

**The Literary Reception of Nietzschean Ideas in Relation to Selected
Works of Modernist Literature**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide the beginnings of a clear account of the correspondences between the initial reception of Nietzschean ideas and selected works of modernist writing by the Anglophone intelligentsia. In particular, the aim of this study is to provide a framework for exploring the Nietzschean undercurrents in the work of such figures as George Bernard Shaw, Dora Marsden, Wyndham Lewis, and James Joyce. Departing from traditional studies of influence and their method, the present account will examine the correspondences between the original reception of Nietzsche's ideas and their later absorption and development in the work of these writers and intellectuals with a special emphasis on the little-magazine culture of the period. As will be shown, in such avant-garde forums as *The Eagle and the Serpent*, *The New Age* (and its predecessor the Leeds Arts Club), *The Freewoman/The New Freewoman/The Egoist*, one sees the cross-fertilization of Nietzschean discourses with the then-contemporary theories of social, cultural and aesthetic egoism/individualism. These periodical and artistic coteries illustrate the close relationship between the reception of Nietzschean ideas and the tradition of radical literary modernism, an intellectual and artistic milieu that was progressive, experimental, and avant-garde in nature. The aim of this thesis is to consider and examine possible ways in which the contemporary discourses of 'radical Nietzscheanism' interact with the aesthetic agendas of these periodicals in general – and the individual agendas of Shaw, Marsden, Lewis, and Joyce in particular. I attempt to contextualize the work and thought of these individuals, to situate their texts within a larger avant-garde milieu receptive to Nietzsche, and to consider the ways in which they affect and are affected by it.

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Introduction

This study examines the literary reception of Nietzschean ideas in relation to selected works of modernist literature. By considering the ways in which Nietzsche's thought came to be associated with certain aspects of radical modernism and the literary avant-garde, my thesis attempts to consider how writers such as George Bernard Shaw, Wyndham Lewis, and James Joyce individually respond to this confluence. The thesis has two primary aims. Firstly, I attempt to paint a picture of what I term 'radical Nietzscheanism' by casting light onto the intellectual currents within which Nietzsche's thought was first accommodated. Secondly, I examine how these individual authors respond to Nietzschean discourses of the day – how, that is, some aspects of Nietzsche's radical literary legacy find particular expression in their texts.

Michael Bell's recent article 'Nietzscheanism: The Superman and the all-too-human'¹ points to the importance of reassessing literary modernism's engagement with Nietzsche and the impact his work had on several modernist writers. For Bell, Nietzsche should be valued not merely as a source of influence upon individual modernist writers but rather for 'having articulated discursively and in advance the complex of themes and the composite worldview that can be deduced from a large part of modernist writing'.² Bell rightly identifies two phases of what has come to be called Anglophone Nietzscheanism. The first one may be said to begin at the turn of the nineteenth century and continues through to the modernist period (although not without quite a few

¹ Michael Bell, 'The Superman and the all-too-human', in *A Concise Companion to Modernism*, ed. by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 56-74.

² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

disruptions, variations, and shifts). The next one started in the 1950's, with the attempts of scholars, such as Walter Kaufmann, to free Nietzsche's work from its fascist appropriations, generating a renewed interest in the scholarly community which continues uninterrupted until this day. Although as Bell points out, the two phases are quite distinct and should be studied in their own right, and within the context of their respective periods, he also notes that the recent phase throws new and interesting light on the earlier one, and more specifically on the literary developments generally grouped under the term 'modernism'.³

A sense of the relationship between Nietzsche and the literary tradition of modernism can be sought in early accounts of this intellectual phenomenon. For instance, in 'Nietzsche Revisited', a series of articles published in *The New Age* in 1921,⁴ Professor Janko Lavrin, referring to Nietzsche's 'radical' literary legacy, notes:

It would be difficult to point out another philosopher or thinker of the nineteenth century whose vogue and fate can be compared with that of Nietzsche. Entirely ignored until the end of his literary activities, he suddenly became the slogan and standard of radical 'modernism'; he was proclaimed – almost in a night – the apostle of a new culture and soon after the gospel of his Zarathustra degenerated into fashion, breeding adepts and interpreters all over the world.⁵

Lavrin's account of the phenomenon is particularly interesting for the light it throws not only on the Nietzsche's pre-war legacy (from the early 1900s until the outbreak of the First World War), but, most importantly for my purpose here, on the particular ways writers and intellectuals related to his philosophy. Carefully separating the positive and negative forms of reception, namely the literary reception and more propagandistic

³ Ibid., p. 56.

