



**MONTCLAIR STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

Montclair State University  
**Montclair State University Digital  
Commons**

---

Theses, Dissertations and Culminating Projects

---

5-2013

## **What is Woman? : Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, Ladies Almanack, and Woman's Search for Her Identity in the 1920s**

Timothy Coyne  
*Montclair State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/etd>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Coyne, Timothy, "What is Woman? : Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, Ladies Almanack, and Woman's Search for Her Identity in the 1920s" (2013). *Theses, Dissertations and Culminating Projects*. 801.  
<https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/etd/801>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Montclair State University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses, Dissertations and Culminating Projects by an authorized administrator of Montclair State University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@montclair.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@montclair.edu).

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

*What is Woman?/Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, Ladies Almanack,*  
and Woman's Search for Her Identity in the 1920s

by

Timothy Coyne

A Master's Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Arts

May 2013


College of Humanities and Social Sciences Thesis Committee:

Department: English

Certified by:

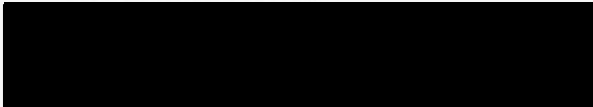
Marietta Morrissey  
Dean of the College of Humanities  
and Social Sciences

*May 8, 2013*  
Date

  
Dr. Jonathan Greenberg  
Thesis Sponsor

  
Dr. Rita Jacobs  
Committee Member

  
Dr. Daniel Bronson  
Committee Member

  
Dr. Emily J. Isaacs  
Department Chair

## Abstract

In the introductory chapter of her book, *The Gender of Modernity*, Rita Felski writes, "If our sense of the past is inevitably shaped by the explanatory logic of narrative, then the stories that we create in turn reveal the inescapable presence and power of gender symbolism" (1). Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack* are two such stories; however, they both do more than simply reveal gender's presence and power. These works of literature question the gender ideologies of the early twentieth century, challenging their power and inescapability by producing other, perhaps unknown, unthought of or misunderstood spaces for women to exist. Each novel, in its own way, takes the perceived truths about what women are, or are supposed to be and turns them on their head. Barnes and Loos attempt to jam the theoretical machinery by attacking middle class sensibilities, while at the same time creating a tension, which exists between mutually flawed characters ripe with contradiction. Thus, each novel raises the question of how does one live without ever being able to definitively answer that question. It is the presence of this ideological destabilization in both Loos's and Barnes's novels which helps secure their place within the feminist tradition; however, it is the way *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Ladies Almanack* go about shaking up patriarchal ideology that makes them even more fascinating and forward thinking. *Blondes'* Lorelei Lee and the *Almanack's* Dame Evangeline Musset are no suffragettes and probably would not have been accepted by feminists of their time. They aren't interested in the battle for equality with men; they don't appear to have much faith that it could happen anyway. What they are interested in, however, is reclaiming for

women some of what men have taken from them. What they are interested in is giving women the power to make decisions about whom or what they are.

In chapter one of this thesis, an analysis of Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack*, which will illustrate how each uses this idea of the socially constructed nature of gender identity in order to destabilize and subvert the patriarchy's claims of women's inferiority and lack, which define what women are supposed to be, is provided. Later on, in chapter two, the form each author chose for her novel, the diary and the almanac respectively, is examined in order to show how their choices serve to destabilize the gender ideologies of the early twentieth century, and allow them to present various, alternate identities for women to inhabit.

WHAT IS WOMAN? *GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES*, *LADIES ALMANACK*,  
AND WOMAN'S SEARCH FOR HER IDENTITY IN THE 1920S

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts

by

TIMOTHY DANIEL COYNE

Montclair State University

Montclair, NJ

2013

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1.....	7
Chapter 2.....	28
Conclusion.....	48
Works Cited.....	50

## Introduction

In the introductory chapter of her book, *The Gender of Modernity*, Rita Felski writes, “If our sense of the past is inevitably shaped by the explanatory logic of narrative, then the stories that we create in turn reveal the inescapable presence and power of gender symbolism” (1). Anita Loos’s *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and Djuna Barnes’s *Ladies Almanack* are two such stories; however, they both do more than simply reveal gender’s presence and power. These works of literature question the gender ideologies of the early twentieth century, challenging their power and inescapability by producing other, perhaps unknown, unthought of or misunderstood spaces for women to exist. Each novel, in its own way, takes the perceived truths about what women are, or are supposed to be and turns them on their head. Barnes and Loos attempt to jam the theoretical machinery by attacking middle class sensibilities, while at the same time creating a tension, which exists between mutually flawed characters ripe with contradiction. Thus, each novel raises the question of how does one live without ever being able to definitively answer that question. It is the presence of this ideological destabilization in both Loos’s and Barnes’s novels which helps secure their place within the feminist tradition; however, it is the way *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Ladies Almanack* go about shaking up patriarchal ideology that makes them even more fascinating and forward thinking. *Blondes*’ Lorelei Lee and the *Almanack*’s Dame Evangeline Musset are no suffragettes and probably would not have been accepted by feminists of their time. They aren’t interested in the battle for equality with men; they don’t appear to have much faith that it could happen anyway. What they are interested in, however, is reclaiming for

women some of what men have taken from them. What they are interested in is giving women the power to make decisions about whom or what they are.

In order to fully appreciate the ways in which *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Ladies Almanack* destabilize the gender ideologies of the early twentieth century, it will be necessary to first have some knowledge in regard to what some of those ideologies were. For my purposes here I will be focusing primarily on the role Sigmund Freud's work, concerning the sexual development of females, played in perpetuating those ideologies. Shulamith Firestone states that the significance of Freudianism lies in the fact that Freud understood the importance of sexuality in modern life (49), a notion he was forced to defend. Freud responded to critics who resisted psycho-analysis on the grounds that it tried to explain "everything" by sex by writing, "Anyone who looks down with contempt upon psycho-analysis from a superior vantage-point should remember how closely the enlarged sexuality of psycho-analysis coincides with the Eros of the divine Plato" ("Three Essays" 134). Eventually, though, it became what Freud was saying about sexuality, and more specifically female sexuality, that was truly polarizing because as feminism began entering women's consciousness in the early decades of the twentieth century,

[It] betokened not just a claim to the vote or to making mothers' roles in society more honored, but rather to economic independence, sexual freedom, and psychological exemption from the repressive obligations of wifehood, motherhood, and daughterhood – a jettisoning of family duties for a heightened female individualism. (Stansell 227)



According to one critic, every small criticism of Freud goes back to one large objection; Freud, so this objection goes, viewed femininity as failed masculinity (Young-Bruehl 41). It is quite difficult to deny the truth that exists in that statement, especially when Freud himself wrote, “[a girl’s] whole development may be said to take place under the colors of envy for the penis” (“An Outline” 193). Freud’s theories of female sexual development turn controversial when he states that at puberty girls come to recognize their lack of a penis, “and, with it too, the superiority of the male and her own inferiority (the inferiority of her clitoris)” (“Female Sexuality” 229). This realization will have permanent effects on the development of her character (“An Outline” 155), and as she rebels against it three lines of sexual development for the female open up. The first line of development finds the girl frightened of her comparison to the male and growing dissatisfied with her clitoris. Thus, she gives up her “phallic activity” and with it “her sexuality in general as well as a good part of her masculinity in other fields” (“Female Sexuality” 229). The second line of development leads the girl to “cling with defiant self-assertiveness to her threatened masculinity” (“Female Sexuality” 229). In this line of development the female will insist upon acting like a man, exhibiting “markedly masculine traits” and in extreme cases “will end as a manifest homosexual” (“An Outline” 193). Only the third line of development will lead the girl to a proper femininity. In this line of development, the girl’s wish to possess a penis may find satisfaction, “if she can succeed in completing her love for the organ by extending it to the bearer of the organ” (“An Outline” 194). In other words, the girl will turn away from the mother, which will coincide with a lowering of the active sexual impulses and a rise of the passive ones (“Female Sexuality” 239), and take the father as her love object.

Later on, the girl will be ready to recognize the authority of her husband because he both has a penis, and has the ability to give her that longed for penis in the form of a son (“Some Psychological Consequences” 195).

According to Freud then, women’s bodies are defined as lacking and in order for women to embody a proper femininity they must give up or repress everything they have been up until the point they encounter their castration complex. And since Freud contends that the effects of that castration complex in girls are uniform (“An Outline” 193), women’s realization of their inferiority and man’s dominance is unquestionable; in fact, it is presented as science. So, although Freud states that he is not trying to describe what woman is (“Femininity” 580), that is in effect exactly what he is doing. His theory of female sexual development defines what women are supposed to be quite clearly, while at the same time demonizing those who do not fit within the boundaries of that definition and exiling them from proper feminine womanhood. This theory places women in a prison of submission and passivity, void of any desire – desire being coded as masculine only – except the desire for a penis, dependent on man for all, including their own identity.

And yet, Juliet Mitchell reminds us that what must not be forgotten is the fact that “psychoanalysis is not a recommendation *for* a patriarchal society, but an analysis *of* one” (xiii). Thomas Laquer elaborates on that point by stating that Freud’s theories must be regarded as a narrative of culture in anatomical disguise. When specifically referring to Freud’s explanation of clitoral repression, which is a necessary step on the road to normal femininity, Laquer writes, “The tale of the clitoris is a parable of culture, of how the body is forged into a shape valuable to civilization despite, not because of itself. The language

of biology gives this tale its rhetorical authority but does not describe a deeper reality in nerves and flesh” (236). That distinction is the site of Freud’s real value to this project. He was developing his theories on female sexual development, theories which were clearly influenced by and representative of the dominant cultural discourse (patriarchy) of the day, in the same era that Loos and Barnes produced their novels challenging that discourse. In fact, there are instances in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Ladies Almanack* when it appears as though Loos and Barnes are challenging Freud directly. By looking at the works of Freud one can gain some insight into the question of what ideologies women would have to subvert in order to lay claim to and assert their own power, independence and identity.

