly unconnected statements such as "Alabama's head felt as if somebody had been making popcorn in her cranium … She tried to conceal her bruised eyes" are given no explanation but indicate a dark undercurrent of marital violence. (140).

Perhaps Zelda wrote a darker version of this scene where it was not an innocent person falling into the door that caused the black eyes. Again, without the surviving text of the original manuscript, it is nearly impossible to know the definitive intent. Based purely on what the narrator of the story conveys, "The swinging door caught [Alabama] full in the face. Her nose bled jubilantly a newly discovered oil well down the front of her dress. […] Alabama and David surveyed her black eyes disconsolately" (54-55). This moment, while not without violent behavior with Alabama "snatching" the bottle from David's hands while he "fends her off," shows two people in a scuffle. Power dynamics could play into Pike's interpretation, but strictly speaking, it appears to be a no-fault situation, or at least no calculated harmful intent is apparent on David's part. "Alabama's head felt as if somebody had been making popcorn in her cranium" (55). The interaction Pike points to could indicate violence between husband and wife. It is just as likely that Alabama's head feels the way it does because she hit it on the door, gaining two black eyes in the process.

This scene and the scene of breakfast with the judge showcase the situation's absurdity and the expected reactions of everyone in the house. Alabama tries to keep the peace; David only worries about his in-laws thinking, he gave Alabama the black eyes. Millie Beggs remains silent while her husband shows all his disappointment and frustration in his comments directed to Alabama.

> "Alabama," he said, "about that telephone call to Joan – your mother and I felt that we'd better make it today. She will be needing help with the baby."
>
> "Yes, sir."
>
> Alabama had known this would be their attitude, but she couldn't prevent a cataclysmic chute of her insides. She had known that no individual can force other people forever to sustain their own versions of that individual's character – that soon or later they will stumble across the person's own conception of themselves. (55)

At this moment, with the one word from her father, her name being called, Alabama knows she has once again disappointed her father. Readers feel her pain clenching insides, being able to empathize with her despair. In two sentences, the judge weighs down his daughter with feelings of failure at his recriminations, something she will continue to struggle with despite not seeing her father again until he is on his deathbed.

Curiously, there is little mention of Alabama drinking after this point. Soon after, she, David, and their daughter, relocated to France. Alabama quickly begins ballet lessons. Suddenly, alcohol is no longer a source of rebellion and independence for Alabama. Instead, her ballet becomes her form of rebellion.

Alcohol? Nah –Ballet Preferred

’There is a shift in alcohol use between the novel’s first and second half. Alabama uses alcohol in her teens as a form of independence and rebellion. By her twenties, she shifted her focus from alcohol to ballet because she no longer needed to rebel against her parents. She does, however, need independence from her often-controlling husband. The first half of *Save Me the Waltz* has nearly twice as many mentions of alcohol or drinking versus the second half. Alabama begins taking ballet lessons and shifts from drinking to pass the time to claiming some independence by spending all of her time in the dance studio. At first, “David was glad of her absorption at the studio. It made them less inclined to use up their leisure time on parties” (Zelda Fitzgerald 124). However, less than a page later, David drinks with Paris locals, celebrating the empty city.

“Why will you never come out with me?” He said.

“Because I can’t work the next day if I do.”

[…]

“David, I can’t honestly. I get sick when I drink.” (126)

This prolonged conversation dropped and picked back up, showing that the Knight’s marriage is not happy and loving. Resentment has burrowed into their hearts, which is illustrated aptly when the conversation becomes more severe and bitter.

“Where are you going?”

“I’m going to the studio.”

> "Yet you can't stay with me! What's the use of having a wife? If a woman's only to sleep with there are plenty available for that—"
>
> "What's the use of having a husband or anything else? You suddenly find you have them all the same, and there you are." (Fitzgerald 126)

The fissures of discontent in the dysfunctional relationship between husband and wife widen as Alabama becomes more entrenched in ballet. David's jealousy stems from no longer having Alabama's full attention. Alabama has found something that is solely hers. It is something David tries to infiltrate, but Alabama stops him. "A vague unreasoning dread filled Alabama — she must keep the studio apart from her life — otherwise one would soon become as unsatisfactory as the other, lost in an aimless impenetrable drift" (Fitzgerald 136). This moment shows how badly Alabama wants to keep her dancing to herself. She does not mind sharing her dancing with a paying audience, as seen when she takes the position with the Italian Ballet Company. However, sharing with David would taint her classes, robbing her of her freedom and autonomy.

