

**THE AMAZON IN THE DRAWING ROOM:
NATALIE CLIFFORD BARNEY'S PARISIAN SALON, 1909 – 1970**

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Abstract

This thesis is organised into two chapters and an appendix. The first chapter explores the significant American expatriate movement in France in the early part of the twentieth century, in an effort to answer the question “Why France?” The second chapter examines the life and work of Natalie Clifford Barney, an American expatriate writer in Paris, who wrote predominantly in French and ran an important weekly salon for over sixty years. Specifically, her aesthetic and subject matter, her life, and her fraught publishing history are considered. The appendix is a translation of Barney's 1910 book of aphorisms entitled Éparpillements.

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The Amazon in the Drawing Room:

Natalie Clifford Barney's Parisian Salon, 1909 – 1970

Introduction

Natalie Clifford Barney published her first chapbook, detailing her love for various women, in French in 1900. Thus began a long life filled with scandal, important friendships, and writing. In 1902, the American writer moved to Paris permanently. Barney went on to publish twelve books, only one of which was originally published entirely in English, the last appearing in 1963 when Barney was eighty-seven years old. In 1992, two English-language books of Barney's writing were posthumously published: a collection under the title A Perilous Advantage: The Best of Natalie Clifford Barney and a translation of the 1929 publication Aventures de l'esprit, entitled Adventures of the Mind. It could, therefore, be argued that the true impact of Barney's work remains to be discovered in English.

In 1909, Barney moved into the house at *20, rue Jacob* that would become the location of one of the modern period's most exciting and important salons. The first French salons appeared in the seventeenth century and quickly became an essential part of the artistic and literary tradition, allowing artists and writers to gather together, exchange ideas, sample each others' work and, in contemporary terms, network. Literary salons have been important to women historically, as many significant salons were run by

women. Barney's salon is unique for two main reasons: it lasted from 1909 to 1970, and its scope was international and inclusive. The salon ran weekly on Fridays and hosted writers such as Rainer Maria Rilke, Colette, James Joyce, Paul Valéry, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Gertrude Stein, Somerset Maugham, T. S. Eliot, Ford Madox Ford, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, Janet Flanner, Sylvia Beach, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, and Truman Capote. Barney and her salon were useful in bringing together expatriates and figure in many works of the twentieth century, notably The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas (1933), The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams (1968), Ladies Almanack (1972), Claudine and Annie (trans. 1962), Paris Was Yesterday (1972), The Cantos of Ezra Pound (1949), and Shakespeare & Company (1959).

Natalie Clifford Barney's salon had an important influence on her own work, and this is especially evident in her two books of *pensées*: Pensées d'une Amazone (1920) and Nouvelles Pensées de l'Amazone (1939). As Solita Solano observed:

Natalie did not collect modern art; she collected people, and you could be sure of being dazzled any Friday (her day) you dropped in for tea. And tea it was inexorably. No alcohol ever enlivened the wits of such stars of the literary world nor did they need it. Useless to name them here. Beginning with Colette, anyone who could write well in any language went dutifully to Miss Barney's teas and praised the cakes that her cook Berthe, I have heard, is still making... (Perhaps I should have described the amenities — then perhaps not. Just to say they were the type known to the experienced European traveler as PERSIAN will suffice). (qtd. in Weiss 111)

In order to prove the importance of Barney's work and, by extension, her salon, this thesis is organised into two chapters and an appendix. Chapter one explores the question "Why France?" through a discussion of American expatriation in France. The second chapter considers Barney's work by examining her aesthetic and subject matter, her life, and her fraught publishing history. The appendix portion is comprised of a translation of Barney's 1910 work Éparpillements, with a new note.

Chapter 1

Beautiful Losers: American Expatriates and the Construction of France

An American in Paris is, as they say, a story in itself ... From "Introduction,"
Americans in Paris: A Literary Anthology by Adam Gopnik

For over two hundred years, Americans have left their homes in the United States for the foreign comforts of Paris. More often than not, they have chosen Paris as an alien muse, a fertile ground for creative endeavours from writing to painting to music. Beginning perhaps with Benjamin Franklin's exodus in 1767, Americans have created a romantic ideal of life in France that still calls to the young and restless today (Gopnik, "Benjamin Franklin" 1). A survey of existing scholarship reveals scores of writing on the subject of the expatriate life in Paris. Celebrated North American actors, artists, and musicians continue to choose France as their adopted home. However, as Adam Gopnik posits in his introduction to Americans in Paris: A Literary Anthology, "it is after the twin traumas of the decade beginning in 1861, the Civil War in America and the Commune in Paris, that something new in the relations of Paris and America happens." From the turn of the twentieth century to the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929, conditions in the United States resulted in a significant transatlantic pilgrimage to France. Centered on the French capital of Paris, a new micro-culture arose from a generation's disaffection and dissatisfaction with its homeland. It is in this period that Americans began to move to Paris, rather than just paying a visit to France (Gopnik xix). The

reasons for this betrayal of the motherland are many, from the individual to a generalised, generational angst.

Between what was occurring in the United States during this period and what Americans believed they would find in this construction of Paris is the space where one may discover the motivations for this significant American flight. This chapter shall examine the state of America, the state of France, and France as Americans perceived it from 1890 and 1929, with the aim of elucidating the causes for that period's expatriation. The most oft-cited implicit and explicit reasons for the abandonment of the United States boil down to one word that Americans have used as a mantra since declaring their independence from Great Britain in 1776: freedom. According to Edward C. Knox, "depending on the individual and the moment, they came to Paris seeking culture, a strong dollar and easy alcohol, sexual and racial tolerance, modernism, a context appreciative of the writer's craft and the arts in general. They sought what they could not find in America: a non-America and often an anti-America" (12). Indeed, the liberty Americans sought in France is as varied as its seekers were. Many artists believed that the French had an innate respect for the arts, that one could be a truly serious writer or painter or musician there. Some Americans found their sexual preferences to be at odds with the puritanical sexual climate in America. Other American evacuees left to avoid the rigidity of the genteel gender roles observed at home. Additionally, Social Darwinism and ingrained racism made conditions in America unfavourable and unfair for certain of its citizens. Finally, especially in the aftermath of the Great War, certain

unwelcome political leanings, perceived of as anti-American beliefs, and a desire for more substance led many Americans abroad.

The prevailing thought in turn-of-the-century America tended toward what George Santayana coined the Genteel Tradition.¹ This circumscribed philosophy of life meant that artists were to focus on the joyful in their works, avoiding anything sordid. One could argue that this necessary avoidance left artists with little freedom to pursue their craft and depict the realities of human existence. After all, while life may be beautiful, it also consists of tragedy, pain, fear, and a whole host of human emotions and experiences that are other than joyous. In an attempt to explore these less salubrious events, Thomas Eakins' painting "The Gross Clinic" provoked critical wrath (Patterson 37).²

Similar tastes dominated what was accepted as praiseworthy literature. To be critically successful, writers had to avoid demoralizing subject matter, exalt puritanical attitudes toward sexuality, and otherwise inspire their audience. Though Edith Wharton left America for Paris in 1903, her celebrated works expose the Genteel Tradition she lived with in the United States. Perhaps her success in America at the time was due to her depiction of the perils of an encroaching modern life. Her female protagonists, who drink, smoke, cavort with men, and gamble, all habits embraced by the modern woman, meet with the disapproval of their older Gilded Age counterparts and, ultimately, fail to succeed in the America of the early nineteenth hundreds.³

In 1921, Harold Stearns, an American expatriate in Paris, published a series of essays addressing the post-war generation's grievances and disillusionment with the state of contemporary life and art in the United States. America and the Young Intellectual remains one of the most interesting sources for understanding the generational gap between the Genteel Tradition, that vanguard of traditional American values, and modernism. While scholarship regarding America during the modern period reveals similar attitudes among artists and writers across the board, Stearns' work sets out a cohesive discussion of the plight of such bohemians by addressing coeval debates. In the titular essay, Stearns advances the notion of moral idealism, and the dream of a utopian America is what most troubles the young artist of the day:

There is much talk of progress and efficiency, increased production, sanitation, and sobriety; and a future republic flowing with milk and honey so potent that everybody will then have a flivver, a phonograph and hundreds of classical records, a patent sewage system, and a wireless telephone, as well as an individual aeroplane to transport him from his immaculate home to his electric-tractor-ploughed field or his model factory. (10)

Indeed, the age of excess in America did promise its citizens many unrealistic achievements. From 1900 to 1929, the national income increased by an astounding \$201 per capita (Leuchtenburg 178). The mechanisation of industry, from construction tools to assembly-line conveyances, led to an increase in manufacturing. It became easier to stay in touch with fellow Americans, due to telecommunication advances. Most importantly, the proliferation of the automobile afforded the possibility of travel and increased the availability that all-important right: personal freedom. New products and services, and

therefore new “needs,” were introduced at rapid rates. With these modern conveniences came a decrease in the hours of work for most Americans. All the rewards of the second industrial revolution led Americans to experience “the highest standard of living any people had ever known” (Leuchtenburg 178-79, 186). While there were many critics of this tangible modernization, American morality did not change as rapidly as its economic complement did, and many younger Americans bemoaned this fact. While some artists continued to work in this censorious climate, many chose to leave America for Europe.

Stearns defines the American national culture as one of “almost belligerent individualism.” He goes on to proclaim that this plucky individualism is precisely what makes America the country that it is. Were it not for the “real American national genius” of its pioneering spirit, there would be no technological advances or scientific inventions (18). Further, he goes on to explain that “moral idealism is precisely what the institutional life of America to-day does *not* want” because it “means fearlessness before the facts and willingness to face them, intellectual integrity, emotional honesty.” Thus, he argues that it is precisely this pure form of moral idealism that the “young *révoltés*” pursue, not the personal indulgences attributed them by those who run the country (21).⁴ In order to pursue this individualism, this moral idealism, the radical few chose to leave America because, according to Stearns, the “margin of freedom [had] been reduced to the vanishing point” (159).

“It is through art, and art alone, that we can regain any individualism worthy of a name,” Stearns says. “We can be startled out of our eternal preoccupation with

commercialism and moralism... only by the vivid and direct reminder of real values by the creative artist” (155). And, so, young avant-garde artists and writers left America to follow their idealistic dreams in France. France was understood to represent an unquestioned respect for the individual, “and with this fundamental respect for individuality goes a deep abiding interest in form and beauty” (Stearns 152). Edith Wharton well-understood this French propensity for the individual by the time she took up permanent residence in the Faubourg Saint-Germain neighbourhood of Paris, claiming to desire “to find the kind of human communion I called for” (qtd. in Benstock 39). She spent the years leading to her self-imposed exile in 1910 studying all things French. Her mastery of French culture may have been in part what led her to success in the male-dominated salon world of the late *Belle Epoque*: “[She] was rare among the women of this world in that she was a highly successful, published writer; she was not an attendant to a famous husband or the lover of a powerful aristocrat, but rather an attraction in her own right” (Benstock 44). In fact, her supposed understanding of the French was such that she published a pamphlet intended for American servicemen in France after the First World War. Within the pages of “French Ways and Their Meaning,” the French are praised ad nauseam: “The French are the most human of the human race.... They have used their longer experience and their keener senses for the joy and enlightenment of the races still agropo for self-expression” (qtd. in Engle 5). Such admiration of the French is found in the writings of countless American expatriates from Ezra Pound to Ernest Hemingway, and in the non-literary endeavours of artists in general, but it is not an

entirely one-sided affair.⁵ The French return the favour in kind, praising the “American can-do grin and appealing creative energy” (Engle 5). This French-American mutual veneration may have been what contributed to the success of many expatriate American artists and writers. As William Faulkner proclaimed, “[I]n France I am the father of a literary movement” (qtd. in Engle 3).

Much like its understanding of appropriate art and literature, the Genteel Tradition set up strict rules of conduct and dress for the sexes, making the discussion of sex unacceptable in polite society. As American Psychologist G. Stanley Hall proclaims:

In the most unitary of all acts [sexual intercourse] which is the epitome and pleroma of life, we have the most intense of all affirmations of the will to live and realize that the only true God is love, and the center of life is worship. Every part of mind and body participates in a true pangenesis. This sacrament is the annunciation hour, with hosannas which the whole world reflects. Communion is fusion and beatitude. It is the supreme hedonic narcosis, a holy intoxication. (qtd. in Patterson 39)

Grown women and men were rarely left alone, unless they were married. Women’s dress required that they be covered from neck to ankle and encased in restrictive garments. Certainly, even the very notion of homosexuality was an abomination, an insult to the previously discussed “sacrament” of married heterosexual union. The tides, however, were slowly turning on such narrow definitions of sexuality and, by 1913, the magazine Current Opinion declared that the United States had “struck sex o’clock” (Miller 260).

By the post-war, attitudes *vis-à-vis* sexuality had relaxed considerably. Women were wearing loose, corset-less flapper dresses, cutting off their Gibson Girl bouffants in favour of Clara Bow bobs and smoking cigarettes. Divorce, scourge of the traditional

American family, increased from 100,000 in 1914 to 205,000 in 1929 (Miller 271). But even as progressive ideas of sexuality pushed back Victorian proprieties, homosexuality was not included in the equation. If anything, the fear of increased homosexuality was sounded by alarmists who saw it as an inevitable off-shoot of relaxing sexual mores. Due to the very nature of such accusations and the taboo of homosexuality, generally, this charge was impossible to prove (or disprove) (Patterson 194).

Many of the artists who fled America were homosexuals or individuals with a curiosity regarding same-sex couplings. Barney, along with Alice B. Toklas, Gertrude Stein, H. D., Henry James, Carl van Vechten, Langston Hughes, Hart Crane, Cole Porter, Lincoln Kirstein, Janet Flanner, and Elizabeth Bishop comprise but a portion of American homosexual and bisexual expatriates who spent time or lived in Paris prior to 1930. Although France had a less harsh view of homosexuality, it could still not be said to be an accepted lifestyle. According to Shari Benstock, “[W]omen who announced their homosexuality in the *Belle Epoque* years were not exempt from reactions of fear and repulsion on the part of the larger community” (Benstock 50). Within the smaller artistic community, however, there was safety for these women. Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, for example, were able to live together from 1910, without much persecution, until Stein’s death.⁶ Prior to her arrival in Paris, Stein’s personal life had been lonely and psychologically isolated (Benstock 14). Natalie Clifford Barney, much like Stein, had experienced first hand the repercussions of lesbianism in America.⁷ In Paris, Barney organised a salon which welcomed together lesbians and the wider artistic community.

In fact, Lillian Faderman proposes that “the extent to which [Barney’s] circle functioned as a support group for lesbians to permit them to create a self-image which literature and society denied them is often overlooked in research of her life” (Benstock 11).

However, to produce art or writing that was outrightly lesbian in nature was a rarity:

Barney chose to write her sapphic poems in French, and Djuna Barnes’ Ladies Almanack, a fictionalised account of Barney’s salon, is ultimately obscure and ambiguous. It is also important to note that “out” lesbians of the time, like Barney and Stein, were generally wealthy, outside the French class system and the mainstream.

Open homosexuality in men was, more or less, tolerated in *Belle Epoque* France, where the *Code Napoléon* did not contain any laws prohibiting homosexual practices (Benstock 47). The dandy, an attitude and look popularised during this time, was understood as the portrayal of an unwillingness to grow up and accept the mature responsibilities required of a Victorian-era man (Benstock 52). Here too, though, the wider world mattered. In his discussion of Hart Crane’s seemingly indecipherable poetic language, Tim Dean hypothesises that “Crane’s particular form of difficulty involves not only linguistic considerations but also culturally-specific subjective concerns” (84). The leniency afforded homosexuals in France, whether socially sanctioned or not, was not reciprocated in America until much later. The first organised homosexual rights group, the Mattachine Society, would not begin the long, on-going process of gay rights advocacy until the 1950s. Most states did not repeal sodomy laws, the main target of the early gay rights movement, until well into the 1970s.⁸ Clinging fast to its notion of

presumably Christian family values, America believed that non-procreative sex had no place in its society and had the laws to prove it. In 1903, Theodore Roosevelt wrote the following about the perils of the single life:

The man or woman who deliberately avoids marriage, and has a heart so cold as to dislike children, is in effect a criminal against the race... if the women do not recognize that the greatest thing for any woman is to be a good wife and mother, why, that nation has cause to be alarmed about its future. (qtd. in Patterson 55-56)

As a lesbian, Barney was personally affected by the issues surrounding the treatment and ideation of homosexuality, but the wider feminist movement may have also related to her choice to leave the United States. Much like homosexual rights issues, the women's movement has been a part of America since its inception. Unlike homosexuals, women organised a movement for themselves as the twentieth century began. Centered around the right to vote and work, the early Women's Movement was very much political in nature. While the Genteel Tradition set out very specific rules of conduct and dress for women of the upper classes, poor or immigrant women were held to a different set of standards. Often young and unmarried, the working woman was a far cry from "the independent and indulgent lifestyle portrayed in Life, [or] Vanity Fair." The representation of the working girl in the media focused on the possibility for romance and marriage, eschewing the reality that these women earned so little that they aspired to meet men who would feed and entertain them (Miller 255-56). Married immigrant women, who tended to adhere to the customs of the Old World, brought work into the home in the form of washing and sewing (Patterson 18). During the progressive era,

educated middle-class women began to advocate social reform. Jane Addams, known as “Saint Jane” in her time, was an active social worker who founded the settlement Hull House in 1889.⁹ As Patterson suggests, “part of Addams' great appeal to contemporaries... lay in her ability to call for humanitarian reform while at the same time upholding traditional values” (48). These women viewed women’s rights as a part of the larger social reform issue. Of course other, more radical, feminists did exist at the time. Emma Goldman, an advocate of birth control and free love, believed that women “must no longer keep their mouths shut and their wombs open” (Patterson 52). Similarly, Margaret Sanger led middle-class women in the fight for birth control. She was indicted in 1914 for her activities (the charges were dropped), and in 1918 doctors received the courts’ permission to distribute birth control. Another famous social activist and writer, Charlotte Perkins Gilman crusaded for women’s right to work outside the home, publishing her treatise Women and Economics in 1898. By far the most successful women’s movement of the time was the suffragist movement, with membership in the National American Women’s Suffrage Association growing from 17,000 in 1905 to 75,000 in 1910 and to two million in 1917 (Patterson 53-54). The Nineteenth Amendment, “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,” was ratified in 1920. However, even the suffragist movement was bigoted to some extent. Fear of immigrants, labourers, and blacks, coupled with the notion of moral reforms such as prohibition, left a black spot on the early suffrage movement.