But Freud did more than just play a part in reproducing the notion of women’s inferiority. He also introduced some ideas into the discourse that would be used to help challenge the ideologies surrounding that notion. Freud called attention to the duality of the sexes stating, “pure masculinity and femininity remain theoretical constructions of uncertain content” (“Some Psychological Consequences” 197), as well as opened the door to the idea that gender identity is a social process (Kent 21), rather than a natural given or essence. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, he wrote:

As regards the sexually mature individual the choice of an object is restricted to the opposite sex, and most extra-genital satisfactions are forbidden as perversions. The requirement, demonstrated in these prohibitions, that there shall be a single kind of sexual life for everyone, disregards the dissimilarities, whether innate or acquired, in the sexual constitution of human beings; it cuts off a

fair number of them from sexual enjoyment, and so becomes the source of serious injustice. (104)

In the following chapter, I will provide an analysis of Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack*, which will illustrate how each uses this idea of the socially constructed nature of gender identity in order to destabilize and subvert the patriarchy's claims of women's inferiority and lack, which define what women are supposed to be. Later on, in chapter two, I will examine the form each author chose for her novel, the diary and the almanac respectively, in order to show how their choices serve to destabilize the gender ideologies of the early twentieth century, and allow them to present various, alternate identities for women to inhabit.

## Chapter 1

In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud writes, “The development of the inhibitions of sexuality (shame, disgust, pity, etc.) takes place in little girls earlier and in the face of less resistance than in boys; the tendency to sexual repression seems in general to be greater; and, where the component instincts of sexuality appear, they prefer the passive form” (219). Years later, in his lecture “Femininity” Freud states, “A little girl is as a rule less aggressive, defiant and self-sufficient; she seems to have a greater need for being shown affection and on that account to be more dependent and pliant” (581). Helene Cixous tells us that Freud’s opposition between activity and passivity, which is traditionally coupled with the question of sexual difference, is a constant which orders values throughout history of philosophy, and moreover, that “woman is always associated with passivity” (349). She goes on to write, “Either woman is passive or she does not exist” (349). This is an interesting analysis, especially considering the fact that Freud attributes a natural disposition towards passivity to girls. In his view then, it is as if women are hardwired to be molded and told what and how they should be. The inclination toward passivity will both assist girls as they navigate through the castration complex to discover their inferiority, and become an essential characteristic of women’s “normal” femininity. And yet, when one looks at Loos’s Lorelei Lee and Barnes’s Evangeline Musset, as well as some of the other female characters in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Ladies Almanack*, the repressive, submissive, and natural passivity Freud speaks of is missing. Instead of women sitting around waiting for things to happen to them, Loos and Barnes have given us women with agency.

What is even more interesting in the case of Anita Loos’s *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* is the way Lorelei Lee uses passivity and seduction to acquire and demonstrate

her agency, considering the tensions that exist between feminism's goals and certain implications of seduction (Erikson and Thompson 314). Victoria Grace writes:

In feminist discourse, action and theorising since the mid-twentieth century, the woman who does not revolt, analyse or go beyond, but who rather employs her position to entrap and seduce the world into her own domain of limitation, is a particularly galling figure. She is the butt of the patriarchy as much as the scorn of feminism: she is the joke of the music hall, she is the demonic angel who knows her place and uses it to diminish others in her own narcissistic grandstanding. By making herself "prey," according to Beauvoir, "she arouses and entraps men through submissively making herself into a thing." (348)

Undoubtedly, there are some things that have changed since Beauvoir's time; however, tensions are still not resolved. Erikson and Thompson write, "Today, theorists promote seduction's liberationist potential to reduce woman's dependency upon the patriarchal scripts of gender objectification and commodification. Accordingly, the oppressive operations of western rationalism resist, even discipline, its expression" (302). So why would Loos have Lorelei use the seductive arts – disavowed by both men, and women of her period – as a means to challenge the notion of a feminine standard of passivity? Did Loos see the same liberationist potential that today's theorists see in seduction? And, remembering Cixous's words, how does the agency she possesses affect her existence as woman? In order to answer these questions let us turn to the pages of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* to analyze the ways Lorelei employs seduction.

Chapter three in *Blondes*, in which Lorelei chronicles her and Dorothy's adventures in London, perfectly illustrates how Lorelei uses seduction as a means to agency. What makes this episode of her diary especially fascinating is that it is the first time the reader is able to watch Lorelei work a gentleman, so to speak, from their initial meeting until she no longer has any use for him. It all begins when Lorelei lays eyes on a diamond tiara that she simply must have. She writes, "So I was really very intreeged and I asked her how much it cost in money and it seems it was \$7,500. So then I looked around the room and I noticed a gentleman who seemed to be quite well groomed" (37). It is interesting to think about Lorelei's thought process in this situation. First she sees something she wants and once she realizes that it is something she can not afford she starts scanning the room. She is consciously looking for someone who would be able to buy her that tiara and her only reason for zeroing in on the man she does is that he looks well groomed, which to her is a sign that he may have money. But before Lorelei will even consider approaching him she needs to be sure, after all she doesn't want to be wasting her time, so she asks a friend of hers who this man is. Only once she is sure that this well groomed man is "very, very wealthy" does she ask for an introduction. Upon being introduced, Lorelei immediately begins planting the seeds of seduction by asking Sir Francis Beekman to hold her hat while she flirtatiously models the tiara and gets his opinion on how it looks on her. Thus begins the whirlwind relationship between Lorelei Lee and Sir Francis Beekman.

Just one day later Lorelei gives Beekman the pet name Piggie, and begins to build up the pedestal on which she will place him. It may not seem like much, the way Lorelei compliments Piggie on his joke telling prowess, but the fact that she tells the reader that

she knows when she is supposed to laugh because he starts laughing first (Loos 41) is very telling. The same thing can be said about Lorelei's orchid scheme, in which she orders orchids to be delivered to her own room and then insists on thanking Piggie with hugs and kisses for sending them to her (Loos 45). Lorelei writes, "So then I started to make a fuss over him and I told him he would have to look out because he was really so good looking and I was so full of impulses that I might even lose my mind some time and give him a kiss" (45). And then there is the frame shopping test when Lorelei convinces Piggie that, due to his good looks, she must have a picture of him in his uniform, as well as an expensive frame to put it in (Loos 46). In all three of these instances Lorelei's attentiveness feeds into Sir Francis Beekman's own illusion of himself (Cella 50) and creates within him a sense of desirability characteristic of seduction. She makes him feel special and helps him believe that the things he wants to believe about himself are true. Piggie even tells Lorelei that she is the only one who admires him for what he really is (Loos 49). The only problem is that that isn't true; nothing about Lorelei and Piggie's relationship is real. The reader knows all along that Lorelei is only trying to "educate Piggie how to act with a girl" (44) and help him develop good spending habits (46).

In the end, Lorelei is successful. It only takes her about a week to turn Sir Francis Beekman from a gentleman known throughout London for not spending money on girls into the Piggie who buys her the longed for diamond tiara. Surprisingly, Lorelei performs this feat without ever once explicitly asking Beekman to purchase it for her. The question then becomes how Lorelei can be considered a powerful woman with agency who is responsible for making things happen when she is not the one purchasing the tiara, and furthermore, she never really asks for it to be purchased. Susan Hegemen



echoes this question when she writes, “Remade into the siren who lures men to their deaths, Lorelei’s problematic relationship to agency is made explicit: is she a sexual predator, or is she an innocent party; does she coax men into recklessness, or is she the passive object of their dangerous passions?” (534). Lorelei is no victim; at least she hasn’t been since Mr. Jennings helped her to realize that “the world was full of gentlemen who were nothing but wolfs in sheeps clothes, that did nothing but take advantadge of all we girls” (92). But one should also be hesitant to think of Lorelei as a predator, again, at least since her revolver shot Mr. Jennings. The dichotomy Hegeman sets up for Lorelei here – she is either predator or victim – clearly illustrates the misconceptions that still exist with regard to seduction, but Erikson and Thompson warn critics that they “should not assume that seduction tricks or fools subjects into following a wayward path. Subjects react freely to seductive rhetors; they actively participate in the rhetorical exchange as the seductive rhetor shuns the appearance of possessing an unchanging or overbearing will” (303). Lorelei, then, is neither victim nor predator, and yet she is both. She is also something in between as she acquires power and control through acquiescence.

Lorelei is not trying to destroy Piggie. She is not trying to exact revenge on him, or even ruin his marriage. She just wants the tiara and has an understanding of human nature, which allows her to figure out how she can get it. As one critic puts it, Lorelei recognizes the rules of the patriarchal system and how to manipulate them in order to be successful within that system (Cella 49). She is “aware of how uncritical man is concerning the utterances of a blonde” (“A Girl Like I” 135). She recognizes that man is always ready to concede money to a beautiful woman (Guyon 248). And she knows that

“most men who chase after pretty girls are only trying to attract attention to themselves” (“A Girl Like I” 209). So Lorelei, like all great seductresses, puts air in her gentlemen’s tanks even as she subverts and sabotages the patriarchy (Prioleau 2). Her power then is an indirect power, which she acquires through false submissiveness and agency in the guise of passivity, a passivity Thompson and Erikson say can be, “easily misjudged by logocentric critical frames as ineffectual or non-persuasive” (303). They go on to contend that non-aggressiveness is what provides seduction its strength (303). So Lorelei does not flaunt her power. She allows herself to be prey and generously doles out her affections, even though she is always in control. With Lorelei, then, Loos gives readers an exemplar of what seduction theory now suggests: “power means not *having* to act, more accurately, the capacity to be more...casual about any single performance” (Scott 29).