Alabama's need to carve out a life for herself is not unlike Zelda's desire for something of her own. Zelda took up ballet again as an adult while living in Paris. Publishing her writing, however, gave her a feeling of independence because it provided her with the money to take ballet lessons without relying on her husband's income.

> Zelda said she wrote these stories to pay for her dancing so that she would not be financially dependent on Scott. The money was good. But the deal organized by Scott on Zelda's behalf was not. Harold Ober recorded the transaction Scott made with *College Humor* for Zelda's stories. 'SF said that Z would do six articles for *College Humor*, that

he would go over them … and that the articles would be signed with both their names.' (Cline 238)

Even when she tried to gain some form of independence, Scott managed to control her creativity, "guiding" it. Unlike her protagonist, Alabama, Zelda turned down the opportunity to dance with an Italian Ballet Company. Writing *Save Me the Waltz*, at least partly, was Zelda's way of coping with the loss of her dream of a ballet career and experiencing it through the written word. After all, an injury was a much better excuse for retiring than a mental health problem.

Coming Full Circle – Back to the Beginning

Zelda would spend the rest of her life in and out of mental institutions after her ballet career ended. Alabama faired a little better because she was not institutionalized. Instead, injury forced her to give up her dance career. Alabama finds herself once again catering to David's desires. The couple, with their daughter, go back to America because Alabama's dad is dying. The duo quickly falls back into old patterns and begin to go to and host parties.

One of the story's final scenes shows Alabama and David hosting one such party. The following scene shows how the couple has come full circle.

"I sit quietly eyeing the world, saying to myself, Oh, the lucky people who can still use the word "irresistible."

"We couldn't go on indefinitely being swept off our feet," supplemented David.

"Balance," they said, "we must all have balance. Did you find much balance in Europe?"

"You'd do better to have another drink – that's what you came for, isn't it?"

Alabama and David have picked up where they left off, though the final moments between them show that Alabama is unhappy about the situation.

> "Alabama," said David, "if you would top dumping ash trays before the company has got well out of the house we would be happier."
>
> "It's very expressive of myself. I just lump everything in a great heap which I have labeled 'the past,' and, having thus emptied the deep reservoir that was myself, I am ready to continue."
>
> They sat in the pleasant gloom of late afternoon, staring at each other through the remains of the party; the silver glasses, the silver tray, the traces of many perfumes; they sat together watching the twilight flow through the calm living room that they were leaving like the clear cold current of a trout stream. (212)

Alabama acknowledges that she is an empty vessel. She no longer has autonomy and is resigned to being the hostess and housewife David desires. David's comment about Alabama emptying the ashtrays before the guests leave indicates that she resents this and acquiesces under duress. Zelda, too, could be seen as an empty vessel. She was remade, more than once, through Scott's writing. The problem with being someone's muse is that the muse often loses her sense of self, in this case, Zelda, struggles to find or regain that autonomy so strongly desired. This is perhaps why Zelda focused so much energy on her ballet, writing, and later painting. It was the only way for her to have a sense of self without being "Scott's wife."

This moment allows Alabama to voice her frustrations, something Zelda could never do in a satisfying way. With Zelda's various institutionalizations, she and Scott began living

separate lives. Scott still provided for her financially, paying her medical bills, which is, perhaps, one reason he was so frustrated with her when she wrote *Save Me the Waltz*. The story does not put him in a very positive light. David Knight is at once emotionally abusive and neglectful at the same time. If Zelda saw herself in Alabama, then it stands to reason that she saw Scott in David.