By the post-war era, the movement was campaigning for sexual liberation, women's liberation, and economic equality. Yet most women, of all classes, had little interest in these developments, preferring to continue managing their homes and families under the watchful eye of their husbands. James T. Patterson asserts that "a key reason for the problems of feminism in the 1920s was the continuing power of traditional male attitudes asserting the superiority of men in the public sphere" (154). Indeed, laws regarding women may have been easier to change than the deep-seated cultural attitudes about women in America.

France's women's movement began slightly earlier than its sister in America, and it had a slightly different focus. Between the Second and Third Republics, Léon Richer and Maria Desraismes campaigned for women's rights. Richer's feminist organisation pioneered the notion of legal and educational rights for women. Desraismes focused her attention on toppling the traditional praxis that placed women in a subservient role (Wright 284). Their international congress in Paris, in 1889, led to renewed activity on behalf of women, with the emergence of *La Fronde* and the creation of many feminist groups in the 1890s.¹⁰ Suffragism was not the calling card of French feminists until much later, and women were not granted the vote in France until 1945. Gordon Wright attributes this to the belief "that the church's hold on women was still too strong..." However, women were able to attend the Sorbonne as early as the 1870s and, by 1914, ten percent of university students were female. The work force is, perhaps, where French women made the greatest inroads comprising thirty-seven percent of the workforce by

1906 (Wright 284). As in America, the jobs granted women were generally those for which they were thought to be suited, like domestic work, sewing, garment making, clerking, and teaching. Prior to World War I, women were also paid substantially less than their male counterparts. Alas, women's status in France remained much the same until after the Third Republic fell. Outside the regular strictures of middle and upper class French society, however, there existed women who led the way in the *Belle Epoque*. Exemplary of these are Coco Chanel, a fashion designer, and Colette, a writer and music-hall performer. Both were women from modest backgrounds who created lives for themselves using their skills. These working women caused a stir in the more staid French circles: "Chanel's clothes were considered by many to be unseemly and Colette was thought to be a prostitute, displaying herself for male audiences" (Benstock 74-75). Though Chanel and Colette were, apparently, punished socially for their pursuits, the fact remains that they were able to follow their dreams in the face of contemporary French mores. Edith Wharton observes:

The French wife has less legal independence than the American... and is subject to a good many legal disqualifications from which women have freed themselves in other countries. That is the technical situation; but what is the practical fact? That the Frenchwoman has gone straight through these theoretical restrictions to the heart of reality, and become her husband's associate, because, for her children's sake if not her own, her heart is in his job, and because he has long since learned that the best business partner a man can have is one who has the same interests at stake as himself. (qtd. in Benstock 67)

As Wharton expresses it, French women were perceived to have more freedom than their American sisters. It is perhaps because of this that women left America for

France between 1900 and 1929. Much of this migration may be accounted for in the belief that, as Gertrude Stein stated, “[I]t was not what France gave you but what it did not take away from you that was important” (qtd. in Engle 6). Shari Benstock adds that: “In these years American men defined all that was the country’s competitive (and boyish) best.” She continues that, presumably due to social reforms, “men retreated to an earlier stage of their cultural development because women (and men associated with institutions women controlled) had become mothers to them, directing their energies toward limiting man’s independence and self-will” (29). These “institutions” are understood to be the family and the church. While the aforementioned institutions were also paramount in Catholic France, expatriate women were culturally distinct from their French sisters in that they were foreigners and were often wealthy women who were self-employed in the arts. Additionally, many of the female expatriates, as previously mentioned, were lesbian or bisexual, placing them at a disadvantage in a home country where the control of their sex was most evident in the home and the church. The relative anonymity afforded expatriates offered them the ability to step outside their birth roles, to some extent, albeit with inheritance and talent in hand. The case of Edith Wharton demonstrates this perfectly because her acceptance as a woman in the French salon culture was due largely to her serious and respected ability as an author, and her ability to find time to write was due mostly to her independent wealth.¹¹ It must also be taken into account that the salons were willing to harbour renegades who were not welcome in French society at large. In America, Wharton stated that she “was a failure in Boston... because they thought I was

too fashionable to be intelligent, and a failure in New York because they were afraid I was too intelligent to be fashionable” (Benstock 90). Much like Wharton, Natalie Clifford Barney benefitted from the new found freedom in France to escape her expected gender role of wife and mother, to explore her art, and to experience being a respected member of the society that she had yearned to be a part of since she was a child.

Simone de Beauvoir explains in the introduction to The Second Sex: “[T]here are deep similarities between the situation of woman and that of the Negro” (xxix). African Americans, an “Other” much like women according to Beauvoir, were granted few rights and little respect in the America of the early twentieth century. The common white American conception of African Americans as “half child, half animal, the sport of impulse, whim, and conceit... a being who, left to his will, roams at night and sleeps in the day, whose speech knows no word of love, whose passions, once aroused, are as the fury of a tiger,” was put into words in Thomas Dixon’s 1905 novel The Clansman (Patterson 56). This portrait was bolstered by the acceptance of the principles of Social Darwinism that held that African Americans were savages and, therefore, of lower birth and entitlement than whites. Between 1910 and 1920, the black population of northern American cities rose by thirty-five percent (Patterson 59). Chicago, a favourite destination, saw its African American population quadruple between 1900 and 1920 to 110,000 residents (Unger and Tomes 113). This incursion of African Americans into the North was not always welcomed: entrenched stereotypes persisted, and there was no end to African Americans’ disparate treatment by other Americans. In addition to

disenfranchisement, institutional racism in the form of segregated schools, washrooms, drinking fountains, restaurants, and seating areas on public transportation were law. Further alienation and fear arose from blacks' ghettoisation in cities, frequent lynchings, tenanted land holdings, and peonage. Low wages and illiteracy were the fate of black men and women in the "Progressive" Era, particularly in the South.

The post-war era brought little relief for black Americans. In 1915, roused by *Birth of a Nation*, William J. Simmons dusted off the dormant Ku Klux Klan. Between 1920 and its decline in 1925, KKK membership blossomed by an estimated four and half million (Zinn 373). With such numbers, it became a political force with which to be reckoned across America, and particularly in the northern cities to which African Americans had flocked (Patterson 171). These cities continued to experience a boom in black migration, resulting in larger ghettos and further discrimination. Within a decade, Chicago's black population doubled to 109,000, causing racial tensions to soar (Miller 53). Harlem, which prior to 1900 had been a middle-class, white neighbourhood of New York City, experienced what has become known as its "renaissance" beginning in 1917. The Harlem Renaissance encouraged blacks across America with its proliferation and production of African American-created literature, philosophy, theatre, music, and art. Harlem, in the Jazz Age, offered a respite for blacks, as expressed by the poet Langston Hughes: "I can never put on paper the thrill of the underground ride to Harlem.... I went up the steps and out into the bright September sunlight. Harlem! I stood there, dropped my bags, took a deep breath, and felt happy again" (qtd. in Patterson 172). And, though

the Harlem Renaissance provided a Valhalla-like symbol for black Americans, the reality was that most of its achievements relied on the support of whites who had the money and leisure time to patronise the arts, music, and literature produced there. However, seeds were sown in Harlem that grew later in the century as African Americans gained the wherewithal and organisations necessary to effect change. Though slavery had long since been abolished under law, and though racial suffrage had been enacted in 1870 with the Fifteenth Amendment, long held beliefs and prejudices were not altered much during the first quarter of the century in America. Testament to the slow rate of change is the fact that the last of the so-called Jim Crow laws, mandating that blacks were “separate but equal” under the law and paving the way for segregation in the South, was not overturned until 1965.

Harold Stearns understood France’s attitude towards its African citizens as follows:

Like all Latin countries, France has little native colour prejudice, but the French people’s interest and liking for the Negro goes much deeper. They are delighted with him as an aesthetic spectacle — in Loti, Gautier, Pierre Louÿs and innumerable other French authors, are glowing descriptions of different types such as the bronze and the ebony. (152)

According to Matthew F. Jordan, “[French] jazz discourse serves as a screen upon which one can read anxieties and concerns about change and continuity in modern French culture.” American soldiers were responsible for the French introduction to jazz, a much-loved form of music in France, near the end of the First World War. Black American soldier-musicians were employed by the United States government to play for the French

in celebration of the Armistice, and it quickly became “the” music of the post-war generation. Discussing Ernest Ansermet’s article “*Sur un orchestre nègre*,” published in 1919, Jordan describes the understood value and authenticity of jazz:

Authentic jazz musicians did not cogitate about musical value as western composers did; like Rousseauian primitives, they felt the music and were possessed by it when they improvised... [He] believed that a deeper memory remained at an instinctual level, a memory of freedom, which pushed the nègre towards liberation outside “the master’s laws.” (157-58)

It would seem that early twentieth-century French thought placed value in blacks’ ability to retain as much of their supposed “primitivism” as possible. Whereas Americans used their belief in African Americans’ “savagery” to justify their mistreatment of the Other, the French treated this Other as an exotic bird whose “primitive” spirit denoted its value. And, while jazz was accepted by the French as being a truly modern form of music, the notion of its primitive origins persisted.

Between the world wars, France received over a hundred thousand African immigrants, largely due to an immigration push spurred by the need for unskilled labour (Rosenberg 97). Here, too, immigrants from the former colonies could be of some use to the French.¹² However, as with discussions of jazz, prevailing thought held that blacks could never be properly assimilated into French culture. This belief in the inability to assimilate extended to all of France’s two million immigrants arriving in the 1920s. These immigrants were restricted in the type of work they could accept, usually menial or agrarian jobs, and only about a quarter were ever naturalized as citizens (Wright 354). The latter notwithstanding, perhaps due to the French’s acceptance of immigration as a

necessary evil where labour was concerned, blacks did not experience the outright, legislated racial prejudices in France that were commonplace in America.

In the February 1, 1921 edition of Paris Tribune, Jessie Fauset explains the reasons for her expatriation:

It is simplest to say that I like to live among people and surroundings where I am not always conscious of "thou shall not." I am colored and wish to be known as colored, but sometimes I have felt that my growth as a writer has been hampered in my own country... [In America] in order to offset criticism, the refined colored woman must not laugh too loudly, she must not stare — in general she must stiffen her self-control even though she can no longer humanly contain herself. (qtd. in Benstock 13)

Part of this same later generation of African American visitors to France, Langston Hughes carried the double burden of being both black and gay in 1920s America. In 1923, he spent some time working in Paris. By the time Hughes made his way to Europe, the French were in recession and jobs were scarce. In The Big Sea, he explains his difficulty in finding work is not because of his colour but “because so many Italians and Poles had come to Paris and were working for even lower wages than the underpaid Frenchmen” (Hughes 291). Any foreigner looking for employment was, apparently, treated badly, while those who could afford to live by other means were welcomed heartily. There were, of course, exceptions to this rule. In 1925, the beguiling (and female) Josephine Baker made her first semi-nude appearance in Paris to rave reviews.¹³ Soon after, she returned to Paris and began a stint at the famed Folies Bergère. “La Baker” soon became the most successful American entertainer in France, played muse to white writers and artists, and starred in the first of three films in 1927. As she explained

it, “the French treated black people just the way they do anyone else” (qtd. in Benstock 13). She was never as well-received in America as she was in Europe.

Some Americans’ sense of alienation, however, was less well-defined than as attributed to prejudice and bigotry. Issues such as class, socio-economics, and imperialism troubled many American citizens. While no caste system existed in Gilded Age America, there were definite class distinctions. In 1900, 35 million Americans were African Americans, Native Americans, or immigrants struggling to eke out an existence. The middle and upper classes, who could afford to live a comfortable life, made up a very small percentage of the remaining 41 million Americans (Benstock 4). The rest lived close to the bone with destitution and tragedy just around the corner. Many of these other Americans chose to follow the wagon train West or leave their rural lives for the bright lights and promise of fortune in the big city. Urban growth in this period was unprecedented. For example, Chicago’s population of 30,000 in 1850 had swelled to 1.7 million by 1900 (Patterson 6). Most of this rapid expansion was due to technology and brought with it a whole host of new woes for lower class Americans. The rise of suburbs brought the increased concentration of poorer Americans, who could not afford transportation to and from their places of employment, in inner city slums. Rural life was also changed as improved technology led to overproduction and lowered prices. Coupled with the increase in manufactured goods, which surpassed agricultural production in the 1880s, farm life soon held little of the charm it once had (Patterson 20). The average American’s life was not improved in proportion to the country’s industrialisation and

corollary inventions. According to Patterson, “in 1900, 1 percent of the population owned more national wealth than did the remaining 99 percent, and by 1910 it was estimated that seventy Americans owned \$35 million or more each, or one-sixteenth of the nation’s total wealth.” The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few industrial and financial magnates further widened class gaps. Mergers between large American companies increased this concentration of wealth. The markets experienced several crashes in the early 1900s, causing panic among investors. Additionally, taxation of these large companies had been declared unconstitutional (25).

In 1906, Upton Sinclair, having just published an indictment of the meat-packing industry in America titled The Jungle, wrote an essay for The North American Review entitled “Markets and Misery.” Sinclair, who later won the Pulitzer Prize, is known for his criticism of social issues in the United States of America. In the essay, Sinclair focuses his criticism on the burgeoning American economic system that has allowed so many Americans to flounder at the hands of a few wealthy men:

We are a proverbially optimistic people, and are accustomed to do a good deal of trusting to the Lord in our emergencies; yet there can hardly be an intelligent man to-day who is not conscious of deep disquietude in his soul. We have witnessed the concentration of the industrial powers of the country in the hands of a few men, who have apparently gotten beyond all control of government and law. We have witnessed stroke after stroke of “high finance,” which we have perceived to differ little from open robbery, and which we have yet been powerless to prevent... We see the “open shop” movement gathering headway, and we know that the result of this must inevitably be the lowering of wages; and at the same time we see the cost of living rising year by year, and so we know that it is inevitable that popular discontent should grow. (591-92)

By the post-war period, continued technological advances translated into unprecedented economic growth. This growth, however, meant an increase in wages for the average American, and a plethora of goods and entertainment choices on which to spend this hard-earned cash. The automobile, a prewar invention, became an affordable commodity and, by 1924 there were approximately 17.5 million cars and trucks on the road (Miller 172). Thanks in part to the automobile, urban expansion continued both in numbers and in land mass covered. Advertising, motion pictures, management, corporate concentration, and the mechanisation of the workplace were also telltale signs of the post-war era. Middle class Americans embraced these changes, beginning the “keeping up with the Joneses” attitude that resurfaced in force in the 1950s. Compulsory attendance in schools led to increased enrollment in high schools and colleges. Again, though, the lower classes did not profit much from such advances, and the expanding middle class left poorer Americans in the dust.

As for France, Gordon Wright asserts that “the generation that lived from the 1890’s to 1914 may have come closer to [happiness] than has any other in modern French history.” In those years, industrial output tripled, the GNP doubled, and foreign investments increased to six times what they had been (266). While industrialisation and urbanisation increased steadily, they did not surge to the detriment of rural life.¹⁴ According to Upton Sinclair, the “three millions and a half of people [living in Paris], could, if it were necessary, be maintained in their own territory, provided with food both animal and vegetable, from a piece of ground less than sixty miles on a side!” (597).

Sinclair attributes this idea to what he believes is the French ability to ingeniously use what they have and not to rely solely on new inventions. Consumption and real wages also increased steadily in France. Even the peasants' lots improved during this time, as crop yields and prices increased, and births decreased and lessened pressure on the land. Unlike those in America, the politicians of France's Third Republic "tended to favor the little man" (Wright 269). By 1880 the French aristocracy had been effectively removed from positions of political and clerical power, and the bourgeoisie continued to grow and take power politically and economically. Certainly, within the bourgeoisie, the various levels held various amounts of power. However, these two factions combined made up only fifteen to twenty percent of the population, the remainder comprising workers and peasants. The latter, known as "les classes populaires," were distinguished by their lack or poverty of formal education (Wright 279). Soon enough, even French peasants were literate, and access to transportation meant that they could see the world outside their rural villages. The urban worker was, perhaps, the least recognised of all French citizens. But even these citizens received some recompense: trade unions were legalised as early as 1884; 1900 saw women and children's work day capped at ten hours; in 1906 Sunday was declared a national day of rest; and, in 1910, a national social insurance plan was established (Wright 281). Politically, France remained centrist or slightly leftist for most of the first quarter of the twentieth century. And, although the franc declined in the period between World War I and the Depression (making it an all the more appealing to expatriates in search of a cheap life), the French life seemed to hold social and political

appeal for many Americans. “Intuitively,” Harold Stearns maintains, “the Frenchman realises that there can be no decent art or decent personal life in a country that is much standardised or much regimented” (153).

Randolph Bourne, a member of the “lyrical left” in America, propounded radical, leftist cultural views in the face of the Progressive Era, becoming somewhat of a youth hero in his day (Patterson 40). He left America in 1913 for Paris and returned home as the war began (Gopnik 242). In History of a Literary Radical, Bourne discusses “living down the new orthodoxies of propaganda as he had lived down the old orthodoxies of the classics” (qtd. in Stearns 31). Bourne saw the dual mantra of progress and tradition as blatant counter-information, a way to lull the masses into mediocrity. Presumably, his study and love of French culture is what gave him the courage of his convictions in pursuit of American cultural and literary reform. Theodore Dreiser, also a critic of Progressive America, published Sister Carrie, his indictment of human greed and selfishness, in 1900. His view of America was expressed in his statement that, “the rich were rich and the poor poor, but all were in the grip of imperial forces whose ruthless purposes or lack of them made all men ridiculous, pathetic, or magnificent as you choose” (qtd. in Patterson 41). Like Bourne, Dreiser made the transatlantic voyage in 1913. What he saw in Paris effectively blew his mind, particularly the beauty of its women when compared with the British. All ogling aside, what also impressed Dreiser about the now-industrialised city was the way in which it sprang quietly out of nowhere: “I recall my wonder at entering Paris — the lack of any long extended suburbs, the

sudden flash of electric lights and electric cars. Mostly we seemed to be entering through a tunnel or gully, and then we were there” (Dresier 203).