There are, however, some critics who disagree with the contention that Lorelei possesses any real power, or that she can be interpreted as a symbol of legitimate female agency. One critic, Daniel Tracey, is convinced that Lorelei’s supposed stupidity precludes her from holding a position of power and agency. In his article, “From Vernacular Humor to Middlebrow Modernism: *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and the Creation of Literary Value,” Tracey implies that a certain parallel exists between Lorelei’s lack of brains when it comes to issues of cultural refinement and the lack of awareness he perceives in her in regards to her gentlemen friends’ disingenuous motives (128). He believes that Lorelei believes that all of the complimentary things men say to her are said because they are meant. Furthermore, the fact that Lorelei calls Eisman, one of her gentleman friends, “Daddy” and scolds her sidekick Dorothy for calling him by his

first name shows that Lorelei sees the men she runs around with as parental benefactors holding a position of superiority over her. But by looking at her romance with Beekman we have already seen that this is not the case. Lorelei knows the men in her life do not respect or love her and she most definitely does not love or respect them. She writes, “I mean I always seem to think that when a girl really enjoys being with a gentleman, it puts her to quite a disadvantage and no real good can come of it” (Loos 42).

But if Lorelei is fully aware of what is going on around her when it comes to men’s intentions and her own role in the equation, then she is knowingly selling her body/sex, or at the very least the possibility of it, for money and gifts. Tracey thus claims that, “Loos provides a relatively direct treatment of the gold digger as a prostitute, though it should be clear that Lorelei’s exchange is less direct than prostitution” (129). The decision to refer to Lorelei’s actions as prostitution (whether direct or indirect) and use that interpretation to discount Lorelei’s power and agency is a fascinating one given the significance of the prostitute in modernist literature. Critics point out that, as is the case with seduction, conflicting interpretations about what the prostitute symbolizes exist. During the late nineteenth century, she was read by some as, “representing the dark abyss of a dangerous female sexuality linked to the breakdown of social hierarchies” (Felski 19). For others, the prostitute was a reminder of the loosening of sexuality from family bonds and reproduction; and for others still, the prostitute exemplified, “the tyranny of commerce and the universal domination of the cash nexus” (Felski 19). Whichever interpretation of the prostitute one chooses to adopt, it cannot be denied that she is, “Both seller and commodity” (Felski 19), which is why Lorelei’s relationship to prostitution is so important to what Loos is doing in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. By trading her sex for

money and gifts Lorelei is not only taking control of her sexuality, but also entering into an economy that is ideologically reserved for men. It is true that she is selling her own body, but if: “Heterosexuality is nothing but the assignment of economic roles” in which “there are producer subjects and agents of exchange (male) on the one hand, productive earth and commodities (female) on the other” (“This Sex” 192), then it stands to reason that she would be commoditized regardless of what she does. Lorelei is just taking control of the exchanges. In a way, she is turning the economy on its head by turning the men of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* into commodities to be traded. This can be seen when Lorelei first meets Beekman and English ladies who know what she is trying to do warn her that she is wasting her time (Loos 37). They know she is only using Beekman for his money, that all she sees when she looks at him is his wallet. In Lorelei’s eyes, Beekman is simply a means to an end, a thing that will allow her to acquire other things.

So Tracey is missing the point when he uses his discussion of stupidity and prostitution to deny Lorelei her role as a symbol of feminism, instead choosing to interpret what she does as mere gender warfare and accuse her of reproducing the gender disparities present within the culture (136). Everything Lorelei does, from the false passivity and submissiveness she displays with her gentlemen, to the prostitute-like way she uses sex, to the use of seduction in general, is an attempt to rewrite the female body as a positivity rather than as a lack (“Volatile Bodies” 61). Luce Irigaray writes:

There is, in an initial phrase, perhaps only one ‘path,’ the one historically assigned to the feminine: that of mimicry. One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to

convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it. To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. ("This Sex" 76)

In *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, Lorelei is taking perceived weaknesses and rewriting them as strengths. Through her seduction she is not allowing herself to be objectified, rather she is foiling the patriarchal system of power (Baudrillard 8). The same is true of Lorelei's prostitution, which liberates her sexually and allows her to enter into the male-dominated economy. And her passivity is also an act of cultural mimesis, which contradicts Freud's belief that it is a natural part of being female. Lorelei is passive with her men because she knows that is how they expect her to be, but instead of allowing that passivity to be a sign of inferiority Loos makes it a primary source of Lorelei's power.

When viewed in this light, how can Lorelei be anything other than a symbol of female agency for a feminism that is "founded on the belief that women are capable of achievements other than those recognized and rewarded by patriarchy, other than those to which women's 'nature' has hitherto confined them" ("Space, Time" 51)? One would think that a woman who knows what she wants and goes out and gets it would fall into that category and Loos illustrates that point when Lorelei visits "Dr. Froyd" (88). During her visit, they talk about inhibitions and dreams and she tells him all about her life, including things that she does not write in her diary. She writes, "So then he seemed very very intreeged at a girl who always seems to do everything she wanted to do" (90). "Froyd" cannot believe it at first, asks Lorelei a hypothetical about committing an act of violence, and is surprised to hear about the time she shot Mr. Jennings. She leaves

“Froyd’s” office, believing she is quite a famous case, with the recommendation that she cultivate some inhibitions (90). In this scene, “Froyd” symbolizes a patriarchal system that is shocked and destabilized by a woman who goes against the status quo and does what she wants to do. The fact that his name is misspelled shows just how little Freud and the psychoanalysis that he fathered, which ties woman to a position of inferiority, matters to Lorelei. Her lack of inhibitions is yet another proclamation of her agency, as well as a refusal to conform to Freud’s patriarchal analysis.

Susan Hegeman, another critic of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, attempts to deny Lorelei’s agency and power by pointing out that men are still the indispensable arbiters of value in the economy in which she profits (544); however, that is not one hundred percent accurate. For one thing, that statement implies that the gentlemen have a choice when it comes to giving Lorelei money and gifts, yet it appears as though Lorelei’s seduction works so well that it takes the choice away from them. There are no men in *Blondes* who do not fall for Lorelei once she decides they are of value. Moreover, it is important to recognize that Lorelei’s seductive agency works on more than just men. One needs only to look at what Lorelei is able to do to/with Henry Spoffard’s mother to see this. As soon as Lorelei meets Henry Spoffard she realizes that in order to get him – and his money – she is going to have to win his mother over. In order to do that Lorelei proclaims her distaste for flappers on account of her being an old fashioned girl (79). Eventually they meet and Lorelei, in her best old fashioned girl costume, makes quite a first impression. Lorelei tells Mrs. Spoffard how much she respects her – unlike her nurse, who also happens to be bad mouthing Lorelei – and then loosens her up with some alcohol. Finally she tells Mrs. Spoffard how good looking she is while giving her some fashion

upgrades. As is the case with all of the gentlemen in her life, Lorelei's plan works like a charm. She writes, "So Henry's mother said that I was really the most sunshine that she ever had in all her life and when Henry came back to take his Mother up to her room, she did not want to go" (95). By making Mrs. Spoffard feel desirable and pretending to be the type of woman she is supposed to be Lorelei is able to seduce her into giving Henry her seal of approval on Lorelei. This scene not only illustrates that men are not the only ones Lorelei is valuable to, but also shows that her value is tied to more than just her good looks. There is something else that draws people to her, and in this scene it is the small symbols of a new female freedom, such as drinking alcohol and becoming more fashionable, that she invites Mrs. Spoffard to try. Henry's mother is drawn to the female freedom that Lorelei represents. Even though these and many of the other freedoms Lorelei is able to enjoy throughout *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* are tightly interwoven with the patriarchal system of conspicuous consumption, they are still freedoms. Loos still uses Lorelei to open up new spaces for women to exist in, new identities for her to adopt. Lorelei may be taking small steps for women, but by unmasking femininity and holding it up as the performance piece Judith Butler has said it is (25), those steps destabilize the ground on which the gender ideologies that place women in a role of inferiority and repression sit.

Whereas in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* Loos attempts to subvert gender ideologies by illustrating the performative nature of gender and showing what mimicking socially accepted norms of that gender can mean, in *Ladies Almanack* Djuna Barnes attacks gender and its ideologies in a more direct, and, quite possibly, more complex way. This is not to say that there are no similarities between the *Almanack's* Evangeline Musset and

*Blondes'* Lorelei Lee. Interestingly enough, one critic points out that the public often had trouble distinguishing the masculine lesbian (Musset) from the flapper (Lorelei) based on the uninhibited sexuality they shared (Tamagne 242), but that is not the only thing these two women have in common. Dame Musset, like Lorelei does with Mrs. Spoffard, seduces women in the world of the *Almanack* with thoughts – albeit very different than the ones Lorelei conjures up – of women's freedom. However, the added level of complexity in *Ladies Almanack* lies in the fact that Barnes is not interested in creating space within the patriarchal system where women can exist – as one may say is the case in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* – but instead aims to destroy the system altogether. Irigaray explains what Barnes does with Dame Musset and *Ladies Almanack* when she writes:

In other words, the issue is not one of elaborating a new theory of which woman would be the subject or the object, but of jamming the theoretical machinery itself, of suspending its pretension to the production of a truth and of a meaning that are excessively univocal. Which presupposes that women do not aspire simply to be men's equals in knowledge. That they do not claim to be rivaling men in constructing a logic of the feminine that would still take onto-theo-logic as its model, but that they are rather attempting to wrest this question away from the economy of the logos. They should not put it, then, in the form "What is woman?" but rather, repeating/interpreting the way in which, within discourse, the feminine finds itself defined as lack, deficiency, or



as imitation and negative image of the subject, they should signify that with respect to this logic a disruptive excess is possible on the feminine side. (“This Sex” 78)

So when Barnes, through Dame Musset, confronts the issue of masculine activity versus feminine passivity she does not, as Loos does, show how women can infiltrate the masculine realm of activity, rather, she rails against the dichotomous nature of the gender system that tries to define women and keep them tied down in one place. Thus, Musset’s relationship to female agency, as well as the challenges that arise when trying to define that relationship, is tied to the fact that, in the world of *Ladies Almanack*, gender is neither a fixed nor a natural essence.