Alcohol fueled and informed the 1920s. The decade was prosperous. There was money to burn, and there seemed to be no end in sight. Alcohol and all of its trappings allowed the youth culture to rebel and find their voice in a world that was changing rapidly—so rapidly they could barely keep up. As is seen through Zelda and Scott's relationship and excessive party lifestyle, though, people were giving it their best shot. For a time, alcohol use and abuse formed both Zelda and Scott. Zelda managed to get free of alcohol's grip, much like her character Alabama, through ballet. She turned her obsessive nature from living the party and Flapper lifestyle to devoting all her time to her ballet lessons. Zelda was mildly successful despite never achieving her dream of dancing for a professional ballet company. Instead, she lived her dream through her protagonist, Alabama. Unfortunately, shortly after she ended her ballet career, Zelda was institutionalized. She was diagnosed with schizophrenia, what we would call bipolar today. *Save Me the Waltz* is one of her many accomplishments as a patient in mental institutions. Her paintings, many still shown today, and some used in critical works about Zelda, were also created while institutionalized. In 1948, Zelda died in a locked ward of Highland Hospital during a fire. Her second novel, *Caesar's Things,* remained unfinished. She was forty-eight. Eight years before, her husband died at 44 of a heart attack at his lover's Hollywood apartment.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

The Female Perspective - Beyond the Cookbook!

Stories written from the female perspective are nothing new. Chaucer had three female narrators in *The Canterbury Tales*. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote a poem from the female perspective, "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd," in response to Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." The Brontë's and Jane Austen wrote exclusively from the female perspective. Anne Brontë wrote a scandalous novel, The *Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, which shows an abusive male character, Arthur Huntington, whose drinking destroys his marriage. *Tenant* could be considered a drunk narrative as most of the male characters drink. That a woman wrote it is the one thing to stop it, at least when it was first published. Today, better-informed readers would see it as such a novel. So salacious was the story that readers did not think it was fit to give to impressionable young women to read. What came before helped allow for what came after. Each generation writes for the next generation, allowing them to advance the narrative and push the line forward.

The women of this dissertation, Djuna Barnes, Dorothy Parker, and Zelda Fitzgerald, were only three pioneers in the Modernist era and should be read, studied, and documented as should the others. Barnes experimented with various genres, writing a novel that enjoys a cult following today. Parker, often touted as the first feminist of the twentieth century, wrote about women's issues and championed women's rights. Fitzgerald was the model for the 1920s Flapper and also wrote on women's issues, focusing on character sketches of different types of women.

These three writers stripped away the artifice of what a woman should be and allowed them to be women with flaws and baggage. Barnes's *Nightwood* and Parker's "Big Blonde" could be considered cautionary tales. Both narratives leave the main characters in a state of flux; readers are unsure if they will come out of the situation alive, dead, no longer feeling the melancholy that keeps them grieving or grieving until they kill their liver with drink. Fitzgerald is the outlier in that her novel, *Save Me the Waltz,* is not so much a cautionary tale as a form of rebellion, even at the end. The novel's final scene shows Alabama and David hosting a party for friends. Alabama, in a passive-aggressive move, begins emptying ashtrays to indicate to her guests that it is time for them to go. David later remarks on this behavior.

> "Alabama," said David, "if you would top dumping ash trays before the company has got well out of the house we would be happier."
>
> "It's very expressive of myself. I just lump everything in a great heap which I have labeled 'the past,' and, having thus emptied the deep reservoir that was myself, I am ready to continue."
>
> They sat in the pleasant gloom of late afternoon, staring at each other through the remains of the party; the silver glasses, the silver tray, the traces of many perfumes; they sat together watching the twilight flow through the calm living room that they were leaving like the clear cold current of a trout stream. (212)

This moment shows that Alabama is somewhat resigned to her fate of being a housewife and catering to David's needs. Her behavior also indicates that she will only go so far as a "happy housewife." Even though she could not continue her ballet career, she still retains enough fight to fight against what David and society expect of her.

In *Nightwood*, Barnes creates a narrative of many viewpoints, allowing readers to experience their alienation from society with the characters. Each character progresses through the stages of grieving brought on by various traumas. Some get stuck in one stage or another, turning to alcohol to, if not cure, at least lessen the pain they feel. Barnes rejects permanency and inevitability by constantly changing her characters' lives. Only Dr. O'Connor is somewhat stable, though his life is not what he wants. She instead presents a text with ever-shifting meanings and identities. At the novel's completion, the characters are still in a state of change.

In "Big Blonde," Parker establishes a relationship between the protagonist, Hazel, and husband, Herbie. It is an illustration of an unbalanced marriage that ends with Hazel at the bottom of a bottle with pills in her hand. The short story highlights the frustrations and detrimental effects of not getting the heart's desire and the problem of lack of communication between spouses. Parker allows Hazel to lay bare her troubles and fall into the melancholic depression that she is never able to get beyond.