By the end of the Great War, the idealistic nature of progressivism that men like Dreiser and Bourne had questioned earlier became the great lie that had been forced upon the burgeoning Lost Generation. F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote that his generation had “grown up to find all the Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken” (239). Fitzgerald’s bitterness was shared by many of his contemporaries. Charles Lindbergh, who was famous for his solo flight from New York to Paris in 1921, became an activist for peace. John Dos Passos, who first came to France as an American ambulance driver in 1917, was revered in France for his “desire to locate his subjects in neatly defined networks of history and social change” (Gopnik, “John Dos Passos” 405). Following the war, Dos Passos moved towards communist sympathies only to be joined by that realist of the last generation of malcontents, Theodore Dreiser. Other members of this generation were generally disgruntled with the state of the new America. Ezra Pound spoke of “fleeing a mass of dolts” (Engle 1). Harold Stearns, it seems, was unhappy with most that America had to offer at the time.

As for Natalie Clifford Barney, no one, particular reason was ever given for her leaving the United States to live in Paris. Much as with her reasons for writing almost exclusively in French, which shall be explored in the next chapter, one can only speculate which of the various reasons for expatriation would have resonated most keenly with the Amazon. Definitely, constraints upon personal freedom and individuality were not

welcome with Barney and she spent her lifetime proving this. Though she would not have called herself a feminist, she did expect to be treated as an equal and made it clear early on, to the deep chagrin of her father, that she did not wish to be married. Her desire to express her sexuality in her writing, no matter how veiled, would also seem to be a determining factor on her decision to abandon her home. Barney could never be accused of being a political radical nor was she in need of cheap thrills but she certainly was an Other to the prevailing One in the America of her time. Fortunately, she does not fit neatly into one category: she was an artist, a lesbian, a freethinker, a Francophile, but she was also a traditionalist, a member of the privileged class, and a teetotaler.

America, in the years after the Civil War and before the Great Depression, was a dynamic, troubled place. A young country in the throes of growing pains, she was the land of opportunity for some and a slave driver to others. Early twentieth-century America's "lead, follow or get out of the way" attitude left many young Americans with the impression that they had no choice but to leave their home country seeking solace elsewhere. The American construct of France, as "the sensual and decadently sophisticated ... a foreign land of timeless harmony, at ease in the harness of tradition and [possessing] an inherited respect for artist and artisan," beckoned to many of its Others, intellectuals, artists, hedonists, and radicals (Engle 2). On the surface, America had all the advantages of modern society but the inconsistency between this idealised construct and what was really going on created a feeling of not belonging for many:

But at all costs, the outward semblance of order and decency must be preserved. Although, in defiance of certain Constitutional Amendments, the negro is robbed of his suffrage rights in the South, we must always be sure to speak of how the Civil War freed the slaves, and never refer to Lincoln except as the Great Emancipator. Although, in defiance of a later Constitutional Amendment, liquor is still made, sold and consumed, we must always speak of the prohibition issue as closed; or, as Mr. Bryan has phrased it, as dead as slavery. Although in no country is what is euphemistically termed sexual irregularity more widely practised than in America, we still continue to idealise our women on the covers of our popular magazines; and although in no country is the conversation of men alone more direct and vulgar, we still subsidise organisations whose sole task is to deodorise our books and plays and moving-pictures. (Stearns 73)

This stubborn American refusal to show things as they really were posed a real problem for those with the true moral idealism that Stearns propounded. Indeed, personal freedom was not really free, and individualism was accepted only if it fell within the scope of group attitudes. The philosophy of the Genteel Tradition and its post-war era hangover robbed many artists of the ability to express themselves fully; required that men and women of all sexual inclinations conduct themselves differently in public than behind closed doors; kept African Americans and other minorities in state of perpetual poverty and discrimination; enforced an invisible and lopsided caste system; and generally elevated standardisation and conformity in thought, appearance, and belief at the expense of the individual. Third Republic France, on the other hand, represented for many Americans the idealised version of what their freedom-loving, fiercely individual country ought to be. Against her sheltering breast, expatriates were able to realise, often for the first time, the success and respect that they could not attain in America. While on the surface Paris was the capital of amusement and sin for the Western World, a European

equivalent of modern day Las Vegas some might say, she proved to be more than just a debauched getaway. The heart of France beat with true respect for moral idealism, individualism, and freedom.

Notes

¹ Patterson goes on to define its significance as “discreet and decorous optimism in literature and the arts” (37).

² Eakins’ painting of an operation on the human body prompted a critic to declare it a “degradation of art” (Patterson 37).

³ Though Lily Bart, in The House of Mirth, maintains certain old-school virtues, her inability to inhabit the world of the Genteel Tradition, and unwillingness to fully embrace the burgeoning modern value system, ultimately results in her death.

⁴ These indulgences include the notion that the artist merely wants to entertain her baser instincts, attributed as such to the fact that Freud believed that self-control results in evil (Stearns 11).

⁵ Engle claims that John Ashbery’s study of French surrealist painting led to the creation of the American movement in the New York School. He also quotes Sartre as having written that “the greatest literary development in France between 1929 and 1939 was the discovery of Faulkner, Dos Passos, Hemingway, Caldwell, and Steinbeck” (1, 3).

⁶ It may be, as Benstock suggests, that “women who remained unmarried and perhaps lived with other women were generally assumed to have... been overlooked by men seeking wives” (54).

⁷ Suzanne Rodriguez discusses Barney’s early successful and unsuccessful attempts at seduction in America. Barney is, apparently, surprised to learn that what she desires is deemed “unnatural” or “perverted.” When she continues to display lesbian leanings, she becomes the subject of gossip and disgust, eventually leaving the United States for the more welcoming arms of Paris.

⁸ According to Sodomy.org, Illinois led the way in 1962. At last count, Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, and Virginia, still consider sodomy a “crime against nature” or a misdemeanor of some type.

⁹ By 1915 more than 400 settlement houses existed in the United States (Patterson 52-53).

¹⁰ La Fronde was a daily that held women's issues as its priority and was staffed entirely by women.

¹¹ It was Wharton who supported her depressive husband with her fortune.

¹² The emancipation of slaves from French colonies ended in 1848 with the February Revolution.

¹³ It is interesting to note that Baker's most famous costume of the night was a primitivist inspired bikini with bananas hanging from the waist. It seems that even La Baker played into the European understanding of the "petite sauvage."

¹⁴ Wright reports that, in 1870, fifty two percent of the population was agrarian and, in 1914, that same population still exceeded forty percent (266).

Chapter 2

Barney's Version: Life as Autobiography

Natalie Clifford Barney's literary output spans some sixty years. While Barney is more famous for her love life and her salon, her published works offer clues as to what the famous Amazon believed. Barney claimed that, at fifteen years of age, her vocation was decided upon when reading Oscar Wilde's short stories (Wickes 11). Much like that of the witty Wilde, Barney's literary success rested on her ability to turn a thoughtful, pretty phrase. Though she wrote poems, plays, and novels, her epigrams are considered her finest achievement. Her first published work, Quelques portraits-sonnets de femmes, a collection of thirty-five poetic odes to women Barney knew, was published just months before her infamous mentor passed away in a Parisian hotel room (Rodriguez 114). Also like Wilde's, Barney's sexual proclivities caused a stir following this first publication, necessitating her self-imposed exile in the City of Light.

Barney's publishing history was fraught, perhaps because of her devotion to decadent nineteenth-century forms, her insistence on writing in French, or her innate need to explore her love of women as the predominant theme in her writing; or perhaps it was a combination of these three elements that ensured that Barney's work remains largely unknown to the general population. Following the publication of her controversial first collection of poems, Barney's discovery of the works of Sappho inspired a second collection, Cinqs petits dialogues grecs (antithèses et parallèles), in 1902. The year 1910

produced three published works: Actes et entr'actes, Éparpillements, and Je me souviens. After a ten year hiatus, Pensées d'une Amazone and Poems & poèmes appeared, the latter being her first and only bilingual effort. In 1929, Aventures de l'esprit was published, followed by Barney's only English language publication, The One Who Is Legion, or A.D.'s After-Life, in 1930. A new book of epigrams, aptly titled Nouvelles pensées de l'Amazone, was issued in 1939. A twenty-one year lacuna was followed by a memoir, Souvenirs indiscrets, in 1960. In 1963, when Barney was eighty-seven years old, her last publication, Traits et portraits, was printed. Barney's death in 1972 was followed by several posthumous reprints: Traits et portraits (1975), Aventures de l'esprit (1975 and reprinted in 1992), Éparpillements (1982) with a new forward by Barney scholar Jean Chalon, The One Who Is Legion, or A.D.'s After-Life (1987), and Nouvelles pensées de l'Amazone (1996). In 1992, A Perilous Advantage: The Best of Natalie Clifford Barney, an anthology of Barney's greatest epigrams, memoirs, and poems culled by Anna Livia from collections of the Amazon's writing was translated and published in English. Over her lifetime, Natalie Barney also contributed original work and translations to French and English language periodicals. Notably, in 1910, "Poèmes: À la mémoire de Renée Vivien" was issued in Mercure de France; a poem appeared in the New York Herald in 1917 entitled "D'une Amazone Américaine"; "Two Poems" saw the light in the October 1924 issue of the Transatlantic Review; "On Writing and Writers," an essay, appeared in the October-November-December 1929 edition of This Quarter; "Eleven Poèmes" and "Two Chapters from an Unpublished Novel" were issued in the April-May-June 1932

number of Le Manuscrit autographe; the erroneously-titled “A Few Last and Stray Thoughts” debuted in Adam International Review in 1965; and, not to be completely silenced in her ninetieth year, “Les êtres doubles,” excerpts from a three-act play, was published in Les Cahiers des Saisons, Summer 1966. Also of note is the 1963 Adam International Review, in which it was felt sagacious to devote an entire number to Natalie Clifford Barney.

Although Barney’s work appeared in significant quantity in the first half of the twentieth century, it is the legend of her life that was — and still is — the real celebrity. Fictionalised and real-life versions of Barney have appeared in the writings and memoirs of Radclyffe Hall, Colette, Liane de Pougy, and Djuna Barnes, to name a few.¹ Indeed, Barney’s presence on the Parisian literary scene was so formidable that those who were aware of her influence wangled an invitation to meet with the Grande Amazone of Letters and later told all who cared to read about it.² Continuing in this vein, Barney’s contemporary biographers have kept her reputation alive, employing such provocative titles and subtitles as The Amazon of Letters: The Life and Loves of Natalie Barney, Portrait of a Seductress: The World of Natalie Barney, Wild Heart: A Life, Natalie Clifford Barney and the Decadence of Literary Paris, and not to be outdone Wild Girls: The Love Life of Natalie Barney & Romaine Brooks.³ Certainly, these biographies contain a great deal more about Barney than the gritty details of her sex life, but the fact remains that sex sells, and Barney’s personal life has proven a great commodity over the past fifty-odd years.

The importance of Natalie Clifford Barney's literary *oeuvre*, however, rests upon her ability to transmit personal philosophy gleaned and refined in her salon, using traditional nineteenth-century French forms. Barney's genius, moreover, is evident in that she was able to subvert these staid forms to express thoroughly modern thought. Therefore, rather than recreate the famous daisy-chain linking Miss Barney to the myriad creative women who passed through Paris between 1900 and 1972, this essay aims to consider three aspects of the Amazon's literary work: its subject, form, and language.

La plus difficile des réalisations: soi-même.

(Barney, *Éparpillements* 62)

The most difficult realisation: oneself.

An oft-mentioned Barneyism is her belief that her true art was in her living; she is quoted as saying, "If I had one ambition it was to make my life itself into a poem" (qtd. in Livia i). As such, the large part of Natalie Clifford Barney's work centres on describing the life she lived. Taking to heart the old adage, Barney wrote what she knew and about what was important to her. This autobiographical approach to literature reveals much about the Amazon but also provides information about the Parisian world inhabited by the literary, social, and lesbian elite. On occasion, Barney also used her art to seduce new lovers and to exorcise relationships gone sour. Her epigrams, in particular, relate her philosophy, her political leanings, and her opinions.

Barney's agenda in her literary work may be seen as quite straightforward: to describe her life. Unlike many of her contemporaries, she was not interested in reinventing literature, nor did she appear to aspire to a lauded writing career. While

Gertrude Stein set about creating a place for herself in modernist fiction, for example, Barney delved into anachronistic forms and archaic language. Her apparent lackadaisical attitude toward her own writing has been duly noted and recorded at length by biographer George Wickes. Wickes, who seems to focus a great deal of his attention on the sordid details of Barney's lesbian affairs, gives Barney very little credit as a writer:

As a writer she was facile but undisciplined. The fact is that she did not care enough about her own writing to make a vocation of it... Much of her poetry, drama, and fiction is downright bad, interesting only for what it tells about her life. Her real talent was for epigram, which came to her in conversation, without the rigors of composition, and she published three volumes of these pensées. (10)

While Barney may have given the impression of not caring about her writing, one has only to consider that she used words to express some of the most important, and often difficult, emotions that she experienced. For example, when Renée Vivien died, she wrote. When she was in love, she wrote. Indeed, Dolly Wilde's biographer, Joan Schenkar, sees the Amazon's dedication to her work quite differently: "Natalie, who always maintained the pose of writing carelessly, in fact wrote as carefully as she could. Her archives reveal many scratch copies of letters and prose pieces and voluminous diaries and drafts for creative work... Her 'carelessness' was simply a pose, like any other" (162). Indeed, what Wickes views with such distaste in Barney's style is the very thing that she railed against, at first privately and then publicly, with the establishment of an Académie des Femmes.⁴ According to Renée Vivien's pseudofictionalised version of Barney, "Vally," in A Woman Who Appeared to Me, there were so few women writers because they were forced to write like men, which Barney scholar Karla Jay interprets as

an indictment of the chauvinistic male literary critics at the time. Indeed, consideration of Barney's work seems to have suffered through the patriarchal literary tradition in her lifetime and into male literary critique after her death.

S'observer est dangereux — mais ne pas s'observer est ennuyeux.

(Barney, Éparpillements 62)

To observe oneself is dangerous — but to not observe oneself is dull.

True to her dualistic nature, the great epigrammist claimed to hold no set opinions. She reasoned that it was difficult to narrow down her beliefs when there were so many sides to any question, extrapolating that: “Conclusions: delusions” (qtd. in Rodriguez 181). As such, her salon was a place where one could be oneself.⁵ Over its sixty-odd year history, Barney's salon welcomed lesbians, homosexuals, francophones, anglophones, musicians, painters, writers, members of the elite, members of the demimonde, and expatriates looking for a home. From very early on, the Amazon was known for her social abilities, “combining a stage manager's precision with the showmanship of a Barnum”.⁶ This nonjudgmental approach to life appears to have influenced Barney's writing to a very large extent. For a writer of her time, she wrote fairly freely of her love of women, so much so that her first publication, Quelques portraits, elicited some negative press and social spurning in America. Barney, however, could not deny her nature, and responded accordingly:

I consider myself without shame: albinos aren't reproached for having pink eyes and whitish hair, why should they hold it against me for being a lesbian. It's a question of my nature: my queerness isn't a vice, isn't deliberate, and harms no one. What do I care, after all, if they vilify or judge me according to their prejudices? (qtd. in Weiss 107)

Albert Barney, Natalie's less diplomatic father, did hold the publication against her, and he quickly revealed the meaning of the French poems to his wife. Though bohemian in many regards and the unsuspecting illustrator of her daughter's first publication, Alice Pike Barney was still an upper class matron of the Gilded Age and was not able to be so easy-going about Natalie's sexuality.⁷ For the woman who was to become, according to George Wickes, "unquestionably the leading lesbian of her time," familial disapproval was not a deterrent (qtd. in Weiss 100). For the rest of her long life, the Amazon put her proclivities and personal life at the heart of her oeuvre.

It is not surprising then, that one noted frustration of Natalie Clifford Barney's biographers is this obfuscated boundary between her real and fictional selves. The death of her lover Pauline Tarn is one such example. The legend Barney created surrounding the event makes for a good story but is factually inaccurate: she learned Tarn was ill and, when she went to visit the following day with a bouquet of violets, the butler told Natalie her friend had died.⁸ Barney's work also contains a good deal of ill-disguised actuality. In *Amants féminins ou la troisième*, an unpublished fictional account of the real-life evolving affair between Barney, Mimi Franchetti, and Liane de Pougy, the characters are "disguised" by using initials rather than full names: N, M, L. According to many feminist critics, the "link between life and art is often inescapable" for women artists (Jay 1). Karla Jay also posits that both the form and content of female authors' work is more autobiographical: "For Barney... the two are barely separable, for [her] work evolved

directly from [her life] as [her life] evolved directly from [her] artistic conception of [herself]. To separate the two is as unthinkable as separating twins joined by one heart” (1-2). In Women Artists and Writers: Modernist (im)positionings, Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace argue that Barney’s work is not any more autobiographical than that of her male contemporaries, but that it is the fault of interpretation that her writing has been viewed this way (38). Regardless, it is difficult to ignore the autobiographical in Barney’s work. This is a woman who claimed that her greatest art was her life, and it seems doubtful that Barney would reject the notion of the autobiographical nature of her writing. Whether or not she chose to include the personal in her work because she is a woman seems rather irrelevant. Perhaps the question should be why did she write almost exclusively about her personal life? Barney has offered several answers to this question, most notably that her life was her achievement and her art was simply a vehicle to express her life.

In The One Who Is Legion, or A.D.’s After-Life, the Amazon questions: What books produced you? might be asked as conclusively as — Who are your parents? ... Are we not each a circulating library spreading ideas, dreams, precepts, social and scientific prejudices — the first-hand work of some writer? That writer the writer of another; most inspiration merely unconscious plagiarism, and writing in general a moment of arrested development; for what is an opinion but a full-stop in our comprehension to be passed on through print without end? (qtd. in Elliott and Wallace 39)

Thus, the Amazon herself grapples with the hazy boundary between life and art. In keeping with the notion that the distinction is unclear, she seems to believe that what influences her life is inseparable from what she writes, that this “unconscious plagiarism”

exists in all art. Indeed, this view is not unique to Barney and has existed in some form or another since Plato discussed the duty of a poet. Barney's contemporary T. S. Eliot, to whom she offered the Bel Esprit prize at the instance of Ezra Pound, devotes an entire essay to the hypothesis of praxis' place within art, acknowledging that "no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone."⁹ Unquestionably, Barney wrote what she knew, a farrago of her experiences and influences. Much of the hypothesing about her work is just that: conjecture.

Eros est le plus jeune des dieux, — il est aussi le plus fatigué.