⁴ Janko Lavrin, 'Nietzsche Revisited. I-Nietzsche and Nietzscheans', *The New Age*, 10 November 1921, pp. 21-22; 'II-Pathology and Art', *The New Age*, 24 November 1921, pp. 42-43; 'III-Nietzsche's Dilemma', *The New Age*, 8 December 1921, pp. 65-66; 'IV-Nietzsche and Religion', *The New Age*, 22 December 1921, pp. 88-89; 'V-The Twilight of God', *The New Age*, January 5 1922, pp. 114-115; 'VI-We Immoralists', *The New Age*, 9 February 1922, pp. 190-191; 'VII-The Machiavellism of Strength', *The New Age*, 9 March 1922, pp. 241-242; 'VIII-II Santo', 20 April 1922, *The New Age*, pp. 322-323.

⁵ Lavrin, 'Nietzsche Revisited. I-Nietzsche and Nietzscheans', *The New Age*, 10 November 1921, p. 21.

avenues of appropriation, Lavrin discusses the cultural and perceived philosophical, psychological, and aesthetic value of his work for modern art and literature:

To many, Nietzsche was a surprising discovery because his philosophy was not a dry logical 'system' but something more alive: an intimate psychological document [...] [his] exaggerated and passionate subjectivism that often gives to his books an objective significance and value, making of Nietzsche himself a kind of symbolic figure, which it is impossible to pass by in dealing with the problem of the modern Individual. The second reason for Nietzsche's fascination was the highly artistic form of his writings [...] the magic strength of Nietzsche as Artist.⁶

Lavrin's observations here echo Bell's, and serve to reinforce the latter's argument about connections between Nietzsche's legacy and the literary heritage of modernism. For Lavrin, Nietzsche is seen primarily as a 'representative of modern consciousness',⁷ and his legacy forms part of a tradition of radical modernism expressive of the period's cultural, artistic and intellectual aspirations: '[Nietzsche] came with his gospel of new values just in a time of complete cultural, moral and intellectual disorientation and confusion [...] like a refreshing wind from a more rigorous climate [...].'⁸ Using, therefore, Bell's and Lavrin's accounts as a point of departure, this thesis proposes to understand this particular mode of literary appropriation within the context of what Lavrin refers to as 'radical modernism', as well as the positions of some specific modernist writers within this kind of tradition.

The presence of Nietzsche in Anglophone writers has been the subject of numerous studies. Studies on individual authors, such as Bohlmann Otto's, *Yeats and Nietzsche: An Exploration of Major Nietzschean Echoes in the Writings of William Butler Yeats*,⁹ Cecilia Björkén's, *Into the Isle of Self: Nietzschean Patterns and Contrasts in D. H. Lawrence's The Trespasser*,¹⁰ and Colin Milton's, *Lawrence and*

⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

⁷ Ibid., p. 21.

⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

⁹ Otto Bohlmann, *Yeats and Nietzsche: An Exploration of Major Nietzschean Echoes in the Writings of William Butler Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1982).

¹⁰ Cecilia Björkén, *Into the Isle of Self: Nietzschean Patterns and Contrasts in D. H. Lawrence's The Trespasser* (Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press; Bromley: Chartwell-Bratt, 1996).

Nietzsche: A Study in Influence,¹¹ all deal, in considerable detail, with theoretical affinities between Nietzsche and modernist writers such as Yeats and Lawrence. A broader survey of the phenomenon of literary influence can be found in *Nietzsche in Anglosaxony: A Study of Nietzsche's Impact on English and American Literature* by Patrick Bridgwater,¹² and *Nietzsche in England: The Growth of a Reputation: 1900-1914* by David S. Thatcher,¹³ both of which appeared in the early 1970s. Thatcher's study is organized around a list of selected intellectuals and writers who all in their own ways contributed to the reception of Nietzsche in England. His study is divided into five chapters, discussing the early responses of such writers as John Davidson (1857-1909), G. B. Shaw (1856-1950), W. B. Yeats (1865-1939), and A. R. Orage (1873-1934). Both studies arrange their material around individual authors and attempt to quantify the level of Nietzsche's influence on their writing and intellectual development. Only in the case of intellectuals such as Orage, however, do we get a sense of the broader context in which such an interest develops, where the discussion extends to take into account other quite important figures gathered around the artistic and periodical coterie Orage helped organize (important in terms of their connection to Nietzsche's British legacy). For instance, there are brief but informative accounts of such Nietzscheans as Oscar Levy, the editor of the authorized translation of Nietzsche's works in England, and passing references to other early commentators and translators like Paul Cohn, Judah Benjamin, Paul Selver, J. M. Kennedy, and A. M. Ludovici. The last two are discussed in greater detail, mainly due to the fact that their books on Nietzsche were published around the same time as texts by other important early Nietzsche disseminators and provide fertile ground for interesting comparison.