In *Save Me the Waltz,* Fitzgerald presents a veiled *roman-à-clef* while being the most openly biographic, allowing her closure on several issues with her husband, F. Scott. The novel also showcases how women can find that modicum of autonomy from their husbands; however, that autonomy comes at a price.

When They Speak, We Should Listen

In terms of alcohol, Barnes, Parker, and Fitzgerald all advocated for the right of a woman to drink with or without men. Women should be permitted to drink the same drinks as men, drink in public, and drink without anyone monitoring their behavior. Their written works reflected the woman who drank in all her colors. These authors gave women the authority and agency to own their drinking and call themselves alcoholics. Until these writers, "female alcoholic" was a

contradiction in terms as “alcoholic” was implicitly or explicitly the purview of men. These authors changed that perspective.

Trauma was something that women were intimately familiar with. Trauma and Depression or Melancholia were often internalized and not discussed in public or private. Both these issues play integral roles in these novels and the character’s relationship with alcohol as a response to it. Gender issues are a perennial concern, a systemic problem that society is still struggling with today. The emergence of the Modernist’s New Woman helped usher in greater levels of advocacy.

Barnes, Parker, and Fitzgerald advocated for women’s rights and ushered in the New Woman to the twentieth century. Barnes represented the LGBTQAI+ community allowing them to be part of the group, to have a voice and agency to tell their own stories. She does this despite her friend and editor, Emily Coleman, suggesting removing portions of the story. In a letter to Coleman Barnes explains,

> Robin’s marriage to Felix *is* necessary to the book for this reason (which you can not know, not having lived with a woman having loved her and yet circulated in public with the public aware of it) that people *always* say, “Well of course those two women would never have been in love with each other if they had been *normal*, if any man had slept with them, if they had been well f—and had born a child.” Which is ignorance and utterly false, I married Robin to prove this point, she had married, had had a child yet was still “incurable.” (*Paris Was a Woman* 136)

This idea about Robin’s story is interesting because it shows the attitudes men had toward women who were lesbians in the early twentieth century. Sadly, not much has changed with this

attitude. Many men still believe that a lesbian just needs a "good" man to show her what's what. Regarding Dr. O'Connor Barnes writes:

> [The story of *Nightwood*] is the profound and impossible love of a woman who contemplates and understands for a woman who rages and destroys…There is, too, the very great problem of perspective because Dr. O'Connor is an entire Greek chorus put into a single character, and that character, moreover, stands very near to the reader so that his apparent dimensions are much enlarged. Once that is seen, once the painterly trick of perspective is grasped, whereby the main story is moved upstage where it must appear somewhat reduced, then *Nightwood* has a plot. (*Paris Was a Woman* 136-137)

Without Dr. Matthew O'Connor the reader would not have the same insights into the other characters as they get. The conversations between Nora and Dr. O'Connor help readers understand how desperate Nora is to keep Robin at her side. O'Connor also helps define Robin for Felix when they first encounter Robin lying on the chaise surrounded by plants and later when he tries to explain to Nora why Robin will never belong to her. The doctor also sees something within Felix that the readers do not see until the end of the novel. An early conversation between the two men shows how intuitive Dr. O'Connor is when he tells Felix he will eventually learn to drink. O'Connor is the translator of sorts between Nora, Robin, and Felix to the readers.

Parker was particularly vocal about women's rights. Many of her stories target specific things women were, and still are, fighting for. She also wrote about topics other than drinking. Abortion for instance shows up several times in her stories even though the word itself is never used. However, readers at the time and today know and understand the reference. In "Mr. Durant," Parker shows how women were sometimes forced into getting abortions. It takes two to

have an affair, yet it is the woman who often gets the blame and must face the consequences. “In Lady with a Lamp,” Parker highlights the physical and emotional cost that an abortion has on a woman. Parker’s story shows how the decision to have an abortion is not one to be decided on lightly. She also highlighted the use and abuse of alcohol, showing that women should have the right to drink, like a man, if they wished and should not be regulated by the men in their lives. “In Just a Little One,” Parker shows how women could drink the same alcohol as men, yet they were still cognizant of being a “lady” while drinking. Just having a series of “little ones” that probably equaled to or exceeded the drinking of the man.