(Barney, *Éparpillements* 29)

Eros is the youngest god, — he is also the most tired.

One significant motive for Natalie Clifford Barney's writing was to seduce. Indeed, the woman who was more famous for her love affairs than her work left countless poems, novels, and letters attesting to this fact. Although she was often an unfaithful innamorata, Barney was an altruistic friend. She attempted to rescue Remy de Gourmont from self-imposed exile due to disfiguring disease, to convince Liane de Pougy to leave the courtesan life, and to dissuade Pauline Tarn from her suicidal fascination (Rodriguez 193). By extension, her writing often appears to be courting and correcting the perceived errors of her intimates. *Je me souviens*, an ode to her failed relationship with Pauline Tarn, is a quintessential example. The Amazon stated that she wrote the long poem for Tarn "in the hopes that she would be touched and feel how much I missed her... to the point where I could win her back" (qtd. in Rodriguez 165). Though Barney arrived in Bayreuth, where she knew Pauline would be alone, with her longtime friend and onetime

lover Eva Palmer on her arm, the poem worked its magic and Tarn was temporarily Natalie's again. Je me souviens was published in 1910 as a tribute to Tarn after her death. True to her fickle nature, Barney presented the work to Liane de Pougy as a wedding gift (212). Though Natalie appeared to be implacable in affairs of the heart, she was not as exempt from heartbreak and jealousy as she claimed to be. For example, as expressed in Amants féminins ou la troisième, the affair between Mimi Franchetti and Liane de Pougy caused the Amazon great pain. Her dedication of the unpublished work to Franchetti belies her phlegmatic claims to "rid myself of desire for her" (qtd. in Rodriguez 277). Joan Schenkar notes that "her advanced sexual ideas — classically Greek in their provenance, occasionally Roman in their practice — could support an entire volume of their own, as could the chronicle of her mostly successful attempt to reconstruct a City of Women in the very heart of literary Paris" (164). In truth, this "City of Women" was largely constructed of women who had experienced Barney's powers of seduction, either on the page or in her arms, and often both.

Une femme à prendre ou à laisser — non à prendre et à laisser.

(Barney, Éparpillements 23)

A woman to take or leave — not to take and leave.

Whether or not Barney is seen as consciously attempting to advance the causes of lesbianism and feminism, her unabashed bravery in writing and lifestyle were admired by many women of the time. Radclyffe Hall describes her fictionalised version of Natalie in The Well of Loneliness as "a pagan chained to an age that was Christian" (qtd. in Rodriguez 274). The subversiveness of the Amazon's work may be understood,

however, as simply more of Barney's life spilling into her writing. Rodriguez notes that, in Barney's writing, women triumph over some perceived adversity (204). This theme is in keeping with Barney's own attempts to rescue her friends and lovers from hardship. In her essay "Decadent Heroines or Modernist Lovers: Natalie Clifford Barney's Unpublished Feminine Lovers or the Third Woman," Chelsea Ray explores Barney's debt to decadent French authors, particularly Charles Baudelaire and Pierre Louÿs, reasoning that: "Sexual ambiguity or 'perverse' sexuality — [was] part and parcel of nineteenth-century literature that both influenced decadent literature and was a part of it" (33).¹⁰ Ray goes on to suggest that Barney uses this decadent framework as a way "to create a new language of lesbian desire" (34). Obviously, the Amazon's commentary on sexuality and feminism was perhaps shocking when it first appeared in 1900, but by the time she died the world had faced the great wars, the advent of television, personal vehicles, and many other changes, and feminism and lesbianism were no longer much of a revelation. George Wickes also places priority on Barney's fearlessness, when he observes that "she questioned the conventional attitudes of her day on the subject of woman's place in the world and reached her own conclusions" (8).

Vous avez peut-être raison, mais avoir raison n'est peut-être pas avoir grand'chose.
(Barney, Éparpillements 58)
You may be right, but being right may not be much.

It may be argued that Natalie Clifford Barney was in the right place — her salon — at the right time — the period when Paris was considered to be the *tout-tout* of the artistic world. She definitely took advantage of this fact in her friendships, her ability to

be published, and material for her writing, but also in her role as a literary midwife. Much of Barney's output, specifically her collections of epigrams, came from conversations in her salon and at social engagements. When these events concluded, Barney would scribble her favourite comments on any scrap of paper for future use: "Every ten years, she said, she emptied the contents of her drawers into a book, and often the letters or sayings of others occupied considerable space in her books" (Wickes 10). The Amazon's salon, being a favoured stop for much of the day's international literati, proved fruitful ground for this fodder. According to Renée Lang, Barney did not so much talk as listen at these events (Rodriguez 204).¹¹ Her three collections of epigrams, and Éparpillements specifically, have been considered her best work by critics.¹² When reading these works, one can well imagine the appeal of Natalie Clifford Barney and her salon. She appears sharp, witty, and charming. It is easy to see that she would be an exciting and interesting friend.¹³ Yet, besides the self-serving qualities of the salon, Barney used her Fridays as a way to help other artists with publication, contacts, and proofing of their work. Paul Valéry, George Antheil, and Colette, for instance, all benefited from her aid, in one way or another. Again, though, Barney who "took sincere pleasure in being helpful, but... also enjoyed having clout," benefited from the aid of her habitués (Rodriguez 241). Ezra Pound, for example, edited some of her poems, translated some of her work, and assisted her in the quest for publication.¹⁴

Ils semblent avoir vécu dans l'avenir.

(Barney, Éparpillements 41)

They seem to have lived in the future.

In many ways, the outcome of Natalie Clifford Barney's very personal publications and wildly successful salon set up a paradigm that would enable other Americans, other women, and other lesbians to accomplish what she had. In essence, she proved what could be done when she entered, entertained and enabled the international literary community from the comforts of *20, rue Jacob*. She made her life her art, she wrote fearlessly about her experiences though they were subversive, she made friends and lovers, and she advanced the cause of women. For Barney, writing what she knew, be it controversial subject or anachronistic form, may be seen as a success, and knowing who she knew made all the difference to this success.

One aspect that has thwarted Natalie Clifford Barney's literary success is the choice of language in which she wrote. Of twelve published works, only The One Who Is Legion, or A.D.'s After-Life (1930) is written entirely in English. Poems & poèmes: autres alliances (1920) is divided into two sections: one contains poems written in English, the other is comprised of poems written in French. This lack of English language work partially accounts for Barney's dearth of literary success. One must consider that the Anglo-American modernist movement was composed largely of male, English-language authors, and it definitely did not include the French-language writing of women who preferred decadent forms and taboo subject matter. Surely Barney, whose amazonian finger was on the pulse of the literary world, was aware that such writing would mean being passed over to a large extent. Yet, she consciously chose to write in

her second language. Her reasons for so doing are mostly personal, although her subject matter and style also dictated this linguistic choice to some extent.

Les Anglais qui prononcent le mot art avec un grand T.
(Barney, *Éparpillements* 46)
The English pronounce the word art with a capital T.

In the introduction to *Quelques portraits — sonnets de femmes*, Barney explains the reason she wrote in French: “I have lived too much of my everyday life in English to preserve any feeling for that language. Writing French verse comes naturally to me” (Wickes 47).¹⁵ She also states “*que mon âme est peut-être la tombe de quelques poètes français*,” further linking herself to the Decadent French past (Elliott and Wallace 41).¹⁶ Her affiliation with all things French was so strong that, during World War I, she chose to remain in France when other expatriates fled. In fact, George Wickes asserts that after being in France for so long she lost touch with her mother tongue, and she was “inclined to translate some expressions literally from the French or to quote clichés as if they were epigrams” (Rodriguez 255). According to Chelsea Ray, moreover, this self-identification was natural:

... [S]he had been steeped in French literature from a young age. Born into a wealthy family in Cincinnati, Barney grew up bilingual with a French governess and studied French literature while attending the most prestigious school for girls in Europe, Les Ruches, located near Paris. She settled in the capital at the turn of the century and hosted a literary salon that drew leading European and Anglo-American writers and intellectuals to her home every Friday. (Ray 33)

The success of Barney’s salon depended, partly, on her ability to integrate in French society, mores, and literature.¹⁷ Her ability to speak and write fluently in French, albeit a

fluency of those fifty to one hundred years before her time, ensured her a sacred spot in artistic Paris, one that was shared by very few Americans.¹⁸

Plus que de mauvaises langues il y a de mauvaises oreilles.

(Barney, Éparpillements 5)

There are more bad ears than evil tongues.

Arguably, writing in French also softened the blow of puritanical American scorn that may have been leveled at Natalie Clifford Barney. Her first experience with publication, Quelques portraits — sonnets de femmes, caused such an uproar within her family that Barney's parents left Paris without her and took up residence in New York's Waldorf Astoria to avoid the gossip circulating their Washington, D.C. home (Rodriguez 123). It is not surprising, then, that she felt she could truly express herself in French, and that she endeavoured from then on to be as "French" as possible. Beyond self-preservation, writing in French also allowed the Amazon to make use of double-entendre and mistranslations to further confuse her English-language readers. In a review of that first publication, the Washington Mirror erroneously noted: "She writes odes to men's lips and eyes; not like a novice, either. She makes you thrill, grow hot and cold, turn pale, then crimson red, and stirs your soul while reading her verses" (qtd. in Rodriguez 121). While Rodriguez asserts that some critics refused to believe Barney was writing about women, she also states that, "most of Washington" knew of the poet's sexuality (121). Karla Jay also speculates that writing in French denoted Miss Barney's subversive attack on the constraints of being an American woman in the early twentieth century, something she also attributes to Renée Vivien's Britain: "Of all the American and British

expatriates of their era, they alone expressed their allegiance to an international community of letters and their liberation from patriarchal concerns of nationalism by writing in French” (xiv). While this revolt may not have been a conscious one, writing in French did afford Barney a way to lessen the risk, perceived or otherwise, of self-expression.

Avoir au moins la fatuité de ce que nous ne sommes pas.

(Barney, *Éparpillements* 39)

To have, at least, the complacency of what we are not.

Though French was the language of currency at *20, rue Jacob*, the Amazon conceived of her salon as a true mosaic, something that was a rarity in Paris at the time. While most successful salons throughout history were hosted by women, the fairer sex was often included in salon culture only as a waggish, frequently demimonde arm piece to her male companions, and Americans were seldom respected enough to be invited at all.¹⁹ The Amazon’s salon was a rare exception, a place where women and men were treated as equals. Part of Barney’s desire to maintain and improve Franco-American relations came from her belief that she could “promote understanding between her two countries.” Family lore had it that a distant relative, Commodore Joshua Barney, went to Paris during the Revolution with dispatches from Franklin, fought in the French Navy, and served on several Franco-American missions. Additionally, Alice Pike Barney’s side of the family claimed some French heritage: Natalie’s great-aunt Louisa refused to speak English though she spent most of her life in Baltimore. According to Wickes, Barney was extremely fond of Louisa, who “helped form Natalie’s French outlook, her

independent nature and her refusal to confuse sin with pleasure” (Wickes 18). With such history, it is not surprising that Barney saw French as her language, and chose to write in this adopted tongue.

Pourquoi ressusciter des dieux, quand de nouveaux dieux attendent d’être créés?

(Barney, *Éparpillements* 61)

Why revive the gods, when new gods await creation?

Natalie Clifford Barney wrote poetry in highly formalised nineteenth-century verse, often characterised as “second-rate Mallarmé” (Rodriguez 115). When she had begun experimenting with poetry as a young girl, she attempted free verse but soon began modeling her writing on that of her heroes, French Symbolists like Paul Verlaine, Charles Baudelaire, and, of course, Stéphane Mallarmé (74). Only a year after moving to *20, rue Jacob*, she produced a book of *pensées* garnered from her Fridays. Naturally, as most of these witticisms were originally expressed in French, they were recorded in French. Moreover, epigrams, as a literary style, were mastered by the French.²⁰ These French influences were so all-invasive to Barney that it has been said that she even spoke with “an antiquated nineteenth-century style” (Weiss 107).²¹ While Alice Pike criticised her daughter’s antediluvian style as being too “high-brow,” it may be that Barney’s literary paragons so influenced her writing that she could never write for the masses (Rodriguez 270). Perhaps, too, she was so modern in her lifestyle, that she did not need to be in her writing, that record of her tempestuous existence. Pierre Louÿs’ dedication in the copy of *Les Chansons de Bilitis* that he presented to Barney in 1901 reads: “To Natalie Clifford Barney, Young Woman of the Future Society,” but he also pointed out that her

manuscript of Lettres à une connue, a tell-all about her affair with the great cocotte Liane de Pougy, was written in a way that was “a little outmoded,” and thus, was unpublishable (129-33). Undeterred and highly allergic to editing her work in-depth, Barney continued to write in the French of her mentors until her death in 1972.

Natalie Clifford Barney wrote of clothing: “These short skirts, so many women showing their legs without being asked... Poor legs one meets in the streets, knock-kneed, wanting in padding and training. What has become of that dance, that rhythm, that gait?” (qtd. in Rodriguez 238).²² As with her longing for the fashions of the past, the form Barney’s writing took reveals a desire for a time that was all but forgotten by 1920. She practised writing in Symbolist verse, and excelled at the epigram. In the same way that her French language was outdated, Barney’s choice of form was also passé. Outside the bedroom, the Amazon could never be accused of being experimental, and, perhaps, these formal strictures provided the best avenue to discuss her non-staid ideas.

Cet homme de l’avant-dernière mode qui parle avec un à-propos — en retard!

(Barney, Éparpillements 46)

This man of the latest fashion who speaks aptly — is behind!

Being considered anachronistic never seemed to faze the Amazon. Unlike her innovative and oft-misunderstood contemporary, Gertrude Stein, Barney never aspired to literary genius, but she injected her real creativity into her salon.²³ A thoroughly modern Samuel Putnam describes the salon thus:

In the meantime, the one real salon in all of Paris, possibly in all the world, in the eighteenth-century meaning of the term, was that kept by Natalie Barney in the rue Jacob... There I found a setting that made me think at once of what I had read

in my youth of Madame de Staël and Miss Barney's other illustrious predecessors. (73)

Putnam appreciated the anachronistic bent of Barney's Fridays, though few of his contemporaries would say the same of her out-of-date choice of form. Barney's lack of modernity in her writing was duly noted by Ezra Pound, who, upon review of Poems & poèmes: autres alliances prior to its 1920 publication, wrote: "you are out of touch not only with editorial connections but with the best contemporary work" (Elliott and Wallace 48).²⁴ In essence, it appears that modern life and writing often bored her: "regular verse, a game of patience/Irregular verse, game of impatience" (qtd. in Rodriguez 256). Rather than be in keeping with or ahead of the times, and despite repeated urging and editing for change, the Amazon insisted on clinging to her beloved nineteenth-century writing.

J'écris pour quelques-uns. Quelques-uns me comprendront-ils?

(Barney, Éparpillements 61)

I write for some. Will some understand me?

It may be that the constraints of such writing suited Natalie Clifford Barney because they offered a way for her to explore bawdy subject matter without completely revealing herself. Rodriguez claims the "double-being" as Barney's favourite theme (Rodriguez 256). In light of this revelation, the forms that Barney's writing took may be seen as one opposing half of the coin, the other being the subject matter she chose to consider. Indeed, many of the ideas she put forward in her epigrams about marriage, child birth, and women's rights, in general, were thoroughly modern. "In her collections,

Barney takes up the philosophical discourse as exemplified in the pensée,” Ray argues, “transforming the genre to accommodate feminist content such as lyrical passages on lesbian eroticism” (33). Essentially, Barney took these staid forms and turned them on their heads, making her an important figure for further study by gender, feminist, and literary theorists.²⁵ As previously discussed, however, due to both its old-fashioned nature and language, the subversiveness of Barney’s work has been overlooked.²⁶ It should be noted that Radclyffe Hall’s Ladies Almanack, though written in a style that was outmoded even in its day, was an exceedingly popular novel. The difference between the two being that Hall’s novel was written in English and, presumably, the author wrote in an ironically démodé fashion. Barney was sincere about her language and forms.

Que d’hiers il y a dans demain!
(Barney, Éparpillements 58)
How many yesterdays there are in tomorrow!

Natalie Clifford Barney, the woman who created the Académie des Femmes, who refused to ride her horse side-saddle, who was notoriously promiscuous and hated to see women smoke, is “now viewed as embodying the contradictions of the *Belle Époque*, a period caught in the tension of looking forward to the new century while clinging reluctantly to the old” (Weiss 110). She lived through experimental times, but she always returned in her writing to the period she loved best, and, perhaps, her life was so experimental that she needed not to be overly creative in her work. “Like [Oscar Wilde, a favourite of hers] she assumed a pose of indolence and frivolity and firmly believed in

making her life a work of art instead of sacrificing herself to create works of art,” according to George Wickes (11). Though, from the post-war period on, Barney’s subject matter became unexceptional, and she chose to stick with epigrams and formalised verse. Colette saw this fascination with old French masterpieces as a result of Barney’s having discovered them later in her literary development, but there may be another stylistic explanation (Jay 120). In discussing The One Who Is Legion, Elliott and Wallace assert that:

Clearly, “The One Who Is Legion” ‘flaunts’ its own lack of originality, its dependence on literary and autobiographical sources. The novel also makes it clear that decadence is a chosen *alternative* to a more recognizably modernist aesthetic; within A.D.’s library “the mediums of modernism as mannequins of fashion, were also excluded, because an acquired speed can represent a movement.” (41)

Barney saw modernism as a passing fad, found much of its fashion and writing disgusting, and appeared to be quite self-confident in these opinions. Her life, however, was forward-looking, and the main subject of her writing, her love of women, was exceedingly brave. As the rest of her life was anything but unintentional, it is difficult to believe that she wrote in out-dated forms out of sheer laziness. It seems she had a preference for the past, recalling with fondness “when we were all martyrs!” and chose to stick with it in her writing (Rodriguez 246).

Natalie Clifford Barney’s work has taken on a life of its own, a life deserving of further examination. Through her writings, a picture of an intentional life emerges: a life that was at once brave, thoughtful, subversive, and miles ahead of its time. Barney’s

oeuvre has suffered from neglect and misunderstanding, but it remains as relevant today as it was in its creation for the fact that it is an autobiographical record of a life less ordinary. What has been understood as indolence was, in fact, an intentional attempt at writing like a woman should, a disregard for the male-domination of her vocation, and a genuine effort of self-expression. The Amazon's "feminal writing", as it has been derisively described by some of her critics, was a calculated undertaking that placed her advanced sexual mores and feminist thought in the sea of modernism. What is more, Barney honoured her influences with the most sincere form of flattery: she imitated their chosen forms while using them to express her innovative soul. Her agenda was a mixed bag of self-discovery, wooing, saving, and opining.