Barnes begins her assault on the notion of a congenital femininity and masculinity on the very first pages of her novel. As the reader learns that Evangeline Musset “had been developed in the womb of her most gentle Mother to be a Boy” (7) and “paid no Heed to the Error” (7) when she was born a girl, questions about what she *is* already start to destabilize the gender binary. Is she a man? We know she is born “an Inch or so short” (7) and never gives a thought to what she refers to as the “Dashing out of the Testicles” (7), and yet, as she becomes less womanly with each passing hour, how can she be thought of as a woman? With the story of Dame Musset’s birth *Ladies Almanack* attempts to denaturalize the supposed congruence between sex and gender (Harris 64), so that femaleness does not presuppose femininity. This idea is complicated, though, because Musset’s esteemed standing as “one Grand Red Cross for the Pursuance, the Relief and the Distraction” (6) of girls “in need” (6) prevents her from fitting into either category of the gender binary. We are not sure if Musset is a man, a woman, some

combination of the two, or something different entirely. According to psychoanalysis, female homosexuality is, of course, a manifestation of penis envy, a way for a female to assume the masculine part. But, critics are also quick to point out that in psychoanalysis desire is always only male so that when women, in this case Dame Musset, desire or love another woman they do so not as a woman but as a man (“Space, Time” 178, “This Sex” 194). Besides defining and reinforcing gender associations, charges such as these would typically force women “back into that Religion and Activity which has ever been thought sufficient for a Woman” (8) so that they would be able to avoid being labeled unnatural or monstrous (Berni 92). However, this is not the case for Musset. Instead of retreating to a proper ideological femininity she embraces what would be called her masculinity, wondering why her father isn’t impressed that she is able to be so masculine without the tools for the trade (8). And in some instances in *Ladies Almanack* Musset does more than just embrace her masculinity; in some instances she almost seems to be identifiable as man.

The first time Dame Musset is identified as a man is in February’s chapter when the narrator gives the reader the run-down of dates and reasons why Dame Musset has been sainted (14). There are twelve saint’s days in all and most have something to do with Musset’s sexual prowess, but her saint’s day in June is particularly interesting. The narrator writes, “When well thirty, she, like all Men before her, made a Harlot a good Woman by making her Mistress” (16-17). Once again the reader is faced with the question: What *is* Evangeline Musset? In just one sentence she is referred to as both male and female making it extremely difficult to define her given the mutually exclusive nature of the gender binary. The same thing happens in June’s chapter. As the warm

weather brings plants and animals back out into nature, “and Man turns inside out for love, Dame Musset, like many a Dandy...had also an Eye when she went out for a walk” (41).

In both of the above examples the narrator is speaking about Musset’s male-coded desires, so it is both fitting and necessary that in these instances she be compared to man. But the real purpose here is to show that just as femininity has nothing to do with femaleness masculinity has nothing to do with maleness. And, as one critic puts it, if anatomy is not destiny, then women’s bodies should be cut loose from the culturally prescribed meanings thrust upon them (Harris 74). The *Ladies Almanack* indeed sets out to do just that, but rather than provide new definitions of what women are or should be it presents them as indefinable and unknowable. Women vary infinitely in the *Almanack* and are nothing by nature. According to one critic, it is this indeterminacy which forms the groundwork of desire, and ultimately agency (Berni 102).

At the beginning of the September chapter the narrator states, “The very Condition of Woman is so subject to Hazard, so complex, and so grievous, that to place her at one Moment is but to displace her at the next” (55). Here, women are shown to be in a constant state of flux. They are impossible to grasp, impossible to tie down with definitions because as soon as one does time passes and they change. The importance of this idea to what Barnes is doing with the *Ladies Almanack* is clear when one considers that the very same point is made – and made more elaborately – just one chapter earlier, in August. But whereas in September this description of women comes under the heading “HER TIDES AND MOONS” (55), in August the heading reads, “DISTEMPERS” (47) because women’s anonymity is viewed as a disease by the

patriarchal culture at large. In August we are reminded that every inch, every nook and cranny of women's bodies, minds and hearts is and has been a topic of interest for every form of discourse imaginable in an attempt to find some solution to the riddle of women's nature. Upon examining those discourses the narrator finds:

Some have it that they cannot do, have, be, think, act, give, go, come, right in any way. Others that they cannot do, have, be, think, act, get, give, go wrong in any way, others set them between the two Stools saying that they can, yet cannot, that they have and have not, that they think and yet think nothing, that they give and yet take, that they are both right and much wrong, that in fact, they swing between two Conditions like a Bell's Clapper, that can never be said to be anywhere, neither in the Centre, nor to the Side, for that which is always moving, is in no settled State long enough to be either damned or transfigured. (48)

Here, the discourse appears to show that the feminine itself is untheorizable, unlocatable within existing structures ("Speculum" 101), and prove that the feminine is not another identity but nonidentity (Michel 34). This is no disease though. The mysteriousness of women should not be held over them as a sickness because their anonymity is not merely a lack of identity; rather it is a multiplicity of identity (Harris xiv). It should not shrink women's possibilities; it should open up every one of them. In the world of *Ladies Almanack*, belonging nowhere allows woman to belong everywhere. In order to account for women's ability to belong everywhere Musset/Barnes offers her an inverted code of

morals and ethics (Berni 97), so that she might be able to avoid being, “admit[ted] to sense through the masculine Door only” (53).

The code Musset offers is simple to understand, while at the same time remaining strangely complex, which is to be expected in a novel that refuses stability. She says, “Wisdom is indifference” and advises woman to “Never want but what you have, never have but that which stays, and let nothing remain” (78). Musset seems to be imploring women to give up their claim to ownership over anything – people, ideas, feelings, everything – but why? Perhaps it is because Musset understands that ownership assumes a knowledge of and mastery over things which is difficult to attain. Musset is also aware that the patriarchy uses this system of assigning meaning and value to all things and she knows that she can not rescue women from, or overthrow that system by using the very same tactics it does.

This point is illustrated through Dame Musset’s interactions with Bounding Bess and Daisy Downpour, where we can see what happens when woman attempts to use patriarchal practices to escape the patriarchy. Bounding Bess is originally approached by Musset and her friends as a candidate for conversion because she appears to be a “Sister lost” (31); however, Musset is able to see quite quickly that “She is not for us” (33). Her mind changes after she overhears the conversation that Bess, who we are told has great talents for history and concentration, is having with herself. In her soliloquy, Bess is attempting to break down and file her urges as she uses female historical figures to help her justify the way she feels. Bess believes that by using the right/wrong binary to understand and place her love she is moving towards some truth, but, according to Musset, she is really only trying to assign meaning to feelings which is moving her away

from truth. Unfortunately, not all of Musset's friends are able to see that Bess cannot be saved and Miss Tuck sticks around to try to show her the light. Eventually even Tuck learns that there is no mystery within Bess; she is nothing but facts (37). Tuck says, "When a Woman is as well seasoned in her every Joint as she, with exact and enduring Knowledge, there is nothing for it but to let her add herself up to an impossible Zero" (37). What passes for facts, knowledge, and truth within the patriarchy – its fixed meanings that don't make cognitive space for identities or ideas that don't fit inside the patriarchal box – keep women from freedom by keeping them tied to that patriarchal culture and its definitions of truth and knowledge.

Daisy Downpour, on the other hand, is not searching for facts. She is searching for a god and decides that Dame Musset will fill that role. Daisy then devises a plan to "secure" her god for herself and begins to keep track of all of Musset's comings and goings, vowing to be ready whenever her god calls. But Musset never lays eyes on Daisy, maintaining, "All Women are not Women all" (67). One critic believes that this is because Musset sees in Daisy's veneration, "Woman's need to affirm importance, or meaning, beyond fleeting impressions" and objects to that state of being (Plumb 98). Musset states, "I fear that, in yonder Bosom leaning upon her Casement, grows a Garden of Hope, and that with it she would crown and feather me with the Pinions of celestial glory only to destroy me with these same Implements" (67). Daisy, then, does not fit in with what Dame Musset is trying to do because she is counting on Musset to make everything make sense and to make everything all right.

There are no answers in Musset's code and there is no use trying to assign meaning or value to things as unexplainable as love and desire. We can see just how true

that is by looking at the chapter for July in which the narrator tries to record how women in love express that love. We learn, “nowhere, in all the fulsome data of most uncovered and naked backrunning of Nature...can be gathered the vaguest Idea of the Means by which she puts her Heart from her Mouth to her Sleeve, and from her Sleeve into Rhetorick, and from that into the Ear of her beloved” (43); however, the narrator still gives it her best shot. In the end though words do not do any justice to woman’s feelings and desires, the narrator writes, “Nay – – I cannot write it! It is worse than this! More dripping, more lush, more lavender, more midmauve, more honeyed, more Flower-casting, more Cherub-bound, more downpouring, more saccharine, more lamentable, more gruesomely unmindful of Reason or Sense, to say nothing of Humor” (45 – 46). The futility of answers is also illustrated in the chapter for January when Patience Scalpel, a woman greatly confused and distressed by women and their ways, tries to find out “Where, and in what dark Chamber was the Tree so cut of Life, that the Branch turned to the Branch, and made of the Cuttings a Garden of Ecstasy?” (12). What is most interesting here is that at no time during Patience’s rant did Musset, or any of her friends, offer up any type of response to her inquiry. This is because the reasons and meanings behind the desire are unknown.