As a prototype for the 1920s Flapper, Zelda Fitzgerald inspired a generation of women to do as they please and shorten their dresses, cut their hair, drink, and flirt outrageously. Fitzgerald also showed women that it was possible, to a degree, to have a life outside that of her husband.She wrote short stories to provide the money for her ballet lessons and turned to other forms of art when ballet was no longer an option after a series of mental breakdowns. She continued to be an inspiration to women and managed to be successful in three artistic mediums: dancing, writing, and painting.

A Curtsey to the Modernist Writers

Writers like Barnes, Parker, and Fitzgerald helped pave the way for those female authors who came after them. These authors include, but are not limited to, people like Natalie Clifford Barney, Romanine Brooks, and Emily Coleman. Writers of color who were contemporaries of Barnes, Parker, and Fitzgerald include Nella Larson, Zora Neale Hurston, and Toni Morrison. Whether being a direct influence and inspiration or simply opening the door for opportunities, today’s storytellers owe a debt of gratitude to Modernist Writers. The female characters of Barnes, Parker, and Fitzgerald weren’t the perfectly coifed and puffed women of the past who

did what she was told and served as extensions of their husbands. Each of these authors created full-bodied characters, literally in the description of Hazel as a "big girl," complicated, and full of flaws. These characters lived on the margins, were contradictory in what they wanted, and pursued their dreams regardless of objections and family obligations. Without these writers, the authors who came after wouldn't have been able to create their own stories.

Writers like Jacquelin Susann and her *Valley of the Dolls* published in 1966 is just one example of a story that probably would not have been created if these three had not paved the way. The four central characters of *Valley of the Dolls* are all women. The story follows them through their trials and tribulations navigating New York and Hollywood, with many of them falling into the trap of using and abusing alcohol and other drugs to cope with failed expectations. Without characters like Parker's Hazel Morse, there could not be a character like Anne Wells, a central figure in Susann's *Valley of the Dolls*. Anne finally gets the man of her dreams, Lyon Burke. But, just like Hazel, the reality of Anne's marriage isn't what she hoped. The novel ends with her realizing her adulterous husband is having an affair with someone she considered a friend. Anne, during a party at her home, goes upstairs and takes "dolls," also known as pills, to help her forget what she knows and not to love him any longer.

Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects*, Paula Hawkins's *Girl on the Train,* and Louise Eridrich's *Shadow Tag* are just three of the many novels that feature female characters who drink. Alcohol serves as a theme of these stories without being the primary focus. *Marlena* by Julie Buntin tells the story of two teenage female alcoholics and their escapades during their teen years and one's struggle to sobriety.

Sharp Objects, published in 2006, follows the story of Camille Preaker, a journalist, as she returns to her hometown to investigate and report on the murders of two little girls. Going

home is problematic for Camille as her childhood was complicated. As a teen, she would cut herself to help deal with the traumas of her life. When she is older, she turns to alcohol instead. "I've always been partial to the image of liquor as lubrication, a layer of protection from all the sharp thoughts in your head" (Chapter 7) As an adult Camille can legally drink to chase away her Depression. Is this better than cutting? Perhaps, but there is still damage being done to her body, particularly with the amount of alcohol she drinks. For example, drinking straight vodka from a water bottle cannot be good for the liver.

Similar to Camille in *Sharp Objects,* Rachel Watson, one of three narrators in *The Girl on the Train,* published in 2015, uses alcohol to forget her deteriorating life. At the novel's start, Rachel's husband, Tom, has left her for a younger woman. Already an alcoholic, she falls deeper into the bottle, doing things while drunk that her sober self does not remember. "Drunk Rachel sees no consequences, she is either excessively expansive and optimistic or wrapped up in hate" (105). She becomes an entirely different person when drinking and acts on feelings that do not serve her interests. In the quote above Rachel has sent an email to her ex-husband while plastered. Alcohol erases her common sense and objectivity. Sober, she's left to repair the damage she did while drunk.