Barney's decision to write in French also came from a personal place. While her prominence has undoubtedly suffered from this choice, just as she could not hide her sexual preferences, she could not deny this essential aspect of her linguistic self. Barney's emotional and familial attachment to all things French, coupled with the language's ability to shield her from some unwanted scrutiny, makes it an obvious choice for her writing. The resolve to write in her second language also came from a place that was more technical: it suited her epigrammic style and demonstrated her debt to the decadent French Symbolist movement. Barney's fascination with duality is self-evident in the forms she chose for her work. The structure of her writing is one area where she chose not to experiment, rather placing an emphasis on content. Barney was generally

bored with modernist attempts at innovation in art, while her very existence was a testament to a future age.

Toute expression, tout art est une indiscretion que nous commettons envers nous-mêmes. Et ceci ne provient pas d'une <<pauvreté>>, mais d'un surcroit de richesse, car c'est ainsi que nous faisons vivre quelques heures de notre vie au delà d'elles-mêmes. Et devant nos passés, vraiment passés, la discrétion n'est qu'un oubli sans valeur, stérile...

(Barney, *Éparpillements* 47-48)

All expression, all art is an indiscretion we commit towards ourselves. And this does not come from a "poverty", but from additional richness, because it is thus that we make the few hours of our lives live beyond themselves. And before our pasts, truly past, discretion is but an oversight without value, sterile...

Though Natalie Clifford Barney's biographers have recounted in detail her various affairs with some of the artistic world's leading ladies, it is as much her fault as theirs that this salubrious, albeit sordid, legacy has continued. Barney was genuinely preoccupied with affairs of the heart in much of her work, though she often left the details of who's who to be determined by her future readers. It is abundantly clear that the Amazon achieved what she set out for herself: Her life remains a work of art that may be viewed through the lens of the work she left behind.

Notes

¹ The corresponding titles are: The Well of Loneliness, The Pure and the Impure, Idylle saphique and My Blue Notebooks, and Ladies Almanack.

² For examples, of which there are many, see Samuel Putnam's Paris Was Our Mistress, Ernest Hemingway's A Moveable Feast, or George Antheil's Bad Boy of Music.

³ These are the works of George Wickes (1976), Jean Chalon (original French language version 1976, English translation by Carol Barko 1979), Suzanne Rodriguez (2002), and Diana Souhami (2004), respectively. Refreshingly, Karla Jay's 1988 feminist study The Amazon and the Page — Natalie Clifford Barney and Renée Vivien explores, in part, how Barney's legend of promiscuity has overpowered and largely obscured her other accomplishments.

⁴ According to Suzanne Rodriguez, this informal organisation was something Barney had been discussing since early in the century, but it did not coalesce until 1927. It was her response to the Académie française's refusal to admit women into their ranks. Honorees included: Colette, Gertrude Stein, Anna Wickham, Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, Rachilde, Aurel, Elisabeth de Gramont, Mina Loy, Djuna Barnes, Renée Vivien, Marie Lénér, and Romaine Brooks (252-55).

⁵ As Barney saw it, "I am a lesbian. One needn't hide it, nor boast of it" (Rodriguez 183).

⁶ Rodriguez attributes this skill to Barney's maternal grandfather, an "opera impresario," and her mother, the painter Alice Pike Barney, who was well known in American social circles as a formidable hostess (154).

⁷ According to Rodriguez, when Albert read a review that revealed the subject of his daughter's poems, he left America for Paris, bought out all the remaining copies of Quelques portraits, and destroyed them (123).

⁸ Rodriguez claims that Barney learned that Pauline was ill in January 1909, but that Tarn did not pass away until November 18, 1909 (187-88).

⁹ Eliot refused this award which was to amount to a stipend of 15,000 francs per year. He was later able to attract a patron and leave his day job (Rodriguez 244). The quotation comes from the essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism.

¹⁰ The works of these authors, The Flowers of Evil and Songs of Bilitis, respectively, deal in part with Sapphic love.

¹¹ “Natalie didn’t talk much. She would sit comfortably, listening to conversation. But every once in a while — Ziiiiip! She’d swoop down and make a witty, insightful remark — often a devastating remark” (qtd. in Rodriguez 204).

¹² Rodriguez states that it was Barney’s favourite published work and “was well received by critics and readers alike” (205).

¹³ Wickes refers to it as having a “genius for friendship” (Wickes 9).

¹⁴ These Pound-Barney collaborations were published, respectively, in Transatlantic Review, October 1924; portions of Pensées d’une Amazone in English for This Quarter, 1929; and a print version of her translation of Valéry’s story “An Evening with M. Teste” in Dial, February 1922 (Rodriguez 243).

¹⁵ She goes on to explain that French was the only language in which she could think poetically. Wickes understands it as being the language that “expressed her essentially classical temperament” (47).

¹⁶ ... *that my soul may be the resting place of a few French poets.*

¹⁷ Thus, it is fortunate that, “more than almost any other American she was at home with the French language and temperament” (Wickes 10).

¹⁸ Another almost-French American, Edith Wharton, was considered so well-acclimated that the United States government had her write a guide for American servicemen in France. Wharton, however, did not approve of Barney and was very vocal about this fact to all who cared to listen. Rodriguez postulates that this abhorrence boils down to a simple case of jealousy: Wharton’s popularity was in direct competition with Barney’s salon (267).

¹⁹ Edith Wharton was an exception to this rule: it was she who was invited to social engagements, prized for her intelligence and facility with French language and customs, and her husband who tagged along. Gertrude Stein, who patronised and helped popularise many famous artists, seemed to use her abilities to serve an entirely male population.

²⁰ Proof may be found in the fact that the most celebrated epigrammists, Jean de La Bruyère and François de La Rochefoucauld, were French. For more on this subject, see Jay 119.

²¹ True to her fondness for the 1800s, she apparently spoke English much the same way!

²² This is Barney's reflection on the arrival of the modern woman in post-World War I Paris.

²³ For a good description of Barney's composure at the salon, see Rodriguez, 240-41.

²⁴ Pound's critique of Pensées d'une Amazone is similarly damning. For more information, see Rodriguez, 259.

²⁵ Shari Benstock goes so far as to suggest that Barney saw these forms as a means of bestowing her writing with "literary authority" (qtd. in Elliott and Wallace 47).

²⁶ Joan Schenkar sees Barney's importance as such: "Natalie's classical temperament, best suited to the protected life that all eighteenth-century hommes de lettres lived... finds its fullest expression in these aimed little arrows of wit. Natalie's re-appropriation of male forms — the homme de lettres pose, the epigram, and the erotic narrative — not to mention the many photographs of masquerades and temporary gender transformations attending lesbian love that she staged, directed and starred in with her lovers, deserve a far wider audience than they have had" (Schenkar 164).

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Appendix

... it is charm that characterizes the Scatterings of Natalie Clifford Barney, a charm which conceals subtle observations of herself and of others and also, of life. From Paris Herald quoted in Wild Heart: A Life by Suzanne Rodriguez

Nineteen hundred and ten was a busy year for Barney, with the publication of three French language books: Je me souviens, Actes et entr'actes, and Éparpillements. The first was a long poem written in 1904 for Pauline Tarn. The second publication was a collection of poems and plays that Barney had written over a few years prior to publication. Éparpillements was by far the most successful of the three. Paris Herald chose it as “Book of the Week” and Tatler lauded it “a volume to travel with.” It was also the book with which Barney was able to woo the lupus-ridden Remy de Gourmont, a reclusive French writer, into inviting her to his exclusively male Sunday gatherings. It was Gourmont who first referred to Barney as “l’Amazone” (Rodriguez 190-96, 202-05).

I chose to translate Éparpillements for several reasons: it is out-of-print, it is a sort of catalogue of Natalie Clifford Barney’s thoughts, and it includes snippets overheard at the salon. Chiefly, however, I felt that it was important for the epigrams contained in these pages to be read again. While Barney was known for many things, her “epigrammatic wit” was considered her most important literary contribution (Rodriguez 204).

What can be gained from these epigrams today? Certainly, the work provides much insight into Natalie Barney's thoughts and feelings. The reader gets a sense of Barney's personality: she is at turns funny, at others judgmental but always intelligent. We meet a young woman who is predominantly interested in the nature of love. This exploration leads into gender roles, self-contemplation, and social mores and faux-pas. Therein lies Barney's strength.

Beyond that, while some of the epigrams are decidedly dated, there are many truisms contained in these pages that are as relevant today as they were upon publication one hundred years ago. And it is the neatness with which they are contained that makes reading them like unwrapping a tiny present: one never knows what one will uncover once one unties the bow. After all, in the words of Natalie Barney herself:

Ce qui ne peut être contenu dans une phrase?...
What cannot be contained in a sentence? ...

Eparpillements

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

QUELQUES PORTRAITS-SONNETS DE FEMMES. *Ollendorff.*
CINQS PETITS DIALOGUES GRECS (out of print). . . . *La Plume.*
ACTES ET ENTR'ACTES. *E. Sansot.*
JE ME SOUVIENS (novel). *E. Sansot.*

In preparation:
LE TOMBEAU DE RÉNÉE [sic] VIVIEN

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NATALIE CLIFFORD BARNEY

Éparpillements

PARIS
BIBLIOTHÈQUE INTERNATIONALE D'ÉDITION
E. SANSOT et Cie
7 et 9, Rue de l'Éperon, 7 et 9

1910

ÉPARPILLEMENTS
SCATTERINGS

Plus que de mauvaises langues il y a de mauvaises oreilles.
There are more bad ears than evil tongues.

Est-ce la faute des choses ou des êtres ou de nous-mêmes si rien n'a su retenir notre constance?
Is it the fault of things or of beings or of ourselves if nothing has been able to retain our constancy?

Comment ne pas commencer?
How not to begin?

La gloire: être connu de ceux qu'on ne voudrait pas connaître.
Fame: to be known by those that one would not wish to know.

A quoi bon? puisque rien n'est impossible.
To what end? since nothing is impossible.

A leurs colères on voit la race des gens.
In people's anger one sees their breeding.

Je connais des tentations, pas de tenteurs.
I know temptations, not tempters.

Tu es tellement plus belle que tout ce qui peut t'arriver.
You are much more beautiful than all that may befall you.

Toujours: trop longtemps.
Forever: too long.

Marié: n'être ni seul ni ensemble.
Married: to be neither alone nor together.

Savoir plaire, quelle vieillesse!
Knowing how to please, what agedness!

Avoir ou n'avoir pas, lequel est le pire?
To have or not to have, which is worse?

Je ne m'explique pas, je m'obéis.
I don't explain myself, I obey myself.

Moi seule puis me faire rougir.
I alone can make myself blush.

Ne point suivre ceux qui s'arrêtent à nous, ni les conduire!
Neither follow those who stop at us, nor lead them on!

On aura toujours raison de craindre le bonheur.
One will always be right to fear happiness.

Qu'ils aient peur de perdre leur jeunesse ceux à qui la vieillesse n'ajoute rien.
They should fear losing their youth, those for whom old age adds nothing.

Vieillir c'est se montrer.
To grow old is to show oneself.

N'oser critiquer que ce qu'on admire.
Dare to criticise only what one admires.

Ceux qui s'ennuient dans la vie sont moins pauvres cependant que ceux qui s'amuse en dehors d'elle.
Those who are bored in life are less pitiful than those who take pleasure in being outside of it.

De mauvaise compagnie pour eux-mêmes, ils recherchent autrui.
Bad company for themselves, they seek out others.

C'est de moi-même que je suis le [sic] plus curieuse.
I am the most curious about myself.

Comme certains recherchent autrui pour s'oublier, je recherche autrui pour me retrouver seule.
As some seek out others to forget themselves, I seek out others to find myself alone.

Ces rires tout en dehors qui semblent ne rien garder d'amusant pour eux...
This outward laughter that seems to keep nothing amusing for itself...

On a parfois ce que l'on désire et ce n'est pas ce que l'on désire.
One occasionally has that which one wants and it is not what one wants.

Ce n'est pas ce que vous faites qui m'importe, mais ce que vous êtes.
It is not what you do that matters to me but what you are.

Je ne juge d'après leurs actes que ceux pour qui j'ai de l'antipathie.
I only judge by their actions those whom I abhor.

La fatigue nous vient du travail que nous ne faisons pas.
Fatigue comes to us from the work we do not do.

Si j'hésite, c'est qu'il ne faut pas.
If I hesitate, it is that I must not.

La Beauté: une simplification.
Beauty: a simplification.

Je juge le charme des êtres par la facilité à m'exprimer en leur présence!
I judge the charm of beings by the ease with which I express myself in their presence!

Que de ressources il faut en soi pour supporter sans fatigue une vie oisive.
Such resources one requires within oneself to support an idle life without weariness.

La délicatesse: cette aristocratie de la force... Qu'ils doivent en manquer ceux qui la nomment impuissance!
Delicacy: that aristocracy of strength... How those who name it weakness must lack it!

Ils ne sont pas les plus forts ceux qui nous découragent.
They are not the strongest those who discourage us.

Etre fataliste, cette façon d'accueillir, de toute sa paresse, l'évitable.
To be fatalistic, this manner of welcoming, in all its indolence, the inevitable.

Accepter simplement la souffrance — et toutes ses joies.
Simply accept suffering — and all its joys.

Toute perte, m'enrichit davantage.
All loss, further enriches me.

Devant certains êtres je crois difficilement à l'évolution universelle.
When presented with certain beings I have difficulty believing in universal evolution.

Mon désir: qu'il s'accomplisse autrement.
My desire: may it be consummated otherwise.

Quand une joie est mienne, je crois moins que jamais au hasard.
When joy is mine, I believe less than ever in happenstance.

Le merveilleux c'est l'audace de sans cesse l'exiger, le créer.
The supernatural is the ceaseless audacity to require it, to create it.

PETITES MAITRESSES
LITTLE MISTRESSES

N'aimerions-nous en *eux* que ce que nous leur prêtons de nous?
Do we only like in them that which we lend them of ourselves?

Etre assez absorbée pour ne plus penser à tout.
Be absorbed enough to no longer think of everything.

Qui me consolera de ma gaîté?
Who will console me in my mirth?

Combien de volonté il nous faut pour céder à ce que nous désirons le plus.
How much will we require to cede to that which we most desire.

Ce qui est vrai pour d'autres ne saurait la convaincre, il lui faut *sa* vérité.
That which is true for others will not convince her, she needs her truth.

Mes tristesses? Je les invente: il en faut à force de joie.
My sorrows? I invent them: a necessity in the face of felicity.

Le blanc ne devrait être porté que par celles qui en irradiant.
White should be worn only by those women who illuminate it.

A voir de telles femmes libres et s'efforçant d'être artistes, on comprend plus avant la bêtise des hommes.
To see such women free and endeavouring to be artists, one understands more when faced with the stupidity of men.

<< Faire de la littérature >>, quel mauvais reproche à la vie!
"To make literature", what a vulgar reproach to life!

Quelle horrible chose que la vie — la vie des autres.
What a horrible thing is life — the life of others.

Je subis une crise d'équilibre!
I am suffering a crisis of equilibrium!

On n'est pas soi-même tous les jours, heureusement.
We are not ourselves every day, luckily.

*De leurs superstitions:
Of their superstitions:*

Aucune dureté ne peut être définitive.
No harshness is conclusive.

Ceux qui ont pu s'endormir fâchés ne s'éveilleront plus ensemble.
Those who were able to go to sleep angry will no longer wake together.

On n'a pas d'âge tant qu'on est jeune.
One is ageless as long as one is young.

Toutes les nuits je rêve que tu me trompes, mais la nuit dernière j'eus enfin un rêve heureux: tu te tuais pour moi.
Every night I dream that you are unfaithful, but last night I finally had a happy dream: you were killing yourself for me.

Elle n'en vaut pas la peine.
— Ma peine en vaut la peine.
*She is not worth the trouble.
— My pain is worth the trouble.*

(Eloge à un amant) Il savait si bien ne pas m'embrasser!
(In praise of a lover) He knew so well how not to kiss me!

La dentelle: l'art des trous.
Lace: the art of holes.

La voilette de dentelle faisait sur son visage un tatouage hideux: une arabesque brodée de feuillages, semblable à une longue cicatrice irrégulière, fendait sa bouche en travers.
— Je n'ai jamais pu me rendre compte pourquoi les femmes couvrent leur approche d'un aussi effarant déguisement.
*The lace veil made a hideous tattoo on her face: an arabesque embroidered with foliage, like a long irregular scar, split her mouth across.
— I have never been able to account for why women cover their approach with such an alarming disguise.*

Ses cils recourbés semblent sourire même quand ses yeux sont tristes.
Her curved lashes seem to smile even when her eyes are sad.

Des yeux aigus comme des points d'orgue sous leurs sourcils arqués — des yeux qui arrêtent.

Sharp eyes like climaxes under their arched brows — eyes which arrest.

Des yeux orgueilleux et las — des yeux aux larmes refoulées.

Proud and tired eyes — eyes of repressed tears.

Son état d'âme: avoir gros coeur!

His mood: heavy hearted!

Des yeux si pâles qu'ils semblent décolorer tout ce qu'ils regardent (*yeux de moralistes*).

Eyes so pale that they seem to blanch all that they look at (eyes of moralists).

Ceux qui fixent le soleil voient toutes choses tachées d'or: ainsi, d'avoir tant regardé vos yeux, à tout ce que je vois s'ajoute leur couleur.

Those who fix the sun see everything stained with gold: thus, having looked so long at your eyes, their colour is added to all that I see.

Aimer, c'est doubler son regard.

To love is to double one's gaze.

Des femmes passent fraîchement fardées: mauvaises peintures que nul ne voudrait signer.

Women pass by freshly made up: bad paintings which nobody would wish to sign.

La mode: la recherche d'un ridicule nouveau.

Fashion: the search for a new ridiculousness.

A éviter: l'intimité et ses impudeurs progressives.

To be avoided: intimacy and its progressive immodesties.

Elle m'appela: << Mon amour >>, ce nom devenu habituel, dit sans intention, pour commencer une phrase devant aboutir ailleurs; triste mot domestiqué, survivance d'un sentiment d'où est parti tout le radieux...