In keeping with the idea that the need for knowledge, for definitions, plays a role in keeping women from freedom, Barnes implies that not even Musset’s code of indifference can be *the* answer for all women at all times. Women must be free to deliver themselves from love and love’s folly in their own time. This is a lesson Musset learns when she tries to share her newly acquired “wisdom” with many girls throughout the town and not one of them will listen. Finally, Musset comes to an old woman of sixty

who does listen. Unfortunately, this woman proceeds to inform Musset that “there is yet more to learn of this world” and, “At sixty you are ten Years tired of your Knowledge” (79). The fact that in the world of *Ladies Almanack* even the answer is not really the answer allows Barnes to present the reader with characters who are “the same” in that they are lesbians, but are very different in that sameness (Berni 95). There is Low-Heel, who thinks women are “weak and silly creatures” (50) and High-Head, who believes women are “twice as hardy as any Man” (50). There is Tilly-Tweed-In-Blood, who believes in marriage (18) and Cynic Sal, who is full of vanity and jealousy for nature (36). Perhaps it is possible then to read Musset’s credo a bit differently. Instead of saying “Wisdom is indifference” perhaps she is saying wisdom is *in* difference – in a difference that is far from perfect (Berni 100). What the *Almanack* proposes is no better or worse than the patriarchy because it is not in competition with it.

However, if and when women do subscribe to Musset’s code of indifference, patriarchal binaries separating right or wrong, male or female, masculine or feminine disappear along with meanings, identities, and values. This disappearance leaves women free to explore their feelings and succumb to their desires, a fact the women of the *Almanack*, Dame Musset especially, take full advantage of. And in doing so they show that *Ladies Almanack* opts out of Freud's developmental model entirely by erasing its ultimate destination: motherhood (“Femininity” 592, Berni 96). When Musset attains wisdom with the realization that she “has no cause for Children and no effect for Babes” (74) she is taking control of her body. Margaret Sanger, who in the 1920s lobbied for the availability of birth control to all women because she believed “sex expression is not merely a propagative function” (Sanger 171), claims, “A free race cannot be born out of



slave mothers...No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her own body. No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother” (138). It is important to point out that motherhood itself is not being condemned by Sanger or *Ladies Almanack*, only the idea that motherhood is the one thing women desire. Barnes’s point is that there is more to being a woman than motherhood; it is not the only purpose of her sexuality (Hird 6).

Once the link between sex and reproduction is severed, Musset is free to learn on the bodies of all women (35) as she searches for pleasure, rather than seeking a way to fulfill a role defined for her by patriarchal culture. Musset is able to find fame and an almost goddess like reputation through her “Genius at bringing up by Hand” and “Slips of the Tongue” (9) because of her refusal of a gender binary that so rigidly tries to define what she *is*. Without the gender binary telling women what they should be, they are free to decide what they want to be. This is how Musset/Barnes upend Freud’s active/passive dichotomy; they allow woman to be, free from meaning, value, and identity. She chooses. She creates. She is.

In sum, the authors of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Ladies Almanack* use the main characters of their novels to destabilize notions of a congenital female inferiority, passivity, and lack. Whether they achieve this destabilization by infiltrating the male-dominated system, as is the case with Lorelei, or by exploding the gender binary at large, as is the case with Dame Musset, Loos and Barnes give readers women who will not sit idly by and be told what they are. In the next chapter it will be interesting to see how the form of each novel contributes to this work of reinventing gender.

## Chapter 2

In her book, *Gender, Sexuality, and Meaning: Linguistic Practice and Politics*, Sally McConnell-Ginet writes, “Language plays a key role in creating and sustaining (and sometimes challenging and changing) all of the varied kinds of beliefs and practices that inform gender and sexual identities, relations, practices, and ideologies” (15). Perhaps that is why Helene Cixous believes so strongly that, “Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing... Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement” (875). She goes on to describe this writing as:

An act which will not only “realize” the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal; it will tear her away from the superegoized structure in which she has always occupied the place reserved for the guilty (guilty of everything, guilty at every turn: for having desires, for not having any; for being frigid, for being “too hot”; for not being both at once; for being too motherly and not enough; for having children and for not having any; for nursing and for not nursing...) – tear her away by means of this research, this job of analysis and illumination, this emancipation of the marvelous text of her self that she must urgently learn to speak. (880)

Here, Cixous stresses the redemptive and freeing nature of writing for women. It is through writing that women have the opportunity to define themselves and choose their

own identity, rather than being identified by the patriarchal writings of men which label women as inferior and define them only in terms of what they lack.

In chapter one, we saw just how true that is as we analyzed the ways in which the content of Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack* destabilize gender ideologies and open up new spaces for women to exist in. In the following chapter, acknowledging Elizabeth Grosz's statement that, "It may not be what is written but how it is written that indicates a text's feminist position" ("Space, Time" 17), we will examine the form of each of the novels, the diary and the almanac respectively, to see how it contributes to this work of reinventing gender.

In the very first entry of her diary, the very first lines in fact, Lorelei writes, "A gentleman friend and I were dining at the Ritz last evening and he said that if I took a pencil and a paper and put down all of my thoughts it would make a book" (3). This friend of Lorelei's goes on to send her a book full of blank pages and since she seems to be thinking almost all of the time (3) she begins keeping a diary. But what exactly is a diary? Critics agree that the heterogeneous nature of the diary form make that question more difficult to answer than one might think (Kagle 15, Martens 3); however at its core a diary is, "a record of events or thoughts written as dated periodic entries" (Kagle 15). If that definition seems general, that's because it is. The only order the diary form imposes is successiveness, which frees the diarist from many literary requirements or prescriptions (Martens 186). The diary form allows for formal elasticity and lacks rules restricting style, topic, and length (Martens 186), so that one important characteristic of the diary form is that it lacks the consistency and unity usually expected of literature (Kagle 21). It is understandable why a diarist is less likely than other writers to be concerned with

presenting a consistent attitude (Kagle 18) when one considers that diaries are first person accounts typically written for private, rather than public consumption, as well as the fact that real life is usually not arranged in plot (Kagle 23, Martens 33). It is also understandable why critics look at this characteristic of the diary in order to explain why diary keeping became a more commonplace practice for middle class women around the turn of the twentieth century (Martens 173, Churchwell 137). Lorna Martens writes:

One might conjecture that the diary is a particularly attractive form for women because, as a flexible, open, and nonteleological structure, it complements the nonautobiographical quality of women's lives and the traditionally dependent, accommodating female role. A diary can be written in snatches and with little concentration; it is adaptable to the housewife's interrupted day.

(182)

Interestingly enough, some of the same characteristics of the diary form, namely the lack of emphasis it places on organization or style, which draw women writers to it also serve to prevent it from receiving critical attention as art or literature. Steven Kagle writes, "Those critical of the artistic potential of diary form maintain that diarists lack the artistic intent necessary for effective communication" (20). Sarah Churchwell echoes this feeling when she refers to the diary form as the "least professional written form" (137). However, what must not be forgotten is the fact that *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* is not just a diary, but a diary novel, an imitation of a real diary. And whereas authors of real diaries may be simply accumulating a record of events without thinking about artistic potential, authors of diary novels "choose the form consciously and usually with some

particular artistic end in view” (Martens 26). But why would Anita Loos choose to use a form that many don’t even consider literature for her novel? Lorna Martens offers up an answer to that question when she writes, “A number of twentieth century authors have used the fictive diary to question more or less pointedly the traditional claims and purposes of writing” (192). With *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* though, Loos is using the diary form to do more than question what counts as literature, she also uses Lorelei and her diary to challenge ideologies about who is allowed and able to create literature.

In *A Room of One’s Own*, Virginia Woolf declares, “Literature is open to everybody” (82). This is an idea that Loos begins pushing to the limit with Lorelei’s very first diary entry when she writes, “It would be strange if I turn out to be an authoress” (4). It is unclear at first as to why that would be strange, but when Lorelei points out that writing is different from playing music because “you do not have to learn or practise” (5), the meaning behind her previous statement begins to come into focus. The implication here is that up until she sat down to write this first diary entry, Lorelei was under the impression that the ability to write was a skill that everyone did not possess. She seems to have believed that writing was difficult and that to be a writer was to be a member of an exclusive club reserved for the elite. But at the end of that first diary entry, Lorelei’s thoughts about writing are changing because of how easily it is coming to her. She writes, “So now I really almost have to smile because I have just noticed that I have written clear across two pages onto March 18<sup>th</sup>, so this will do for today and tomorrow. And it just shows how temperamental I am when I get started” (5). Writing that first entry provided Lorelei with a spark so that the next time she sits down with her diary, just a few days later, she is no longer considering what it would be like to be an authoress;

instead she identifies as a writer when, after telling her diary about the excuse she came up with to get out of going to lunch with Coocoo, she writes, “I mean it is no wonder that I can write” (6). Lorelei then attempts to seal her identity as a member of the refined, literary set in her third diary entry, in which she brags about the guest list for her birthday party and how “literary” it was, consisting of professors, editors, famous playwrights, and novelists all gathering to celebrate her special day (7). What is interesting here is that as Lorelei is attempting to make it clear that she is a writer as well as a member of the literary community, she is simultaneously asserting that all writing has some sort of literary value, which collapses the distinction between literature and writing in general.