In Julie Buntin's *Marlena,* published in 2018, Cat (Catherine) struggles with her emotional traumas when her parents' divorce and she is forced to move with her mother and brother far away from her friends and the happy childhood she longs to recapture. In her isolation, Cat reaches for anything to feel a connection to someone or something similar to the way Djuna Barnes's characters reach for connections before turning to alcohol. Cat meets Marlena and gets pulled into a world of drugs and alcohol. Cat uses alcohol as a way of dealing with her emotional difficulties and continues drinking as a way of coping into adulthood. She

eventually goes to self-help meetings and manages to NOT drink when faced with Marlena's brother, Sal. This is important because Marlena died suspiciously when they were still teens, causing Cat even more trauma and misery.

In a moment narrated by Cat, Part 1, Section 4, she explores, through the benefit of hindsight, the moment she first sank into alcohol and its dark promise of freedom. This freedom comes at a price, the life of Marlena, which is a major turning point of the story.

> "There's a theory that alcoholics are suspended in amber, forever twelve, or twenty-one, or fifteen, whatever age they were at the time of their first drink, consumed by the same old fears and desires. Their development hijacked and replaced with a row of bottles, stretching on and on and on. Those hours in [the tunnels] would be the start, then. The stop."

At this moment, Cat is talking about herself, having pointed out several times within the narrative that she recognizes she is an alcoholic. The darkness and isolation of "the tunnels" she refers to the darkness and isolation she and other characters feel throughout the novel, particularly within themselves, and how these feelings take over their lives.

There is no shortage of female alcohol memoirs on the market today. *Quit Like a Woman* by Holly Whitaker, *Drinking: A Love Story* by Caroline Knapp, and *Drink: The Intimate Relationship Between Women and Alcohol* by Ann Dorset Johnston are just three books that detail the authors' personal stories with alcohol and the struggles overcoming their addictions. Jeannette Walls's *The Glass Castle* tells the story of Walls's story growing up which includes a nomadic lifestyle and abuse and abandonment with the underlying alcohol abuse of her parents.

Not With a Curtsey, but with a Bow

It was not only the women who came after Barnes, Parker, and Fitzgerald who owe them a curtsey. Male writers also benefited from what came before and should bow in appreciation for changing the way female alcoholics could be written. American author Raymond Carver originally published the short story “Vitamins” in 1981. The story is about a husband and wife who drink excessively, cheat on each other, and are not inclined to change their ways. With surprising calmness, the story of Patti and her husband, the story's unnamed narrator details his wife’s success and fall from grace selling vitamins door to door. At a party, he hits on one of the women working for his wife and later takes her out to a bar in order to sleep with her. Foiled by a friend’s weird behavior, the narrator takes Donna home and returns to his home to find his wife, who is still fully clothed, passed out on the bed. Carver does not indicate any censure in the telling of the story but merely offers a look into this slice of life of two alcoholics.

The play, *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf* by Edward Albee debuted on Broadway in 1962. It is another depiction where alcohol is the central theme of the story. The play opens with husband and wife, George and Martha, coming home from a party, waiting for guests they have invited back to their home all the while bickering. The couple invites Nick and his wife, Honey, and they all continue to drink. They continue drinking throughout the play, yet no one comments about it. Instead, Martha attempts to seduce Nick, Honey passes out for a bit, and George pretends his son is dead, though the audience finds that George and Martha have no son. Nick and Honey finally take their leave and George and Martha have a tender moment as the sun rises.

These are only two of the stories written by men that could not have been written had those who came before not broken-down barriers to tell such tales. The play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, by Tennessee Williams, published in 1947 is another story that may not have been

written if not for what came before. The central characters, Stanley and Blanche, spend their days drinking excessively for similar reasons. Stanley is frustrated with his marriage to Stella and fed up with his job and lot in life. Blanche drinks to forget the suicide of her husband and to forget that she is no longer considered young and beautiful, at least to herself. Even the gentlemen callers she receives at a local hotel are not enough to convince her of her enduring beauty.

Blanche cannot get past not finding lasting love, similar to Hazel in "Big Blonde," and whiskey becomes her friend, like it once was for Hazel. Blanche is more careful to ensure that her drinking and dependence on alcohol are not revealed to anyone. "She pours a half tumbler of whiskey and tosses it down. She carefully replaces the bottle and washes out the tumbler at the sink" (Scene 1). With alcohol, Blanche believes the paper lantern that makes a lightbulb beautiful will also turn her face into a beautifully fresh face instead of the care warn face of her reality. Instead of fulfilling her dreams, Blanche ends up committed to a mental institution after a break with reality.