She called me: "my love", this name become routine, said without intention, to begin a sentence that must end somewhere else; sad domesticated word, survival of a feeling from which all radiance has left...

Les mots deviendraient de petits tombeaux si on ne les quittait à temps.

Words would become little graves if one did not leave them in time.

Que d'êtres, dans un mot devenu vide, ont enfermé toute leur vie.
What beings, in a word become empty, have locked away their whole life.

Etre assez lasse pour choisir!
To be weary enough to choose!

Avoir la force et la simplicité d'être faible.
To have the strength and simplicity to be weak.

Si la maternité se produisait à rebours, en commençant par les douleurs de l'enfantement, il y aurait quand même des mères, mais des mères différentes, d'un héroïsme volontaire, non pas victimes d'une inadvertance, piètres martyres d'une des ruses de la nature. Quand l'homme sera-t-il subi pour l'enfant et non l'enfant pour l'homme?
If motherhood occurred in reverse, beginning with the pains of childbirth, there would still be mothers, but different mothers, of a voluntary heroism, not victims of an oversight, mediocre martyrs of one of the guiles of the nature. When will the man be suffered for the child and not the child for the man?

Aux heures d'inattention ou de fatigue j'ai vu sur le visage des femmes jeunes encore les signes de la première vieillesse. Les traces de cet âge découragé où, à côté du nez et de la bouche, il y a déjà des lignes descendantes.
In careless or tired hours I saw on the face of still young women the first signs of old age. Traces of that discouraged age where, beside the nose and the mouth, there are already downward lines.

Le temps marque sur notre visage toutes les larmes que nous n'avons pas versées.
Time marks our face with all the tears we have not shed.

On est tellement plus sensible qu'on ne le sait!
One is much more sensitive than one knows!

Elle a de la défense, mais la défense ne sert qu'à souffrir trop — et trop tard.
She has defence, but defence serves only to suffer too greatly — and too late.

L'affinement de la souffrance: sourire.
The refinement of suffering: to smile.

Un petit papier bleu vint annoncer à l'une d'elles la mort d'un espoir. Quelques larmes lui montèrent aux yeux, puis elle s'enferma dans l'attitude de son chagrin. Elle devint une espèce de veuve sans voile, guindée dans son deuil... fermée, isolée, dans la

cristallisation presque immédiate d'un être sous son malheur. Ne plus être vulnérable, émue, sensible, ouverte par ce qui nous frappe, n'est-ce pas trop mourir avec les morts? *A small blue paper came to announce to one of them the death of hope. Some tears rose to her eyes, then she locked herself in the attitude of her sorrow. She became a sort of widow without a veil, starched in her mourning... closed, isolated, in the nearly immediate crystallization of a being under her tragedy. To no longer be vulnerable, moved, sensitive, opened by that which strikes us, is it not to die too much with the dead?*

La douleur serait-elle l'enclume sur laquelle on ne brise que les métaux de mauvais aloi? *Would pain be the anvil upon which one breaks only metals of dubious worth?*

Il n'est pas vrai que nous souffrions trop: si notre souffrance nous dépasse c'est pour que nous grandissions jusqu'à elle. *It is not true that we suffer too greatly: if our suffering overwhelms us it is so that we may grow into it.*

Nos ombres sont plus grandes que nous. *Our shadows are bigger than us.*

Tu me dis de douces paroles — pourquoi n'es-tu pas l'autre? *You speak soft words to me — why are you not the other one?*

Je compte les mois par les fleurs qu'ils font éclore... ou par la durée d'un amour: C'était, je me rappelle, la saison des iris noirs du midi, tristes fleurs d'un printemps sans adolescence... ou bien la saison des orchidées bleues, des crocus, des pois de senteur et des gardénias arrivés de Londres... puis celle des pivoines, le jeune été semblant s'être déjà lassé de produire des fleurs subtiles! Et, après, les clématites, et les roses de plein air — comme nées d'un parfum de femmes qui passent — les violettes, les premières violettes de l'automne.

I count the months by the flowers they cause to bloom... or by the span of a love: It was, I recall, the season of the black irises of midday, sad flowers of a spring without adolescence... or else the season of the blue orchids, crocuses, sweet peas and gardenias arriving from London... then that of the peonies, the young summer seeming already to have grown tired of producing subtle flowers! And, afterwards, the clematis, and the open air roses — as though born of the perfume of the women passing by — the violets, the first fall violets.

Comme il est lassant d'avoir des ennemis et pas d'adversaires!... *How boring it is to have enemies and no opponents!...*

Est-ce vraiment à toi que je parle? Je ne sais, mais quelqu'un que j'aime m'écoute.
Is it really you I am speaking to? I do not know, but someone I love is listening.

Elle promenait dans un monde d'artifices l'or vrai de sa chevelure.
In a world of artifice, she carried the true gold of her hair.

Il me regarda, et ce fut comme si les sources, les montagnes, les forêts et le ciel me contemplaient, et j'eus honte devant lui de mes vêtements, de mes pensées, de tout mon être rompu aux villes et à leurs usages. Je me sentis hors nature, inhabitée des dieux.
He looked at me, and it was as though the springs, the mountains, the forests and the sky contemplated me, and I was ashamed of my clothing in front of him, of my thoughts, of all my being hackneyed by cities and their manners. I felt outside nature, uninhabited by gods.

Etre assez grande pour le bonheur.
To be grown enough for happiness.

Vous êtes plus beau que le bonheur.
You are more handsome than happiness.

J'aime trop les commencements pour savoir aimer autre chose.
I like beginnings too much to know how to like anything else.

Lequel de tous ces passés, sera *le* Passé?
Which of all these pasts, will be the Past?

Je ne savais pas encore que c'était *toi* que j'aimerais en toi — je ne savais pas encore que c'était *toi* que j'aimerais en d'autres!
I did not yet know that it was you that I would love in you — I did not yet know that it was you that I would love in others!

Nous voyons les êtres qui nous ressemblent, non ceux qui nous complètent.
We see beings who are like us, not those who complete us.

Je sentis qu'il me trouvait plus jolie qu'il ne le craignait!
I sensed that he found me more attractive than he had feared!

M'aimez-vous? C'est pour que cette question vous occupe, pour que vous vous donniez à vous-même sa réponse que je vous la fais. Car c'est pour vous encore davantage que pour moi que je veux que vous m'aimiez.

Do you love me? It is so that this question preoccupies you, so that you give yourself its answer, that I ask. Because it is for you even more than for me that I want you to love me.

Je voudrais vous faire ce don merveilleux d'un amour que vous auriez pour moi.
I would like to offer you the marvelous gift of a love you might have for me.

Je ne puis pourtant pas me donner à ceux qui ne savent me prendre.
Nevertheless, I cannot give myself to those who do not know how to take me.

Je suis avec toi comme ces mères timides qui ne savent pas dorloter leurs enfants, et qui, seulement lorsqu'ils dorment osent s'approcher et, en se penchant, les toucher d'une furtive caresse. Je t'aime dans l'obscurité et dans la solitude de moi-même. Mieux vaudrait sans doute être tendre au jour le jour, et dans la lumière des petites choses simples, définies. Mais l'on n'aime pas comme l'on voudrait — on aime comme l'on est!

With you I am like those timid mothers who do not know how to cherish their children, and who, only once they are sleeping dare approach them and, bending over them, touch them with a furtive caress. I love you in the obscurity and solitude of myself. It would be better, no doubt, to be tender day to day, and in the light of simple, defined little gifts. But one doesn't love the way one wishes — one loves the way one is!

Nous ne différons les unes des autres que par des détails — essentiels!
We women differ only in the details — essential!

Qu'avez-vous vu au Salon?
J'ai vu... qu'on me regardait.
What did you see at the Salon?
I saw... that I was seen.

Elle aimait à voir sur ses murs, seuls tableaux d'elle, ses miroirs.
She liked to see on her walls, only paintings of her, her mirrors.

Les fines veines de ses tempes, petites sources bleues sous sa peau transparente, semblaient avoir versé dans l'iris de ses yeux leur couleur.
The fine veins of her temples, little blue springs beneath her transparent skin, seemed to have poured their colour into the irises of her eyes.

Faible, je n'ai de force que pour les choses ardentes!
Weak, I have strength only for ardent things!

Des femmes sont là, des femmes à l'oeil noir tout scintillant d'énergie... Je me sens si irrémédiablement blonde!

Women are there, women whose black eyes twinkle with energy... I feel so irreparably blonde!

Quelle suffisance... et elle lui a suffi.

What self-satisfaction... and she satisfied him.

Des femmes avec, autour de leur cou, l'impersonnel collier de perles. Chaîne d'un symbole devenu presque universel: représentant anonyme d'heures serviles... perles doublement douloureuses, ayant, à parer tant de piètres demoiselles, perdu tout lien avec leurs origines mystérieuses. Et pourtant elles s'irisent encore d'avoir frôlé, autrefois, sous la mer, la joue des sirènes.

Women with, around their neck, impersonal pearl necklaces. Chain of an almost universal symbol: anonymous representative of slavish hours... doubly painful pearls, having, in adorning so many mediocre young ladies, lost all ties with their mysterious origins. And nevertheless they remain iridescent having brushed, long ago, under the sea, the cheeks of sirens.

Etre libre, quand ce ne serait que pour changer sans cesse d'esclavages.

To be free, when it is only to ceaselessly change enslavements.

Que de fois on aime ce qu'on n'aime pas, et plus encore que de fois on n'aime pas ce qu'on aime!

How often one likes what one does not love, and even more often one does not like what one loves!

Etre belle, à temps.

Being beautiful, in time.

Une femme à prendre ou à laisser — non à prendre et à laisser.

A woman to take or leave — not to take and leave.

Etre infidèle à ceux qu'on aime, pour ne pas laisser devenir habituel leur charme.

Being unfaithful to those one loves, to not allow their charm to become routine.

Ses bijoux, sans tares, rehaussent la grâce de sa beauté irrégulière: parfaitement imparfaite. Ses ornements ne doivent pas nous distraire par leurs originalités figées de la personnalité vivante qui les porte. Ils doivent être, et rester de petites illuminations, diversement colorées, mais uniquement destinées à mettre en valeur, à laisser en valeur, son visage.

Her jewels, flawless, heighten the grace of her irregular beauty: perfectly imperfect. Her ornaments must not distract us with their fixed originality from the living person wearing them. They must be, and remain little illuminations, multicoloured, but uniquely destined to emphasize, to insist on, her face.

Comme une ville, la nuit, j'ai vu passer des femmes tout éclairées de leurs pierreries.
Like a city, at night, I saw women all lit up by their precious stones.

Que de beautés ne sont pas belles!
How many beauties are not beautiful!

Que de femmes laidement belles, que de femmes bellement laides... Le plus rare: la beauté belle, la laideur laide.
So many ugly beautiful women, so many beautifully ugly women... The rarest: the beautiful beauty, the unappealing ugly.

L'inattendu: ce maladroit.
The unexpected: that incompetent.

Peu de femmes finissent en beauté — même leur toilette de nuit.
Few women end in beauty — even their night time toilet.

Donner des raisons à la déraison, quel manque d'amour!
Giving sense to nonsense, what a lack of love!

Il est plus difficile de garder ce que l'on a que de s'attacher un être nouveau!
It is more difficult to keep what one has than to attach oneself to a new being!

Je lui ai dit un petit mensonge, et il m'a crue — quel dommage qu'il m'ait crue!
I told him a little lie, and he believed me — what a shame that he believed!

Je la croise parfois dans sa voiture, accompagnée de quelque rose nouvelle, auprès d'elle sur sa longue tige, comme une compagne jolie.
I cross paths occasionally with her in her car, accompanied by some new rose, next to her on its long stem, like an attractive companion.

Elle ne craint pas la rivalité des fleurs.
She does not fear the rivalry of flowers.

Etre belle pour soi, d'abord.
To be beautiful for oneself, firstly.

Pourquoi compliquer nos instincts d'une volonté?
Why complicate our instincts with a will?

C'est haut, la joie!
It is high, joy!

Elle avait trente-cinq ans, c'est-à-dire parfois dix-sept et parfois quarante-sept.
She was thirty-five years old, that is sometimes seventeen and sometimes forty-seven.

S'exiger belle (et pouvoir l'être) est un triomphe dont se permettre d'être laide (et pouvoir l'être, oh combien plus facilement!) est la revanche, le repos.
To demand oneself to be beautiful (and to be able to be so) is a triumph of which allowing oneself to be ugly (and to be able to be so, oh how much more easily!) is the revenge, the ease.

N'être d'aucune époque. La mode seule se démode.
To be of no single era. Only mode outmodes itself.

Serai-je ce que je cherche?
Will I be what I seek?

Quand je parle, je n'ai plus rien à dire...
When I speak, I no longer have anything to say...

Cette Américaine a de la race.
— Elle les a toutes!
That American has breeding.
— *She has them all!*

Nous sommes limitées par tout ce que nous ne sentons pas.
We are limited by all that we do not feel.

On est trahi par son quotidien.
One is betrayed by one's everyday life.

Aimer ce que l'on a; une façon résignée de ne jamais avoir ce que l'on aime.
To like what one has; a resigned way to never have what one loves.

Tu es plus proche de moi que ma pensée.
You are closer to me than my thoughts.

Mes songes sont les ombres des réalités, à moins qu'ils n'en soient les clartés.
My dreams are the shadow of realities, unless they are their clarity.

Celles qui ont besoin d'apprendre ne sauront jamais rien.
Those women who need to learn will never know anything.

Ne pas me moquer de ce qui me plaît.
Not to laugh at that which pleases me.

Que d'hommes veulent être nos amants qui ne sont pas dignes d'être nos valets.
So many men wish to be our lovers who are not worthy of being our valets.

Qu'avez-vous le plus aimé?

— Aimer.

Et s'il fallait choisir plusieurs choses?

— Je choiserais plusieurs fois l'amour!

What did you love the most?

— *Love.*

And if you had to choose several things?

— *I would chose love several times!*

LEURS AMANTS
THEIR LOVERS

La femme: une des portes du merveilleux.
Woman: one of the doors to the supernatural.

Elle m'a initié au plaisir, — je ne lui ai jamais pardonné.
She initiated me into pleasure — I never forgave her.

Que l'on perd vite auprès d'elles ce qu'on venait y chercher.
How quickly one loses what one came to find next in them.

Encore amoureux: faire pour elle avec ardeur ce qu'on n'attendait plus de soi.
Still in love: to do for her with ardour what one no longer expected of oneself.

L'aimer: avoir *ses* élans.
To love her: having her élan.

Si les femmes savaient à combien on renonce lorsqu'on dort avec elles.
If women knew how much one gives up when one sleeps with them.

Eros est le plus jeune des dieux, — il est aussi le plus fatigué.
Eros is the youngest of the gods — he is also the most tired.

Comme je dois l'aimer, pour ainsi me forcer à cette attitude amoureuse qui m'ennuie.
How I must love her, to thus force myself in this amorous attitude that bores me.

Les amants devraient avoir aussi des jours de sortie.
Lovers should also have days out.

Vieille maîtresse, espèce de mère obscène.
Old mistress, a sort of obscene mother.

On se fait à sa peine, et ce n'est pas là le moins triste.
One is made in one's pain, and the least sad is not there.

Recherchez les femmes qui marchent sur la pointe des pieds — il y en a encore.
Seek women who walk on tiptoe — they still exist.

J'observe, la nuit, le long des corridors d'hôtel, les souliers au seuil des portes. Ceux des couples, affalés du talon, déformés par des courses d'affaires et de sordides plaisirs; ceux des enfants, personnels, mais sans individualité, évoquant de belles promenades, des étonnements, et de mystérieuses fatigues insoupçonnées; ceux des hommes soignés, mieux soignés... encore soignés! puis les souliers d'une femme seule, de très petits souliers usés seulement de la pointe.

I observe, at night, along hotel corridors, shoes at the thresholds of the doors. Those of couples, slumped at the heel, deformed by business errands and sordid pleasures; those of children, personal, but without individuality, evoking beautiful walks, surprises, and mysterious unsuspected tiredness; those of well-kept men, better-kept... even-better-kept! then the shoes of a single woman, very small shoes worn only at the toe.

Nous vîmes une épée en cristal. Une épée pour fantômes, dit-elle.

We saw a crystal sword. A sword for ghosts, she said.

J'étais à tout le monde, elle n'était à personne: nous nous attendions autrement et cependant nos solitudes se ressemblaient...

I belonged to everyone, she belonged to no one: we expected one another otherwise and meanwhile our solitudes resembled each other...

Se parler, oui, pour savoir qu'on est du même silence.

To speak to oneself, yes, to know that we are of the same silence.

Quand vous ne me répondez pas, je doute de moi, je m'en veux, je me suis déloyal.

When you do not answer me, I doubt myself, I blame myself, I am disloyal to myself.

Attendre en vain, c'est parfois, néanmoins, une façon d'avoir.

Waiting in vain, is sometimes, nevertheless, a way of having.

Quel est ce désir obstiné, limité, qui ne sait plus vouloir qu'une chose? Et ce désir infiniment plus obstiné et plus limité encore qui, dans cette chose, ne vaut qu'une chose!
What is this stubborn, limited, desire that no longer only wants one thing? And this infinitely more stubborn and more limited desire that, once in this thing, is worth but one thing!

Nous ne saurions être chagrinés que du refus de celles assez pauvres pour ne nous inspirer aucun autre désir.

We would only know how to be saddened by the refusal of those women who are impoverished enough to not inspire any other desire within us.

Ces petites lâchetés intimes qu'elle appelle son devoir.
These little intimate cowardices that she calls her duty.

En s'approchant d'une femme: vous êtes belle, vous étiez belle!
Approaching a woman: you are beautiful, you were beautiful!

Que de bonheurs dont le malheur ne voudrait pas!
So many good fortunes that misfortune does not want!

Métamorphose: ce parfum de jasmin qui a des mains de femme.
Metamorphosis: that jasmine perfume with the hands of a woman.

On ne se donne pas à l'invisible, mais on le prend.
One does not give oneself to the invisible, but one takes it.

Il est si rare que quelque chose ait pu être... vaut-il mieux laisser ne pas être!
It is so rare that something was able to be... it is better to not be!

Des amants? Sûrement, voyez comme ils s'ennuient ensemble.
Lovers? Surely, see how they are bored together.

