
The End of a Dream: Djuna Barnes from her last period in Paris to *Nightwood*

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Abstract

Djuna Barnes's last period in Paris (1929-1930) is marked by the end of her relationship with the American artist Thelma Wood, with whom she shared a house, a life and an artistic method. This common project is mostly visible in Barnes' *Ryder* and *Ladies Almanack*, two hybrid novels written in France, in which the author mixes words and pictures. During their years together Wood, as a sculptor, decided to adopt the silverpoint technique, "writing" pictures on paper with a small pen. Her choice was widely influenced and supported by Barnes, who saw the silverpoint as a sort of common medium, the way of juncture between her visual poetic and Wood's written images. The end of the relationship with Thelma Wood inscribes a lack not only in Barnes' life but most of all in her writing, in which transmediality is now replaced by numerous and impressive literary techniques and figures of speech such as ekphrasis and hypotiposis. From this point the pictures, apparently disappeared, are translated in a new poetic made of literary icono-texts. The most clear example of Barnes' turn is traceable in *Nightwood* (1936), the novel that reflect and summarize her life in Paris with Thelma Wood. This paper explores the differences among Barnes' most popular Parisian novels and *Nightwood*, concentrating not only on the change of tones given by the end of the long relationship with Thelma Wood, but also on Djuna Barnes' new way of the expression, by now exclusively made of literary pictures.

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