Excessive violence against women in Stieg Larsson's *Girl with a Dragon Tattoo*, published in 2005, leads the main female character to drink excessively. A troubled past leads Lisbeth Salander to be in the control of her lawyer who has guardianship over her. Nils Bjurman, her guardian, rapes her, which causes Lisbeth to seek revenge, though she does not go the obvious route of plotting his murder. Instead, she works to gain her independence from him while punishing him for his sins. Lisbeth's drink of choice is gin and tonic and she is often found with a glass in her hand. The ever-present drink is as much a part of her as is her reflective nature over the past, "Our past defines us, but it doesn't determine our future" (Chapter 21). The idea of the past not defining someone's future is shown in Lisbeth's personal growth and resilience. The

emphasis on not letting the past limit or confine people to preconceived notions of their capabilities is an important lesson to learn. People are shaped by their past, but ultimately, they have the agency and potential to redefine themselves, forging their own paths.

More Changes: Beyond the Confines of the Hardcover

It is not a leap to extrapolate the impact of these three writers and their compatriots on today's depictions of female alcoholics. At one time, the term 'pregnant' could not be said on television. That changed. The drunken woman was unseen and unheard of in books, movies, and the early days of television unless she was used as a cautionary tale to keep women from drinking. Post World War I, more women were pushing for equal voting rights, body autonomy in relation to reproductive rights, and equality regarding employment opportunities. While these issues do not directly relate to drinking, they all serve to create moments that affect a woman's right to drink when and where she wants.

One only has to look to the Guide on any Smart TV to see a plethora of shows that feature women who drink. *Cosmopolitan* writer Sarah Hepola has this to say,

> Lately alcohol is practically a co-sponsor of reality TV, where disinhibition and drama reign supreme among vicious housewives and bachelorettes in satin dresses, and glasses of wine have become a hallmark of prestige dramas like *The Good Wife*, *House of Cards*, and *Scandal.* The cocktail sipped in solitude at day's end is a way to capture the stress and anxiety of being a female power player—how hard (actually: impossible) it is to have it all. (Hepola)

The Good Wife and *Scandal* were both created by and produced by women. In basic ways, these two shows probably reflect the life of their creators, at least in their drinking habits at the end of

a long day. In *The Good Wife,* especially lead protagonist Alicia Florrick is seen most nights reaching for a bottle of wine to manage the stress of both her high-profile job at a prestigious law firm and the stress of her troubled marriage to her political climbing husband whose affair came to light very publicly in the first episode.

Male creators are not excluded from the shift to female characters who drink as hard, as the men. Matthew Weiner, the producer of *Mad Men,* presents the character, Peggy Olson as regularly drinking scotch, which is typically a male drink. One memorable quote from the show relates how drinking is common in the advertising office. “Am I the only one who can work and drink at the same time?” (Wilkinson) Peggy asks her coworkers, predominantly men. Drinking is so prevalent within the advertising firm that it seems as if someone at any point during the day has a drink in their hand. However, the above quote shows how the men are struggling with alcohol in this specific episode and it is up to the women of the firm to show them how to drink and work at the same time.

Producing Graphic novels or Comics as television shows or films is nothing new. Notably, the Marvel comics’ transference to the cinematic format has dominated the big screen for approximately the last fifteen years. Once thought to be the purview of children and teenagers, mostly young men, the popularity of comics and graphic novels has expanded now to include women and older generations. The result of an aging audience has led to a changing landscape of graphic novels. Once clearly a binary of black and white, good and bad, within the storylines, readers are now seeing narratives with shades of gray and much more adult content. One example includes Marvel’s *Jessica Jones,* which was created in 2001 by Brian Michael Bendis.

Like most characters in books, television, and films who drink, Jessica drinks to excess, mostly because of her troubled past. One of the best quotes from the television show which highlights Jessica's drinking and also shows how alcoholism is acknowledged yet is not necessarily a problem comes from Jessica herself. "Would you put day drinking under experience or special abilities?" This tongue-in-cheek question is Jessica's self-awareness that she has a problem, but also shows how she is not in a place to do anything about it, or that she needs to address it. Instead, she jokingly wants to add it to her powers as a positive.