Je l'attendais et elle n'est point venue, serais-je plus jeune que je ne le crois?
I awaited her and she did not come, could I be younger than I believe?

Il ne leur manque que le temps pour l'essentiel.
They are only missing time for the essential.

Hommages répudiés: Vous leur avez donné de l'importance... J'aurais dû faire comme vous.
Repudiated tributes: You gave them importance... I should have done like you.

Vous obéir? Vous désobéir? Combien de tels mots me prouvent que vous n'êtes pas seule!
Obeys you? Disobeys you? How much such words prove to me that you are not alone!

Comme d'autres ont besoin d'ivresses, j'ai besoin de plein air: adieu.
As others need drunkenness, I need fresh air: farewell.

Elle oubliait ses yeux sur moi.
She forgot her eyes on me.

Nous eûmes des mots bienheureux comme des songes, dont il ne reste plus rien!
We had happy words like dreams, of which there is nothing left!

... Et j'étends vers toi mes bras dans une étreinte vide, mes bras désespérés d'avoir contenu une forme unique.

... *And I extend my arms to you in an empty embrace, my arms desperate to have held a unique form.*

Des fleurs: on finit par préférer leurs feuillages.
Flowers: one ends by preferring their foliage.

Tes résistances: autant de soupirs vers la vie que tu n'oses vivre!
Your resistance: so many sighs towards the life you dare not live!

A dix mètres de moi, elle préparait déjà son visage au sourire.
At ten meters from me, she was already preparing her face to smile.

Les pierres, ces yeux de femmes sans paupières.
Stones, those women's eyes without lids.

Ses cils jouaient de l'éventail.
Her lashes played at fan.

Elle faisait une musique bête, bruyante et compliquée — qui blessait l'ombre.
She made silly music, loud and complicated — which injured the shadows.

Elle me dit des choses émerveillées de venir de ses lèvres.
She says things to me that are amazed to come from her lips.

Ses mains sont chaudes comme si tous les baisers qu'on leur avait donnés revivaient.
Her hands are hot as though all the kisses they have been given lived again.

Je ne te savais pas si grand...
— C'est que je n'ai jamais été qu'à genoux devant toi.
I did not know you were so tall...
— *It is that I have only ever been on my knees in front of you.*

Lorsqu'elle baisse les yeux, il me semble qu'elle tient toute la beauté du monde entre ses paupières, et lorsqu'elle les relève je ne vois que moi dans son regard.
When she lowers her eyes, it seems to me that she holds all the beauty in the world beneath her lids, and once she lifts them again I see only myself in her gaze.

Tu regrettes qu'elle puisse te tromper. Elle le regrette peut-être encore davantage.
You regret that she can deceive you. She regrets it perhaps even more.

Ma Vie... ma mauvaise vie!
My Life... my wicked life!

Me tromper, est-ce une probabilité impossible ou une impossibilité probable?
To cheat on me, is it an impossible probability or probable impossibility?

Sa chair est si sensible qu'elle sent même les ombres qui glissent autour d'elle.
Her flesh is so sensitive that she senses even the shadows which slide around her.

... Et puis nous endormir comme des dieux ivres.
... And then to fall asleep like drunken gods.

Je ne sais vouloir que ce que je veux... et ce que je veux vous le voudrez?
I only know how to want that which I want... and that which I want, is it what you want?

La violence, argument de souteneur.¹
Violence, the argument of the procurer.

Je ne t'ai jamais dit << notre amour >>.
<< Notre amour >> m'a toujours semblé un peu duo.
I never said to you "our love".
"Our love" always seemed a bit too coupled.

Un Russe lui écrit des lettres comme des libretti de grand opéra. Les femmes aiment toujours les clichés rassurants de ceux qui savent ne pas les troubler par une personnalité autre que celle de l'amant coutumier. C'est peut-être leur manière de lui être fidèle?
A Russian man writes her letters like the libretti of great operas. Women always like the reassuring clichés of those who know not to trouble them with a personality other than that of the customary lover. Is it perhaps their way of being faithful?

Elles appellent << de la littérature >> tout ce qui sait s'exprimer.
Those women call all that which knows how to express itself "literature."

¹ The word "souteneur" refers to an individual who obtains a woman as a prostitute for another person. It is essentially an archaic word for a pimp.

Courages après l'amour: Elle a osé mourir... j'ai osé vivre.²
Courage following love: She dared to die... I dared to live.

Je pars pour ne jamais revenir.
— Mais tu retournes la tête...
Pour mieux me rendre compte que je m'en vais.
I am leaving to never return.
— *But you turn your head...*
To better make me realize that I am leaving.

² Death is a recurrent theme throughout Éparpillements. It is important to note that Barney's former lover, Pauline Tarn or "Renée Vivien", died on November 18, 1909. It is commonly accepted that she drank and drugged herself to death.

ELANS CRITIQUES
CRITICAL OUTBURSTS

Etre sans cesse vrai envers des vérités sans cesse changeantes.
To be ceaselessly true in the face of truths which are ceaselessly changing.

Avoir pour sincérité son sourire.
To have one's smile as sincerity.

Ne rien faire exprès, ne rien défaire exprès.
To never do anything purposefully, to never undo anything purposefully.

Les romantiques se sont approprié tous les grands mots, il ne nous reste que les petits.³
The romantics have appropriated all the great words, we are left with only the little ones.

Il est pourtant plus difficile de chercher la petite bête que la grande.⁴
It is, however, more difficult to be overscrupulous than unscrupulous.

Ceux qui parlent selon eux parlent pour eux; moins pour qu'on les entende que pour qu'ils puissent s'entendre.
Those who speak according to themselves speak for themselves; less so that they may be understood than so that they may hear themselves.

Ce n'est qu'après l'avoir dite que je puis penser ma pensée.
It is only after having said it that I can understand my thought.

Je comprends toujours ceux qui parlent indistinctement, en cherchant leurs mots, en cherchant leurs idées; toute voix en représentation effraie mon entendement, semble renverser, avec son arrogant parti pris, toute vérité.
I always understand those who speak indiscriminately, searching for their words, searching for their ideas: all representative voices frighten my understanding, seem to knock over, with their arrogant prejudice, all truth.

³ The phrase “petits mots” used in reference to romance is akin to “sweet nothings” in English.

⁴ The analogy Barney employs here uses the the word “bête” for double-entendre: it is more difficult to find a small beast than a large one; and the phrase “chercher la petite bête” is synonymous with the nitpicking, whereas “la grande bête” may be an euphemism for the antichrist. See the entry under “bête” in Antoine Furetière’s 1727 edition of the Dictionnaire universel.

Ne questionner que soi.
To question only oneself.

Je fus muet de peur qu'il ne s'aperçût qu'il ne parlait pas pour lui seul.
I was struck silent with fear lest he notice that he spoke only for himself.

Un esprit mal orienté, et trop vaste pour les choses qui l'occupent.
A badly positioned spirit, and too great for the things which occupy it.

A ceux qui me demandent: avez-vous lu mon livre, je puis répondre: je n'ai pas encore lu Homère.
To those who ask me: have you read my book, I can respond: I have yet to read Homer.

Ceux qui ne blessent pas poliment ne sont que des critiques.
Those who do not wound politely are nothing but critics.

Avoir au moins la fatuité de ce que nous ne sommes pas.
To have, at least, the complacency of what we are not.

Il disait: il faut avoir écrit un livre de vers — il en avait écrit un.
He used to say: one must have written a book of verse — he had written one.

Le romantisme est une maladie d'enfant, les plus forts sont ceux qui l'ont eue jeune.
Romanticism is a childhood disease, the strongest are those who had it young.

Un être riche: qui met de l'imprévu même où il en faut.
A rich being: who puts the unexpected exactly where one needs it.

Comment ne pas aimer les Méridionaux, ils sont éloquents et ils sont faux, parmi tant de gens simplement faux...
How not to like the Meridionals, they are eloquent and they are false, amid so many people who are simply false...

Les Méridionaux: ces boussoles à rebours indiquant toujours le midi.
The Meridionals: those misguided compasses always pointing south.

Le pire chez les arrivistes c'est qu'ils arrivent.
The worst thing about arrivistes is that they are coming.

Le derniers arrivés: quand repartiront-ils?
The last to arrive: when will they leave again?

J'ai vu à l'enseigne d'un cordonnier une botte rouge; cela dispense, je suppose, en quelque sorte nos contemporains d'en avoir le talon.⁵
I saw a red boot on a shoemaker's sign; this exempts, I suppose, in some way our contemporaries from having the heel.

On écrase certes mieux avec de grosses bottes — mais quoi donc?
One certainly crushes better with big boots — but what is the point?

A Bayreuth. — Musique gigantesque — mais il est permis de ne pas aimer le gigantesque.
In Bayreuth. — Gigantic music — but it is allowed to not like the gigantic.

Je le remarquais différent des autres qu'on nommait ses semblables, n'ayant aucune de ces exagérations de maintien ni de costumes de ceux chez qui la perversité est une attitude plutôt qu'un instinct... Un petit mendiant traversa la route sans se rendre compte des voitures qui risquaient de l'écraser; celui que je remarquais le saisit, le sauva, puis s'essuya les mains avec dégoût.
I noticed that he was different from the others who were called his fellow man, having none of the exaggerated bearing or costumes of those for whom perversity is an attitude rather than an instinct... A little beggar crossed the road without noticing the vehicles that threatened to crush him; the man I noticed seized him, saved him, then wiped his hands in disgust.

Il avait ces trois marques de l'impersonnalité: un menton fuyant, la Légion d'Honneur, une alliance.
He had these three marks of impersonality: a receding chin, the Légion d'Honneur, a wedding ring.

Heureux ceux qui gardent une opinion, ceux-là seuls se reposent.
Happy are those who keep an opinion, they alone can rest.

Tout grand homme a un Boswell, et c'est souvent Boswell le grand homme.
All great men have a Boswell, and it is often the Boswell who is the great man.

⁵ The term “talon rouge” was used to refer to nobility in the Ancien Régime in France (17th century).

Votre gloire peut dépendre d'un seul qui vous écoute.
Your glory may depend on only the one who listens to you.

Ils semblent avoir vécu dans l'avenir.
They seemed to have lived in the future.

Que de fois, dans le reflet brouillé d'une vitre de coupé, j'ai vu le chef-d'oeuvre que Whistler aurait pu faire.⁶
How many times, in the blurred reflection of cut glass, I have seen the masterpiece that Whistler could have made.

Comme une lame nue, tu traverses la vie, pure et incorruptible; l'obstacle t'aigüise et ce qui est fangeux ne peut que rehausser ton éclat. Généreusement tu donnes aux mourants le coup de grâce, et des êtres souples, tes semblables, tu fais jaillir des étincelles.
Like a naked blade, you go through life, pure and incorruptible; obstacles sharpen you and that which is muddy only heightens your brightness. Generously you administer the death blow to the dying, and from supple beings, much like you, you make sparks fly.

A un pré-hellénique:
Pourquoi aller en arrière?...
Les nymphes n'ont plus aucune valeur, même esthétique.
*To a Pre-Hellenic:
Why go backwards?...
Nymphs no longer have any value, even esthetic.*

Il date...
Tâchez d'en faire autant.
*He is dated ...
Try to do as much.*

On dit que Mme X... a signé un tableau. Pourquoi pas, puisqu'elle sait écrire.
It is said that Mrs. X... signed a painting. Why not, since she knows how to write.

Quand je l'ai rencontré, il lui restait quelques antennes, mais il renonça à tout pour arriver — et on appelle cela être ambitieux!
When I met him, he had some intuition left, but he renounced everything to arrive — and that is called being ambitious!

⁶ James McNeill Whistler, the American painter, was a close friend of Barney's mother Alice Pike Barney.

Sa manière d'être grand c'est d'être gros.
His way of being great is to be fat.

Il est arrivé!
Où?
He has arrived!
Where?

Un poète: un être que l'on s'imagine jeune.
A poet: a being that one imagines a young person.

Ceux qui recherchent l'admiration me semblent avoir un peu de fatuité réelle.
Those who seek admiration seem to me to have a little real conceit.

S'ils n'étaient que libres penseurs, mais ils sont libres parleurs!
If they were only free thinkers, but they are also free speakers!

Il tourne si vite qu'on ne voit pas bien ce qu'il est. Pourquoi tourne-t-il si vite? Pour éblouir, pour dissimuler: pour éblouir, qui? pour dissimuler, quoi?
He changes so quickly that we cannot see well what he is. Why does he change so quickly? To dazzle, to conceal: to dazzle, whom? to conceal, what?

Un petit homme intègre dans sa malhonnêteté intégrale: il faut bien vivre — bien vivre des autres!
A small man complete in his complete dishonesty: one must live well — live well from others!

Que de bassesses pour monter.
Such lowness to rise.

Comment vous vouloir du mal? N'êtes-vous pas ce que j'aurais pu vous souhaiter de pire?
How to wish you harm? Are you not the worst that I could have wished for you?

<< Ne pas se courber devant les petits >>, on a le beau rôle, et l'on reste seul.
"Do not bend before the small things", we have it easy, and we remain there alone.

Je voulais la connaître à cause de son oeuvre, mais à présent je ne trouve plus son oeuvre assez grande pour pouvoir l'y oublier.
I wanted to know her because of her work, but at the moment I no longer find her work great enough to forget her in it.

Grâce à elle, je sais que subtilité et mesquinerie sont proches parentes; il aurait été plus subtil de me le laisser ignorer.

Thanks to her, I know that subtlety and stinginess are close relatives: it would have been more subtle to have allowed me to remain ignorant of this.

On pardonne difficilement aux êtres de nous montrer leur vrai visage. Et il y avait un temps où je voulais cette sincérité!

We forgive with difficulty those who show us their true face. And there was a time when I wanted this sincerity!

J'étais parti pour un enthousiasme, elle me força à une lucidité.

I started out for enthusiasm, she forced me to lucidity.

J'hésite entre le dégoût et la pitié: le dégoût serait plus charitable.

I hesitate between disgust and pity: disgust would be more charitable.

J'aurais dû choisir un jour de carnaval pour voir la vie: plus je regarde de visages, plus j'aime les masques.

I should have chosen a carnival day to see life: the more faces I see, the more I like masks.

Etre optimiste est un don — un don poétique.

Being optimistic is a gift — a poetic gift.

L'artiste, ce travailleur de sa joie, cet amant de tout hasard, choisissant parmi les réalités ses réalités, et qui, à tout ce qu'il prend, s'ajoute lui-même...

The artist, this labourer of his own joy, this lover of any fate, chooses his realities among the realities, and, from all he takes, adds himself...

Et cet autre espèce d'artiste qui abîme toute réalité, qui l'affadit, l'enjolive à la rendre méconnaissable, et puis la livre, après ce dangereux embellissement, au public toujours prêt à acclamer, comme il acclamerait Samson trahi, toute idée aveuglée, toute force conquise et définitivement émasculée.

And this other type of artist who damages any reality, who renders it tasteless, adorns it to make it unrecognizable, and then gives it over, after this dangerous embellishment, to a public ever ready to applaud, as they would applaud the betrayed Samson, any blind idea, any conquered and definitively emasculated strength.

On ne peut en lire que quelques lignes à la fois — et encore vaut-il mieux pas.

One can only read a few lines at a time — and still it is better not to.

Tout réduire à sa plus simple expression, puis à sa plus complète suppression.
All reduced to its simplest expression, then to its most complete suppression.

Cet homme de l'avant-dernière mode qui parle avec un à-propos — en retard!
This man of the latest fashions who speaks aptly — is behind!

Les Anglais qui prononcent le mot art avec un grand T.
The English pronounce the word art with a capital T.

Non un critique, mais un précurseur de goûts et de dégoûts à venir?
Not a critic, but a precursor of good taste and distaste to come?

Je ne comprends pas ceux qui passent des heures à entendre au théâtre des scènes entre gens que dans la vie ils n'écouteront pas cinq minutes.
I do not understand those who spend hours at the theater listening to scenes between people whom they would not listen to for five minutes in real life.

Chez un auteur que j'admire pour l'ordre délicate de ses pensées, rangées, étiquetées, comme de beaux insectes capturés, et dont la mise à mort a pour nous l'intérêt d'une collection de petites ailes variées, et qui fussent demeurées imperceptibles, si ce maître du détail ne les avait épinglées pour nous d'un mot, traversées d'une phrase qui les fige et les suspend au-dessus de la vie quotidienne dont elles émanent, par une préciosité, devenue trop rare pour n'être pas célèbre — chez un auteur que j'admire (je suis généralement d'accord avec qui me charme), je découvre cependant cet arrêt, cet étiquetage d'un sujet trop multiple pour rester dans une telle opinion: en blâmant l'indiscrétion, il semble oublier tous les bienfaits qui lui sont dus. Toute expression, tout art est une indiscrétion que nous commettons envers nous-mêmes. Et ceci ne provient pas d'une << pauvreté >>, mais d'un surcroît de richesse, car c'est ainsi que nous faisons vivre les quelques heures de notre vie au delà d'elles-mêmes. Et devant nos passés, vraiment passés, la discrétion n'est qu'un oubli sans valeur, stérile. Et je crois qu'il est pieux d'honorer nos morts de quelques paroles par lesquelles ils peuvent encore se survivre, et de leur donner épitaphe inspirante et courageuse de ce qu'ils furent. Car il est peut-être coupable de laisser se dissiper sans voix et sans chants ces prodiges qui, de la vie même, ont fait leurs chefs-d'oeuvre. L'histoire de leurs amours, pieusement recueillies, a embelli le monde; c'est l'aumône que leurs richesses nous font. Elle est également leur seule postérité. Il y a aussi des indiscrétions de silence. Et ne serait-ce pas la pauvreté sans recours que de laisser mourir ce qui est mort?
In an author whom I admire for the delicate order of his thoughts, arranged, labeled, like beautiful captured insects, and for which the killing of has for us the interest of a collection of varied little wings, and which would have remained imperceptible, if this master of detail had not pinned them for us with a word, run through with a phrase which

freezes them and suspends them over the everyday life from which they emanate, by a preciousness, become too rare to not be famous — in an author I admire (I generally agree with those who charm me), I discover however this judgement, this labeling of a subject too varied to remain in such an opinion: in blaming indiscretion, he seems to forget all the benefits which are owed him. All expression, all art is an indiscretion we commit towards ourselves. And this does not come from a “poverty”, but from additional richness, because it is thus that we make the few hours of our lives live beyond themselves. And before our pasts, truly past, discretion is but an oversight without value, sterile. And I believe it is pious to honour our dead with a few words by which they may survive themselves, and to give them inspiring and courageous epitaphs of what they were. Because it is perhaps blameworthy to allow those prodigies to dissipate without voice and without song who, from life itself, created their masterpieces. The story of their loves, piously gathered, has embellished the world; it is the favour that their wealth affords us. It is equally their only posterity. There are also indiscretions of silence. And is this not the paucity without appeal to leave to die that which is dead?