So, in a span of about two week’s time Lorelei goes from being a woman contemplating putting her thoughts down on paper to a seasoned literary veteran writing for an audience – she begins taking “special pains” with her diary because she is writing for Gerry (12) – by doing nothing more than picking up a pen and writing. Sarah Churchwell believes that Loos is using Lorelei’s “illiterate” diary to satirize and attack counterfeit authorship (137), or the idea that one is literary simply because she writes and owns books. It is difficult to flatly argue against Churchwell’s view, especially when considering Lorelei’s discussion of the Conrad novels Gerry sends her. She writes:

They all seem to be about ocean travel although I have not had time to more than glance through them. I have always liked novels about ocean travel ever since I posed for Mr. Christie for the front cover of a novel about ocean travel by McGrath because I always say that a girl never really looks as well as she does on board a steamship, or even a yacht. (8)

It would be easy to read this, or countless other excerpts from Lorelei's diary, and simply label her a "literary" fraud; however, if she is a fraud, she is far from the only one present in the novel. And although this fact does not make Lorelei any less fraudulent, it is significant. Towards the end of Lorelei's diary she meets a scenario writer named Gilbertson Montrose, "a gentleman who is not only an artist but who has got brains besides" (113). She invites Montrose to sit down for a literary conversation, during which he does all of the talking and Lorelei, all of the listening. Montrose believes Shakespeare is a "very great playwright," *Hamlet* is "quite a famous tragedy," and everyone should read Dickens (113). These statements are more common knowledge than literary insight, used to give off the appearance of refinement and culture. Montrose is not saying anything of any substance about Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, or Dickens, instead choosing to throw out little facts with the goal of impressing Lorelei. The two then talk about poetry and Montrose recites "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" (114), by poet Robert Service. Montrose's taste in poetry is significant because Service's poetry was not considered to be serious by contemporaries in the literary set (Mackay 87). Although it is not her intention, Lorelei's description of Montrose's "literary" conversation both challenges the notion that he is "literary" at all, and once again begs the question: What does it mean to be literary? Loos is making that question extremely difficult to answer by showing readers that supposed members of the literary set, such as Montrose, are far less intellectually impressive than they should be or believe themselves to be. More importantly, by destabilizing definitions pertaining to the literary Loos is opening up spaces in the realm of the literary for those, women in particular, who have traditionally

been locked out. In other words, if what was believed to be literary is not, then perhaps what was believed to be unliterary really is.

In order to find the best illustration of this point, the questionable literariness of the literary, one must look at chapter two of *But Gentlemen Marry Brunettes*, Loos's sequel to *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. In that scene, Lorelei and Dorothy eat lunch at the Algonquin Hotel, "the most literary environment in New York...where all the literary geniuses eat their luncheon" (138). The ladies sit at a table that is within ear shot of the "literary geniuses" and once they all arrive Lorelei is blown away by their conversation. She writes, "it was all give-and-take, so that everybody had an opportunity to talk about himself" (142). They are not talking about anything intellectual or insightful, rather they are sharing funny stories about what was said during past luncheons and reminiscing about their trip to Europe. When recounting the experience Lorelei writes, "And I think it is wonderful to have so many internal resources that you never have to bother to go outside of yourself to see anything" (142), and we are reminded of Lorelei's desire to return to what she knows during her trip to Europe. The similarities between these "literary geniuses" and Lorelei become even clearer when they have Lorelei join them for lunch, realize that there is more to her than it looked like, and proceed to issue her an invitation to join them every day (144).

The significance of this scene, as well as the scene in which Lorelei meets Montrose, is thus twofold. We have already established the fact that both scenes raise questions about what it means to be literary, but they also serve to knock those believed to be "literary" down a few pegs, to the point that they are almost on equal ground with Lorelei. The parallel these scenes draw between Lorelei and the Algonquin writers who



are “literary” help to tear the mask of elitism and exclusivity off of writing and literature. By writing about these men, Lorelei is unwittingly creating and fostering the attitude that if they can do it (literature), I (or anyone else) can do it; which is much more philosophical than most of what she writes when she is trying to be philosophical, including her observation that “birdlife was the highest form of civilization” (11). The use of the diary form here allows the reader to see that Lorelei makes her point about the availability of literature to all people unintentionally, but regardless of intent Lorelei still uses this throw-away diary form to say something profound. And as Lorelei accidentally stumbles into moments of clarity and insight, perhaps Sylvia Townsend Warner can help us understand why Anita Loos uses the diary form when she writes, “Women have entered literature breathless, unequipped, and with nothing but their wits to trust to. They are writing what they have in mind to say – for that is all they know about it; no one has groomed them for a literary career” (543). That is why some contemporary women writers “see fragmentary, open forms like the diary as the readiest possibility for finding a new women’s voice” (Martens 182).

Besides destabilizing definitions and expanding the borders of what counts as literature and who counts as literary, Anita Loos’s decision to use the diary form in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* allows her to deal with issues of self-representation. With the diary, the reader is confined to the internal world of a single ego (Abbott 24) so that in the world of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, one depends on Lorelei to translate what is going on (Dolan 82). She, in essence, has control over the reader in much the same way she has control over the gentlemen in the novel. But Lorelei is not only controlling the way one perceives the events described in her diary, she is also in control of how she herself is

perceived. The first person narrative nature of the diary allows Lorelei to create her own identity and define herself, which is significant considering the limitations patriarchal ideologies place on what women should be. However, the first person narrative nature of the diary also forces the reader to question just how truthful Lorelei is being when she writes. As Martens asks, "Does self-consciousness in diary writing make insincerity implicit?" (38).

As we have seen throughout her diary, Lorelei is constantly aligning herself with those who have both economic and cultural wealth and power, as well as identifying herself as someone with an extremely high level of cultural refinement and intelligence. Yet when one sees that she would prefer sitting in a London restaurant drinking champagne to sight seeing because "when you are traveling you really ought to take advantadges of what you can not do at home" (40), and one reads about the fact that the only reason her trip to Europe is not a complete failure is that she was able to see the historically famous site where "Coty and Cartier" make all their perfumes (52), Lorelei's believability definitely comes into question. Couple that with the countless misspellings and grammatical errors present in the diary, along with the repetition of sentence starters such as "so..." and "I mean..." and it would appear as though Lorelei is nothing like that person she is purporting to be; in reality she may be closer to the polar opposite of the identity she creates, even though we know Lorelei is not utterly stupid (Tracy 130). But the tension created by the presence of those two contradictory truths, Lorelei's narrated truth, what she says, and the truth found in the text itself, what the reader sees between the lines, is intentional on Loos's part. H. Porter Abbott writes, "As readers we no longer ask our diarist to give a wholly sincere account of her feelings. We ask instead that we

be allowed to see the truth of those feelings through the mixture of sincerity and self-deception that governs her text” (21). In other words, the misconceptions and misinformation Lorelei records in her diary because it is what she feels or thinks at that moment can still provide vital truths about her attitudes or beliefs (Kagle 19). Lorelei’s contradictions thus present her as a woman who is multilayered and variable; she is not merely or only one easily recognizable and definable thing. Lorelei, like the diary form, is fragmentary and open. In a way, Lorelei is the diary form.

That confusion between what is true and what is false, what is real and what is made up, along with the inability to put one’s finger on exactly who or what Lorelei is makes the decision to believe her or not believe her much more difficult to make. The words she writes down in her diary “obfuscate rather than express the truth of experience” (Martens 196). Sarah Churchwell seems to agree with this claim when she writes, “Lorelei’s language simultaneously betrays her ignorance and her shrewdness: she knows much less than she thinks and much more than she says” (151). And because Lorelei controls the language in her diary she is able to suppress everything that might lower her value as a figure of cultural refinement by disconnecting language from meaning (Churchwell 150). Just look at the way Lorelei uses the words “education” and “brains” in her diary. Susan Hegeman argues that if Lorelei is indeed a kept woman whose business is sex, the words education and brains may be coded references to sex and sex appeal (540). By using those coded references then, Lorelei is able to save herself from the negative reputation of a prostitute, while simultaneously presenting herself as a highly refined, highly intelligent woman. Sarah Churchwell, on the other hand, believes that “educate” is more often used to mean “pay for” or “financially

support” then it is to mean “have sex with” (148). Here, one word has multiple meanings in Lorelei’s diary, neither one being the actual definition. And furthermore, it is impossible to definitively determine the meaning Lorelei intends for these words each time she uses them. By making it so that words are not attached to any single meaning in Lorelei’s diary, Anita Loos is further distancing the reader from the opportunity to place Lorelei. We don’t really know what Lorelei means when she says that Gus Eisman “is the gentleman who is interested in educating me” (4). We don’t know if Lorelei is truly tired after a night with Eisman because they stay up late talking about the topics of the day (4). What we do know is that Gus Eisman spends a great deal of money on Lorelei. We infer that he does this in exchange for sex, but Lorelei never once overtly admits to sleeping with the gentlemen in the novel so any attempt to definitively identify her on the basis of her sexual activity is speculation at best.

Lorelei’s overt contradictions plus the fact that language itself in the diary cannot be trusted make her extremely difficult to grasp. However, there is a second voice in the narrative of a diary novel, the voice of the author. And finding where the author’s voice intrudes may help us with how to read the text (Martens 35). In *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, the author’s voice enters the text in order to make it clear that the text, and Lorelei, is supposed to be indeterminate. Susan Hegeman makes the claim that it is pretty obvious how Loos enters the text of *Blondes* when she writes, “As surely as that archetypal blonde is meant to represent the beginnings of Lorelei, so Loos’s own position would be that of Lorelei’s flapper sidekick, Dorothy Shaw” (529). Hegeman goes on to describe Dorothy as “a critic, a truth teller, and the voice of liberated, unhypercritical moral authority” (529). Some of those attributes cause Dorothy and Lorelei to get into

some heated disagreements, as Dorothy is not interested in putting on a show so that people will think she is refined. She drinks, uses slang, talks to men even if they don't have lots of money, and is not afraid to speak her mind. One might wonder how she ever got hooked up with Lorelei in the first place. But despite all of their apparent differences, one thing Dorothy and Lorelei have in common is that they are both women with distinct voices who refuse to be held down and defined by men. They are women striving for freedom. And although Dorothy is not always on board with the seductive means Lorelei uses to reach that end, the fact that she sticks with Lorelei through everything is evidence that she understands what Lorelei's end game is. For example when Lorelei comes up with her tiara plan while they are in Paris she writes:

So when I got through telling Dorothy what I thought up, Dorothy looked at me and looked at me and she really said she thought my brains were a miracle. I mean she said my brains reminded her of a radio because you listen to it for days and days and you get discouradged and just when you are getting ready to smash it, something comes out that is a masterpiece. (65)

That one passage is very telling if we are to believe that Anita Loos is speaking through Dorothy in order to assist the reader with figuring out who Lorelei is and what we should think about her. Despite the scathing sarcasm present in Dorothy's comments, Loos is once more illustrating for the reader just how variable Lorelei is. She is in a constant state of flux, as varied as the songs that come out of the radio, and underneath all of her frivolous talk there is a core of good sense.