As early as 1959, film producer Billy Wilder created the character of Sugar Kane in *Some Like it Hot* which is based on a 1935 French play, *Fanfare of Love* by Max Bronnet, Michael Logan, Pierre Prévert, René Pujol, and Robert Thoeren. Sugar Kane drinks as if alcohol were water.

> Sugar - Here. You want some? It's bourbon.
>
> Joe - I'll take a rain check.
>
> Sugar - I don't want you to think I'm a drinker. I can stop anytime I want to. Only I don't want to. Especially when I'm blue.
>
> Joe - We understand.
>
> Sugar - All the girls drink. It's just that I'm the one that gets caught.
>
> Sugar - Story of my life. I always get the fuzzy end of the lollipop. ("All the Girls Drink, It's Just That I'm the One That Gets Caught")

The above scene shows the forwardness women could finally feel regarding alcohol. No longer was it considered taboo for a woman to offer a man to drink. And the drink itself is important too. It is not something watered down or fruity as one would expect of an earlier generation. Instead, it's something considered hard alcohol, bourbon. Sugar's comment "All the girls drink.

It's just that I'm the one that gets caught" demonstrates that there are still a few people who would see a woman drinking, especially with a man who is not her husband, as unbecoming, uncouth. Regardless, this recrimination does not stop Sugar from drinking. Perhaps it serves as an extra form of rebellion, continuing from the women who came before.

Barnes, Parker, and Fitzgerald showed the naked truth about female alcoholics. How they got stuck in the spiral of alcohol abuse and why. Each author illustrated the impact of Melancholia or Depression and its role in creating the perfect field for alcohol abuse. Further, they showed that it was not just the slattern or whore that was an abuser. It could also be a member of the upper class or a middle-class woman who wanted to graduate from party girl to homemaker. The limits to women should only come from the boundaries of their imagination. In an ideal world, women and men would be equal. Today's society is experiencing a backslide of the idea of equality between men and women. As some countries begin and continue to make strides in providing rights to women, America is reverting to more restrictive times, for example, in 2022 women lost the autonomy to control their bodies regarding pregnancy when Roe v. Wade was repealed. Unfortunately, America's backslide is tacitly permitting other democratic countries to follow suit.

Modernist women's voices through their novels, short stories, poetry, and plays helped to change the lives of millions of women. Without them, we would not have societal changes that included gender affirmations, birth control, voting rights, and employment opportunities. In today's times of change, mimicking some of those of a century ago, more women's voices are needed again. One such voice making a noise is playwright Shaina Taub. Her new Broadway musical, Suffs, highlights the Suffragette movement.

CHAPTER 9: FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

This dissertation is a starting point for further research. In an ideal world, given time and resources, additional research could extend this project to include other writers of the time. These include but are not limited to authors who came before the ones written about in this dissertation, such as Kate Chopin, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Susan Glaspbell, along with writers who came after, such as Jacqueline Susann, Grace Metalious, along with the many others who wrote memoirs about their relationship with alcohol. Female authors of the modern age, twentieth and twenty-first century need more exposure and deserve increased scholarship. Providing additional critical studies on these authors will help change this, increasing their presence in the "canon" and aiding future scholars to recognize their importance.

Additionally, exploring women writers of color regarding alcohol use and abuse is necessary to understand the subject's full scope. Not including writers of color in this dissertation was a tough choice. However, only including one or two authors would be doing them a great disservice, knowing that they deserved dedicated expansive work. Exploration of writers of color such as Zora Neale Hurston, Deborah A. Miranda, Mya Angelou, and Alice Walker are but a few authors that are needed.

Commitment to researching and writing about women authors is the only way to get them the recognition they deserve. Many female writers are mentioned only in passing and given short shrift compared to male authors of the same period. Some have been forgotten entirely or, at best, are a footnote. Effectively bringing female writer's voices to the forefront of scholarship,

surveys must include HD (Hilda Doolittle), Elizabeth Bishop, Maryanne Moore, Jane Bowles, and Patricia Highsmith to the list of authors. While these authors extend beyond the Modernist period, their writing still reflects Modernist sensibilities, and they all write about and have a significant relationship with alcohol that warrants exploration.

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