On en dit: << C’est un homme en vue, >> c’est-à-dire qu’il ne s’élève jamais au delà de leurs visions. — Et cela est rassurant — pour eux.
They say: “He’s in the public eye,” that is to say that he never rises beyond the public’s vision. — And this is reassuring — for them.

Fou et disloqué, avec d’indicibles absurdités, un mauvais goût de réclame, du vieux nouvel art, des faits exprès imitant de mauvais maîtres en bien, de grands maîtres en mauvais...

Cet incohérent germe de quelque chose qui aurait pu être quelque chose?...
Mad and disturbed, with unspeakable absurdities, a bad taste for publicity, of the old new art, purposefully imitating bad masters for the better, great masters for the worse...
This incoherent seed of something that could have been something?...

Tous ces futuristes, vers libristes⁷, déséquilibristes, réclamistes, absurdistes, ont du tort, un seul, mais un tort grave parmi tant de bruyantes insignifiances: celui de nous rejeter toujours plus désespérément vers les seuls classiques.

All these futurists, vers-libristes, partisanists, petitioners, absurdists, are mistaken, only once, but a grave mistake amongst many obstreperous insignificances: that of throwing us back ever more hopelessly towards the classics.

La littérature devient décidément inhabitablement.
Literature is becoming decidedly uninhabitable.

⁷ This term translates directly to “free-versists”, and presumably refers to the Symbolist members of the French free verse movement.

<< Tout homme a son prix >> (a dit un aristocrate qui eût dû être un millionnaire), mais certains n'ont aucune valeur commerciale, ce qui les sauve.

“Every man has his price” (said an aristocrat who had to have been a millionaire), but some have no commercial value, which saves them.

Il peut davantage.

— S'il sent davantage.

He can do more.

— *If he feels more.*

Salons de peinture:

Art exhibitions:

Ils ont tous, presque tous, des yeux pourris.

They all have, nearly all, rotten eyes.

Les intérieurs de *** qu'une présence heureuse ne vient que de quitter.

Ceux de ***, si dangereusement froids, ne peuvent justement espérer que le guide. Déplacez une chaise? Essayez donc! On hésite: pour musée, pour livres d'ameublement?

****'s interiors that a happy spirit has only just left.*

*Those of ***, so dangerously cold, can only rightfully hope for a guide. Move a chair? Try! One falters: in favour of the museum, in favour of pounds of furniture?*

Dans un des paysages féériques du réel, des femmes aux gestes quotidiens, trop quotidiens?

In one of the magical landscapes of reality, women in quotidian routine, too quotidian?

Il ne s'inspire que de courbes et il a raison, ce dessinateur de sphère, de demi-sphère, de quart de sphère, espèce de derviche convaincu, inconscient.

He is only inspired by curves and he is right, this drawer of spheres, of semi-spheres, of quarter-spheres, a sort of convinced, oblivious dervish.

Deux femmes parmi des cygnes.

— Léda avait donc une soeur? Plusieurs?

Ces deux-ci, couchées comme des rayons jaunes sur une verdure, oblique tordues et courbées, attendant l'indifférente blancheur bleue qui nage au loin?

Que d'enfants qui ne seront jamais personnes.

Two women among swans.

— *Thus, Leda had a sister? Several?*

These two here, lying like yellow rays upon verdure, await the the indifferent blueish white that swims in the distance?

So many children who will never be persons.

— Son exposition: petite pépinière de la bourgeoisie.

Oh! le convenu des panneaux décoratifs, consciencieux (être consciencieux envers des fleurs?) gentils, gentils à peine...

La grosse harpiste brune⁸, et peinte sans ironie!...

— *His exposition: little breeding ground of the bourgeoisie.*

Oh! the agreement of the decorative panels, conscientious (to be conscientious towards flowers?) nice, nice to a fault...

The big brown harpist, and painted without irony!...

Si l'art était aussi rare que le goût.

If only art were as rare as taste.

A côté, et non en exposition, des oeuvres de ***: saines, vigoureuses, près de la terre, d'une terre qui peut tout produire.

*Aside, and not in exposition, the works of ***: sound, vigorous, earthy, of an earth that can produce everything.*

Que de peintres n'ont vu les couleurs que sur d'autres palettes.

So many painters have only seen colours on other palettes.

Une brune aux cheveux blonds, une oeuvre, y compris le cadre, d'une harmonie parfaite, reposante, d'une beauté sans commentaire. Devant une satisfaction aussi complète, je retrouve le silence — le silence depuis trop longtemps perdu!

A brown woman with blonde hair, a work, frame included, of perfect harmony, peaceful, a beauty without words. In the face of such a complete satisfaction, I find silence — silence that has been lost far too long!

⁸ This usage of the word “brune” can be understood as either brown-skinned or brunette.

JE CONTINUE . . . (peut-être à tort)
I CONTINUE . . . (perhaps in error)

<< Je n'ai jamais rien reçu que des avarés >>, me dit une vieille courtisane. Est-ce que les avarés seuls auraient quelque chose à donner?
"I have only ever received misers," an old courtesan tells me. Are misers the only ones who have something to give?

(La vérité sort de la bouche des courtisanes, ces enfants aussi, qui vivent par la joie des autres.)
(Truth comes from the mouth of courtesans, those children, who live through the joy of others.)

Cette prodigalité qui consiste à prodiguer aux indifférents ce qu'on devra plus tard refuser aux êtres qu'on aime... A faire: l'éloge de l'avarice.
This prodigality which consists of lavishing on those to whom one is indifferent that which one must later refuse to those one loves... To do: praise miserliness.

<< Je n'ai plus rien >> n'est même pas une excuse.
"I have nothing more" is not even an excuse.

Pourquoi ceux qui sont pauvres n'inventent-ils pas d'autres valeurs: seraient-ils vraiment pauvres?
Why do the poor not invent other values: would they be truly poor?

... Qu'ils en sont prodigues ceux qui n'en ont pas...
... How lavish are those who have nothing...

Le soleil: l'or des pauvres.
The sun: gold of the poor

Quel peuple aimera assez les Juifs pour qu'ils ne soient plus Juifs?
Which people will love the Jews enough that they would no longer be Jewish?

La charité, seule pitié logique?
Charity, the only logical pity?

Je ne fais jamais de sottises afin de pouvoir faire des bêtises.
I never do anything silly in order to be able to do something stupid.

Une mère maigre, malade, mourante, se penche sans honte vers son enfant, sans crainte de lui faire pressentir le squelette qu'elle est déjà...

A thin, sick, dying mother, bends without shame towards her child, without fear of making him anticipate the skeleton that she already is...

N'avoir par (sic) une mère belle, c'est commencer la vie par de la vieillesse.

Not having a beautiful mother is beginning life by old age.

Un être auquel je tenais s'en est allé, non dans la mort, mais dans la vie... Les seuls bonheurs, seraient-ce les perdus?... Nous ne les reconnaissons qu'à leurs ombres qu'ils nous laissent... Il ne faut à aucune chose autant de recul qu'au Bonheur...

A being I liked has gone away, not into death, but into life... Would the only happiness be that which is lost?... We only recognize it by the shadow it leaves us... Nothing requires as much distance as happiness does...

Ma peine m'éclaire par l'ombre qu'elle met sur le présent. Le présent, cette réalité sans ombres.

My pain illuminates me by the shadow it casts on the present. The present, this reality without shadows.

Les larmes, une maladie des yeux.

Tears, an illness of the eyes.

J'ai voulu être plus exactement renseignée sur l'incertain de mes ancêtres. Je m'adressais à la treizième soeur de ma grand'-mère, âgée de 102 ans, et qui, seule survivante des douze autres, s'exprimait encore avec clarté, et en français. Etant presque sourde et presque aveugle, rien ne venait plus gêner ses souvenirs. Elle me raconta des détails insignifiants: les premiers revenus. Sa mère, malgré la civilisation fruste des Etats-Unis d'alors, se limait les ongles avec de petits morceaux de verre dépoli... Habitudes de délicatesse, et d'inadaptabilité, apportées de la France, qu'elle avait quittée avec ses parents au moment de la Révolution... Etaient-ils donc partis pour épargner à la guillotine leurs cous fragiles? Une fuite? Comme si une telle mort n'était pas la juste compensation de cous trop frêles, tendus hors de la vie réelle qu'il aurait fallu regarder de haut... Quel était donc cette bravoure moindre: l'exil. Une lâcheté? Un courage? Je portais mes mains à mon cou long et frêle aussi, démesurément, et j'aurais voulu être de ces temps de trouble, exigeant des héroïsmes absolus, ou de totales lâchetés, quand cela ne serait que pour savoir quel sang bat le plus fort dans mes veines... Etre prise au dépourvu... Avoir, devant un fait inattendu, un geste irréfléchi... M'échapper, emportée hors de moi, les redevenir, et savoir enfin ce qu'inconsciemment je puis valoir.

I wanted to be more exactly informed on the uncertainty of my ancestors. I spoke to my grandmother's thirteenth sister, who is 102 years old, and who, the only survivor of the

other twelve, still expressed herself clearly, and in French. Being almost deaf and almost blind, nothing hampered her memories. She recounted insignificant details: the first to come back. Her mother, despite the unpolished civilization of the United States at the time, filed her nails with little bits of unpolished glass... Habits of delicacy, and of maladjustment, brought from France, which she left with her parents during the Revolution... Thus, did they leave to spare their fragile necks from the guillotine? A flight? As if such a death was not the just compensation for necks that were too frail, stretched outside real life which would have to have been looked down upon... What then was this lesser bravery: exile. Cowardice? Courage? I brought my hands to my long and frail neck, disproportionately so, and I wished to be of those troubled times, requiring absolute heroism, or complete cowardice, if only to know which blood flows strongest in my veins... To be taken by surprise... To have, in the face of an unexpected fact, an involuntary gesture... To escape myself, taken outside of me, to become them again, and to finally know what I may unknowingly be worth.

Démocratie: Un néant de gens incolores, et sans beauté, ce qui est pire que la laideur.
Democracy: A nothingness of colourless people, and without beauty, which is worse than ugliness.

Et c'est la peur du ridicule qui rend tous ces gens aussi ridicules!
And it is the fear of ridicule that makes those people so ridiculous!

Mes yeux me font mal. Est-ce la vengeance des choses trop bien vues?
My eyes hurt. Is it the revenge of things too well seen?

Comme il n'y a pas d'impossible, il n'y a pas d'inévitable.
As there is nothing impossible, there is nothing inevitable.

On ne voit que par contraste.
One can only see in contrast.

Disassocier⁹ pour retrouver.
Dissociate to rediscover.

Je ne limite pas l'amour à un sexe.
I do not limit love to a sex.

⁹ The correct spelling of this word is "désassocier." Perhaps Barney confused the English and French spellings thereby creating a new word?

Les amants, ces paresseux qui se contentent de la première volupté venue.
Lovers, those lazy people who content themselves with the first sensuousness to come along.

On aime d'amour ceux qu'on ne peut aimer autrement.
One makes love to those whom one cannot like otherwise.

Son amitié, qui se contente de si peu, comment me contenterait-elle?
**** friendship, which contents itself with so little, how would it satisfy me?*

Il vaut mieux être un amant qu'aimer un amant.
It is better to be a lover than to love a lover.

Retrouver tout le long de la vie des parties de soi que la mort viendra disperser?
To discover throughout life parts of oneself that death will come to scatter?

Il y a deux espèces de questions, l'interrogation et la réponse: ceux qui interrogent posent la question, ceux qui répondent la déplacent.
There are two types of questions, the query and the reply: those who query pose the question, those who reply displace it.

Ce qui me plaît dans les êtres, c'est leur inconnu, qu'aucune connaissance ne vaudra jamais.
What pleases me in beings, is their unknown, which no knowledge will ever be worth.

Je l'ai perdue de vue, ou plutôt elle m'a perdue de vue: que de gens on ne voit plus que de profil!
I lost sight of her, or rather she lost sight of me: how many people one only ever sees in profile!

On pardonne difficilement à un sensuel de n'aimer ni le vice, ni la débauche.
One forgives a sensualist with difficulty for loving neither vice, nor debauchery.

Confondra-t-on toujours Épicure avec Héliogobale [sic]?
Will we always confuse Epicurus with Heliogabalus?

Il est dangereux de regarder les choses de haut, à moins d'être né sur un sommet.
It is dangerous to look down upon things, unless one is born on a summit.

Vous avez peut-être raison, mais avoir raison n'est peut-être pas avoir grand'chose.
You may be right, but being right may not be much.

Ce parasite: le passé.
That parasite: the past.

Que d'hiers il y a dans demain!
How many yesterdays there are in tomorrow!

Ne pas craindre de survivre à ses morts, mais de se survivre.
Not to be afraid of surviving one's dead, but of surviving oneself.

J'ai la voix basse, est-ce pour être seule à m'écouter?
I have a low voice, is it to be alone in listening to myself?

Un marchand de cornemuses passa... Sous son bras une poche économisait son souffle dont il tirait des airs imprévus comme les bonds des chèvres. Autour de sa ceinture pendaient d'autres cornemuses, diversement petites, qu'il semblait enseigner à l'écouter. Je l'arrêtai et lui achetai une de ces cornemuses muettes. << La plus belle >>, dit-il en me la tendant pour la pièce d'argent qu'il avait nommée. Puis il s'éloigna silencieusement, et toutes les cornemuses, autour de sa ceinture, faisaient un cliquetis de bois mort, tandis que la cornemuse que je tenais entre les mains ne me semblait plus qu'un triste joujou bariolé...

A bagpipe merchant passed by... Beneath his arm was a pocket that saved his breath from which he pulled airs unexpectedly like goat's leaps. Other bagpipes hung from his belt, variously small, that he seemed to be teaching to listen to him. I stopped him and bought one those mute bagpipes. "The most lovely," he said while handing it to me for the coin he named. Then he went away silently, and all the bagpipes around his belt, made a jingle of dead wood, whereas the bagpipe that I held in my hands seemed nothing more than a sad multicoloured toy.

On ne gagne rien à interroger un chanteur.
One does not gain anything by questioning a singer.

Une cascade rapetissée par le lointain tient dans l'embrasure de ma fenêtre. Sa chute, légère et puérile comme une chevelure, n'atteint pas en droite ligne toute sa longueur, d'être interceptée sans cesse par le vent fort. Infidèle elle s'envole, avant de toucher les rochers humides d'elle (et qu'à d'autres heures elle forme, use et transforme), pour se mêler à cette force passagère qui, souple, l'emporte, et qui, d'être plus libre qu'elle, la surpasse.

A waterfall made smaller by the distance is framed by my window. Her fall, light and puerile like a head of hair, does not achieve her full length in a straight line, being ever intercepted by the strong wind. Traitorous she flies off, before touching her humid rocks

(which in other hours she shapes, wears down and transforms), to join this passing force which, supple, takes her, and which, being freer than she, surpasses her.

L'amour, comme cette oie dont parle Ben Johnson, trop grand pour un, trop petit pour deux!

Love, like that goose Ben Johnson speaks of, too big for one, too small for two!

Une figure merveilleusement ciselée par les émotions. Chaque ride soulignait une jolie disparue. Et je la comparais à ces autres figures gâchées par la vieillesse et l'habitude, et où le temps n'avait laissé qu'une trace: la destruction. Que de différence entre les ruines!
A face marvelously chiseled by emotion. Every wrinkle underlined a prettiness departed. And I compared her to those other faces ruined by old age and habit, and where time left but one trace: destruction. Such difference between ruins!

Faire des fragments.

To make fragments.

Il faut vivre chaque jour comme si c'était le premier.

One must live each day as if it were the first.

La grâce, cette force civilisée.

Grace, that civilized force.

Oh, leurs oreilles, leurs oreilles sans appétit!

Oh, their ears, their ears without appetite!

La vie la plus belle est celle que l'on passe à se créer soi-même, non à procréer.

The most beautiful life is the one that one spends creating oneself, not procreating.

La reproduction est la plus vile des besognes. Les dieux ne se reproduisent pas: ils sont eux-mêmes leurs chefs-d'oeuvre.

Reproduction is the most vile of chores. The gods do not reproduce themselves: they are their own masterpieces.

C'est peut-être notre croyance dans les fatalités qui nous les rend fatales.

It is perhaps our belief in fatalities that render them fatal to us.

Pourquoi ressusciter des dieux, quand de nouveaux dieux attendent d'être créés?

Why revive the gods, when new gods await creation?

Un dieu qui ne serait pas aussi le diable, quel incomplet!
A god who would not also be the devil, how incomplete!

L'amour, cette oeuvre de jeunesse!
Love, that youthful work!

Etre des poètes dans la vie...
To be poets in life...

Pourquoi les heures de joie sont-elles des heures ailées?
Why are the hours of joy winged hours?

Je crois difficilement qu'il y ait autant de soirs que de jours!
I find it difficult to believe that there are as many nights as there are days!

J'écris pour quelques-uns. Quelques-uns me comprendront-ils?
I write for some. Will some understand me?

Des éparpillements dont voici certains, mais où sont les incertains: les moins ternes, les plus ailés?
Scatterings some of which are here, but where are the uncertain ones: the least tarnished, the most winged?

Ce qui ne peut être contenu dans une phrase?...
What cannot be contained in a sentence?...

S'observer est dangereux — mais ne pas s'observer est ennuyeux.
To observe oneself is dangerous — but to not observe oneself is dull.

On regarde autrement devant un miroir.
One looks differently in front of a mirror.

Beaucoup de mes pensées furent à d'autres avant moi (je ne rougis qu'orgueilleusement de mes antécédents!) beaucoup le seront après moi...
Many of my thoughts belonged to others before me (I blush proudly for my antecedents!) many will belong to others after me...

Redire une vérité ne la rend pas moins vraie, sauf peut-être pour celui qui l'a déjà dite!
Retelling a truth does not make it less true, except perhaps for the one who already said it!

La plus difficile des réalisations: soi-même.
The most difficult realisation: oneself.