As was stated in chapter one, Loos is using Lorelei to open up new spaces for women to exist in. And ultimately, it would appear as though Anita Loos chooses the diverse diary form for *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* in order to explore the idea that women are heterogeneous by nature. Loos's point is that there is no sufficient way to definitively define women, for they cannot be pigeonholed into any one single identity because they are constantly in motion, constantly changing and then changing again. The first person narrative nature of the diary lends itself to that theme by allowing Lorelei to enter into the world of literature and the literary previously reserved for men only, as well as allowing her to present contradictory and competing truths about herself and the events recorded in her diary.

Interestingly enough, the almanac form Djuna Barnes uses in *Ladies Almanack* is similar to the diary in the sense that it is yet another heterogeneous literary form. And like the diary, the almanac is equally challenging to define as a genre. Bernard Capp states, "An almanac was, technically, a table of the astronomical and astrological events of the coming year: the movements and conjectures of the planets and stars in the zodiac, and details of eclipses" (25); however, that definition barely cracks the surface of what the almanac was or has become throughout the centuries. Almanacs were among the earliest works to be published following the invention of the printing press (Capp 25), and as time passed many different forms of discourse came to be found within their pages. The discursive forms, some of which will be discussed in greater detail later on, found in almanacs include but are not limited to: prognostications, chronologies, histories, moralistic fiction, humorous anecdotes, maxims and proverbs, verse, medical notes, and myth (Capp 28). Some almanacs included all of those forms and more, while others

mixed and match from the above list. The variety in the almanac form makes it perfect for Barnes's novel since in the world of the *Almanack*, women are nothing "by nature;" their unfixed state is the only reality. Christine Berni writes, "In part, the intermingling of many kinds of discourse within its borders and its shifting explorations of gender and sexuality point to a deliberate lack of fixity – an intervention into the rigid biologism and essentialism of sexology" (102). Barnes, like Loos, uses a literary form that allows for great variability to show the amount of variability that existed between and within women.

But that is only one reason why the use of the almanac form is significant. With all of the various types of information included within almanacs, it is no wonder Bernard Capp argues that their historical significance lies in the fact that they were used for education in the broadest sense (228). For many readers, the almanac was the only source of instruction (Capp 215). Maureen Perkins echoes those sentiments when she quotes an 1860 almanac which states, "A person without an almanac is somewhat like a ship without a compass; he never knows what to do, nor when to do it" (13). The variety of roles filled by almanacs led to their great success. In mid seventeenth century England, more almanacs were sold than any other publication (Palmeri ); and in seventeenth century America, where it was considered to be popular literature, the colonial almanac "had no competition as secular reading matter for the common man for over half a century" (Franklin 270). The almanac, then, appears to have been a must-have, a necessity for everyone who was anyone, which is exactly the tradition the *Ladies Almanack* claims to be a part of. At the close of the opening chapter, the narrator writes, "Thus begins this Almanack, which all Ladies should carry about with them, as the Priest

his Breviary, as the Cook his Recipes, as the Doctor his Psysic, as the Bride her Fears, and as the Lion her Roar!" (9). The importance of the *Almanack* for ladies is clear when one reads that statement, the implication being that without it women would be utterly lost. The *Ladies Almanack* claims that it will save women from wandering around like that ship without a compass. It will give them direction, allowing them to do what they are meant to do and be who they are meant to be, much like recipes do for a cook. Barnes then, has cleverly chosen for her novel a literary form that has been extremely widely read for centuries as a sort of educational text because the goal of the *Ladies Almanack* is to teach as many women as possible about women.

Considering the fact that one of the principal functions of instruction in almanacs was to include morality, stressing the duties and obligations of readers, they frequently plunged into political, religious, and especially social controversies (Franklin 221). Bernard Capp writes, "In calling for amendment of life, compilers often felt an obligation to describe proper social behavior. Frequently they abandoned their prophetic role, and wrote simply as commentators and critics of society" (102). Barnes's *Ladies Almanack* stays true to the almanac form by tackling issues of morality; however, the inverted moral code it offers up stands in stark contrast to what would have been considered proper moral behavior. In chapter one of this paper, Musset's code of indifference, which implores women to give up their desire to definitively define things and which parallels the theme of women's unfixed heterogeneous nature, was discussed. Here, let us look at the way Barnes uses the almanac form to present the other piece of her moral code, the part of the code that calls for women's unabashed search for sexual pleasure in the arms and beds of other women. In the February chapter, using the almanac convention of the



listing of the saint's days (Capp 50), the *Ladies Almanack* shares when and why Dame Musset was sainted (14). There are twelve days in all, with each one corresponding to a month of the year, but I will be focusing on the days she is sainted in April and June. April's saint's day reads, "When fast on fifteen she hushed a Near-Bride with the left Flounce of her Ruffle that her Father in sleeping might not know of the oh!" (15), while June's states, "When well thirty, she, like all Men before her, made a Harlot a good Woman by making her Mistress" (17). The saint's days convention employed by Barnes here makes it difficult to argue against the morality of Musset's actions. The notion that she is being sainted for sleeping with a woman shortly before her wedding and turning a "good" woman into one of her mistresses is presented as fact, which both secures what Musset does in a place of moral soundness, and implies that since her actions are morally acceptable other women should consider following Musset's lead.

It is interesting to note though, that the descriptions of Musset's saint's days do not figure prominently on the pages of *Ladies Almanack*. Instead, they are relegated to the margins of the page and are presented in a smaller font size. This may be an intentional move on Barnes's part since, as one critic points out, Barnes "employs a 'hiding/telling' strategy in *Ladies Almanack* because the sex is between two women" (Wells-Lynn 83). She is aware of the taboo nature of what she is calling for, just as she is aware of the existence of the images of women as monstrous and threatening (Berni 100) so Barnes is extremely careful and playful when she makes her points. She even allows an antagonistic point of view to enter the text of *Ladies Almanack* in the form of Patience Scalpel. Burt Franklin points out that descriptions of freaks of nature were especially pleasurable to the almanac audience, citing the presence in almanacs of stories about

dwarves and man-fish (216). Barnes, then, uses Patience Scalpel in order to present an alternative view of lesbianism and lesbian love, a view that puts lesbians in the same category as the dwarf or the man-fish. According to Patience Scalpel, women who love other women are the freaks of nature. At one point she says, “What can you women see in each other? Where is the Parting of the Ways and the Horseman that hunts? Where there is Prostitution and Drunkenness, there is bound to be Immorality, or I do not count the Times, but what is this?” (31). When Musset responds by saying, “And that’s all there is, and there is no more” (31), it becomes clear that Barnes is once again using a “hiding/telling” strategy and intends for this scene to be read as an anecdotal morality lesson. Musset does not argue with Patience or demand that she change the way she thinks; she simply adheres to her code of indifference.

Another common feature of the almanac was the chronology, or brief history of the world, in which the whole of the world’s history was reduced to one page of text (Capp 215). Djuna Barnes uses this convention in order to do what is perhaps the most important work she does with the *Ladies Almanack*. She uses the almanac form to simultaneously rewrite history and create a purely women’s history that men play no role in. And although this history is another passage hidden in the margins, its profundity must not be overlooked. The *Almanack* states:

This is the part about Heaven that has never been told. After the Fall of Satan (and as he fell, Lucifer uttered a loud Cry, heard from one End of Forever-and-no-end to the other), all the Angels, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagitarius, Capricornus, Aquarius, Pisces, all, all gathered together, so close

that they were not recognizable, one from the other. And not nine Months later, there was heard under the Dome of Heaven a great Crowing, and from the Midst, an Egg, as incredible as a thing forgotten, fell to Earth, and striking, split and hatched, and from out of it stepped one saying “Pardon me, I must be going!” And this was the first Woman born with a Difference. (26)

With this newly recorded history Barnes is contesting the domination of the body by biological discourse and even contesting the terms of biology itself as she presents women of difference as heavenly beings born of the angels via an egg. In her book, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Elizabeth Grosz explains why the work Barnes’s alternate history does is so significant for women when she writes:

If feminists are to resuscitate a concept of the body for their own purposes, it must be extricated from the biological and pseudo-naturalist appropriations from which it has historically suffered. The body must be understood through a range of disparate discourses and not simply restricted to naturalistic and scientific modes of explanation. (20)

Barnes’s explanation of how women of difference came to be is certainly far from being “natural” or “scientific”. Moreover, whereas “natural” and “biological” explanations of women’s bodies are focused on providing answers to questions regarding women, Barnes’s explanation only raises more questions. She does not clear things up; in fact, she makes them more opaque. The confusion Barnes causes with her history may be the point. We are used to dealing with discourses in which “knowing” means that there is

only one definitive answer to a question, so when Barnes gives us the history of the “first woman born with a difference” she is not only reclaiming women’s bodies for women, but also destabilizing ideas about what it means to know. Once again, Elizabeth Grosz helps clarify what Barnes is doing when she writes:

developing alternative accounts of the body may create upheavals in the structure of existing knowledges, not to mention in the relations of power governing the interactions of the two sexes...Other forms of knowledge, other modes of knowing than those which currently prevail, will need to be undertaken [in order to resuscitate a concept of the female body for women’s own purposes]. (20)

The chronology is not the only convention of the almanac form that Barnes alters in order to make the female body “both central and omnipresent” (Berni 95). The presence of the zodiacal man, a figure unchanged since classical times and a mainstay in almanacs, which showed organs and parts of the body controlled by various signs of the zodiac (Capp 30) and was intended to enable readers to look after their own health (Perkins16), is replaced by Barnes’s zodiacal woman in the *Ladies Almanack* (52). It is difficult to make out many of the words included in Barnes’s illustration, but what is clear is that the vagina is referred to as “the love of life” (52). This is especially important considering the fact that for Freud the presence of the vagina is at the core of women’s inferiority. Barnes, then, uses the zodiacal woman, as well as her women’s history not only to place women at the forefront of existence, but also to paint women in a positive light.

One thing Barnes does throughout the *Ladies Almanack*, which is quite ingenious, is stay true to the humorous, satirical nature of the almanac form (Franklin 222). By doing things like having the first woman of difference hatch from an egg that descends from the heavens or making acts of sexual promiscuity the basis for sainthood, Barnes is able to hide layers of meaning behind conventions of the almanac form. The hiding/telling strategy Wells-Lynn believes Barnes uses may prevent readers from realizing all of the things the *Ladies Almanack* does. According to Shari Benstock, the almanac:

provides a woman's history, rewrites woman in patriarchal culture and myth, explains the workings of her body and the directions of her sexuality, and – most importantly – analyzes the reasons for her frequent unhappiness, the difficulties of her situation, and accounts for man's simultaneous hatred and love of her. (250)

In this chapter, our goal was to find some understanding in reference to how the almanac form Djuna Barnes uses in *Ladies Almanack* and the diary form Anita Loos uses in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* help the authors to reinvent gender. Through our analysis we have seen that the variability allowed by both types of discourse runs parallel to the image of women Barnes and Loos aim to present to readers. The resulting effect is that the unfixed, heterogeneous nature of both discursive forms mirrors the unfixed, heterogeneous nature of women. Women, like the diary and the almanac, can not and will not be definitively defined.

## Conclusion

In his lecture, titled “Femininity,” Freud states, “Throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity” (Femininity 577).

Freud attributed the difficulty in grasping the nature of femininity to what he referred to as the biological fact of the duality of the sexes, writing:

No individual is limited to the modes of reaction of a single sex but always finds some room for those of the opposite one...For distinguishing between male and female in mental life we make use of what is obviously an inadequate empirical and conventional equation: we call everything that is strong and active male, and everything that is weak and passive female. This fact of psychological bisexuality, too, embarrasses all our enquiries into the subject and makes them harder to describe. (“An Outline of Psycho-Analysis” 188)

In *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Ladies Almanack* this psychological bisexuality is on display. In their novels, Anita Loos and Djuna Barnes present readers with female characters who are simultaneously linked with the traditionally “feminine” qualities, such as silence, beauty, and the body as well as the traditionally “masculine” qualities, such as the production of meaning, storytelling, and active sexuality (Harris xiv). They are not just one thing. Who they are and what they are, their identities, are multiple and varied.

The result is that Loos’s Lorelei Lee and Barnes’s Evangeline Musset are extremely difficult to pin down and define, and that is the point. Through both their content and their form, Loos’s *Blondes* and Barnes’s *Almanack* aim to uncover and then move beyond the fiction of two mutually exclusive genders in order to show women and

men alike that women are more than what men claim they are, and far from inferior.

*Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Ladies Almanack* insist that women need not conform to prescribed gender roles, but that they should instead embrace their multifaceted nature. If that happens, perhaps it would be possible to create a society in which, as Gayle Rubin puts it, “one’s sexual anatomy is irrelevant to who one is, what one does, and with whom one makes love” (54).

## Works Cited

- Abbott, H. Porter. *Diary Fiction: Writing as Action*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984.
- Barnes, Djuna. *Ladies Almanack*. 1928. Norman, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1995.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Seduction*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1990.
- Benstock, Shari. *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900 – 1940*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987.
- Berni, Christine. "'A Nose Length into the Matter': Sexology and Lesbian Desire in Djuna Barnes's 'Ladies Almanack'". *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 20 (3): 1999, 83 – 107.
- Butler, Judith. *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*. 1990. *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*. Ed. S. Case. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 270 – 82.
- Capp, Bernard. *English Almanacs 1500 – 1800*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979.
- Cella, Laurie J.C. "Narrative 'Confidence Games': Framing the Blonde Spectacle in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925) and *Nights at the Circus* (1984)." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 25.3 (2004): 47 – 62.
- Churchwell, Sarah. "Lost Among the Ads": *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes and the Politics of Imitation*. *Middlebrow Moderns: Popular American Women Writers of the 1920s*. Eds. Lisa Botshon and Meredith Goldsmith. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003.
- Cixous Helene. "The Laugh of the Medusa." Trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. *Signs* 1.4 (1976): 875 – 893.
- Cixous, Helene. *The Newly Born Woman*. 1975. *Literary Theory, an Anthology*. Ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Limited, 2004. 348 – 54.
- Erikson, Keith V. and Stephanie Thompson. "Seduction Theory and the Recovery of Feminine Aesthetics: Implications for Rhetorical Criticism." *Communication Quarterly* 52.3 (2004): 300 – 19.
- Falco, Noel. "Loose Lips: How *A Girl Like I* Talks to *Gentlemen*." *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 37.2 (2008): 73 – 88.



- Felski, Rita. *The Gender of Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Firestone, Shulamith. *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*. New York: Morrow Quill Paperbacks, 1970.
- Franklin, Burt. *Early American Almanacs: The Colonial Weekday Bible*. New York: Burt Franklin & Co., Inc., 1977.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. 1930. Eastford, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2010.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Femininity. The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. Ed. James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1966. 576 – 600.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Female Sexuality*. 1931. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume 21*. Ed. James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1964. 225 – 50.
- Freud, Sigmund. *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*. 1938. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume 22*. Ed. James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1964. 144 – 95.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes*. 1925. *Sigmund Freud: Collected Papers Volume 5*. Ed. James Strachey. New York: Basic Books, Incorporated, 1959.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. 1925. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume 7*. Ed. James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953. 130 – 220.
- Grace, Victoria. “Baudrillard’s Illusions: The Seduction of Feminism.” *French Cultural Studies* 19.3 (2008): 347 – 61.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Space, Time, and Perversion*. NY: Routledge, 1995.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Guyon, Rene. *Sexual Freedom*. 1958. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973.
- Harris, Andrea L. *Other Sexes: Rewriting Difference from Woolf to Winterson*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000.

- Hegeman, Susan. "Taking Blondes Seriously." *American Literary History* 7.3 (1995): 525 – 554.
- Hird, Myra J. "Vacant Wombs: Challenges to Psychoanalytic Theories of Childless Women." *Feminist Review*. No. 75 Identities (2005): 5 – 19
- Horney, Karen. *New Ways in Psychoanalysis*. 1939. NY: W. W. Norton and Company, 1966.
- Irigaray, Luce. *Speculum of the Other Woman*. 1974. Trans. Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Irigaray, Luce. *This Sex Which is Not One*. 1977. Trans. Catherine Porter. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Jacobsen, Kurt. *Freud's Foes: Psychoanalysis, Science, and Resistance*. NY: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2009.
- Kagle, Steven E. *American Diary Literature*. Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1979.
- Kent, Susan Kingsley. *Gender and History*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Laqueur, Thomas. *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. MA: Harvard University Press, 1990.
- Loos, Anita. *A Girl Like I*. New York: The Viking Press, 1966.
- Loos, Anita. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. 1925. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.
- Mackay, James Alexander. *Robert Service: A Biography: Vagabond of Verse*. London: Mainstream Publishing, 1995.
- Martens, Lorna. *The Diary Novel*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- McConnell-Ginet, Sally. *Gender, Sexuality, and Meaning: Linguistic Practice and Politics*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2011
- Michel, Fran. "Displacing Castration: *Nightwood*, *Ladies Almanack* and Feminine Writing." *Contemporary Literature* 30.1 (1989): 33 – 58.
- Mitchell, Juliet. *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: Freud, Reich, Lang and Women*. 1974. New York: Vintage, 1975.
- Perkins, Maureen. *Visions of the Future: Almanacs, Time, and Cultural Change 1775 – 1870*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

- Plumb, Cheryl J. *Fancy's Craft: Art and Identity in the Early Works of Djuna Barnes*. London: Associated University Press, 1986.
- Poe, Andrea C. *Women are the Victims of Sexism. Feminism: Opposing Viewpoints*. Ed. Jennifer Hurley. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, INC, 2001.
- Prioleau, Betsy. *Seductress: Women Who Ravished the World and Their Lost Art of Love*. New York: Penguin Group Inc., 2003.
- Rubin, Gayle. *The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex. The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*. Ed. Linda Nicholson. New York: Routledge, 1997. 27 – 62.
- Sanger, Margaret. *The Body is Not an Enemy of the Spirit*. 1926. *Second to None: A Documentary History of American Women Volume II: From 1865 to the Present*. Eds. Ruth Barnes Moynihan, Cynthia Russet, and Laurie Crumpacker. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993.
- Scott, James C. *Domination and The Arts of Resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Stansell, Christine. *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000.
- Tracy, Daniel. "From Vernacular Humor to Middlebrow Modernism: *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and the Creation of Literary Value." *Arizona Quarterly* 66.1 (2010): 115 – 143.
- Warner, Sylvia Townsend. *Women as Writers*. 1959. *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*. Ed. Bonnie Kime Scott. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990.
- Wells-Lynn, Amy. "The Intertextual, Sexually-Coded Rue Jacob: A Geocritical Approach to Djuna Barnes, Natalie Barney, and Radclyffe Hall." *South Central Review* 22.3 (2005): 78 – 111.
- Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth Ed. *Freud on Women: A Reader*. NY: W. W. Norton and Company, 1990.