¹¹ Colin Milton, *Lawrence and Nietzsche: A Study in Influence* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987).

¹² Patrick Bridgwater, *Nietzsche in Anglosaxony: A Study of Nietzsche's Impact on English and American Literature* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1972).

¹³ David S. Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England: The Growth of a Reputation 1900-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).

Bridgewater's survey has an even wider scope but is less contextually informed. It begins with such figures as John Davidson (1857-1909), George Moore (1852-1933), Edwin Muir (1887-1959), and D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) and reaches across the Atlantic to include Jack London (1876-1916), Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953), John Gould Fletcher (1886-1950), and Wallace Stephens (1879-1955). When it comes to 'the men of 1914', Wyndham Lewis, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, Ezra Pound – whose relationship to Nietzsche proves much more ambiguous – Bridgewater acknowledges the difficulty in identifying direct influences. In the case of Lewis and Joyce, for instance, he limits the discussion to early references in letters and works, remarking how, overall, their interest proved in the long run 'superficial', how 'Nietzsche had been little more than a passing whim.'¹⁴

While both surveys offer a valuable reference source on Nietzsche's literary and cultural legacy, they are by no means exhaustive, and, in spite of their virtues, they leave many areas in need of further examination. Written in the 70s, they reflected the then-current tendencies in literary studies, approaching the subject in terms of 'literary influence'. Focused primarily on studying the analogies existing between these writers' texts and Nietzsche's, they tried to determine the kind of influence that his philosophy exerted on them. As a result these studies leave out broader questions of context, namely the potential link between a literary text and the broader artistic-intellectual milieu in which Nietzsche was originally received and of which most writers were an active part. The more recent 'materialist' trend in literary studies and cultural studies generally is particularly useful, in my view, in helping move past some of the lacunas of earlier studies like these. The recent 'materialistic turn', as Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker call it in their introduction to *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of*

¹⁴ Bridgewater, p. 142.

Modernist Magazines,¹⁵ indicates a direction in contemporary literary studies towards more culturally and historically informed models of analysis. ‘Cultural materialism’, a term originally coined by Raymond Williams, is an approach that emphasizes the interactions between cultural creations such as literature and their historical context, including social, political and economic circumstances. In the guise in which it is adopted and reformulated by scholars like Jonathan Dollimore, Alan Sinfield, Andrew Milner, and George Bornstein, it promotes an understanding of literature and intellectual culture in general as a perpetually dynamic system of relationships, through a focus on the material conditions within which textual and intellectual agendas were originally cast.

The development of such new approaches, alongside the recent trend in modernist scholarship towards the study of periodical culture, make it possible to review earlier ways of addressing questions of influence, reception and interpretation. Especially with regard to Nietzsche’s literary reception, little periodicals may be a way of bridging the divide between the author-based focus of traditional ideas of influence and the current insistence upon the importance of context in contemporary research – helping to reassess the ways by which we understand and evaluate terms such as ‘literary influence’. ‘Little periodicals’ is a term used to describe the plethora of small publications which defined themselves in opposition to mainstream culture, often serving as platforms for particular radical and avant-garde coteries, groups, and schools. As Charles Allen, F. J. Hoffman, and C. F. Ulrich note in *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography*, little magazines were mostly meant as forums of innovation and experimentation, gathering places for radical writers and intellectuals,

¹⁵ Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, ‘General Introduction’, in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Britain and Ireland 1880-1955*, ed. by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 1-26 (p. 5).

the “‘irreconcilables” of our literary tradition’, instrumental in the advancement of new, experimental and iconoclastic views, social, political and aesthetic.¹⁶

As this thesis aims to show, the study of little periodicals proves particularly useful when trying to devise a framework for examining the factors that helped determine the character of Nietzsche’s evolving radical avant-garde tradition. In terms of their importance within the study of literary texts, they allow an enlargement of our scope to include, besides the specific relation of an author to particular ideas, the wider context within which these ideas developed, offering fresh ways of exploring the relation between intellectual history and literary production. Brooker and Thacker propose that together with other ‘related artistic activities and forms of independent production’, little magazines constitute ‘the dialogic matrix of modernism’ providing contemporary documentation of the ongoing literary and cultural activity, opening up the complex layers and social dynamics responsible for the making and the unmaking of certain intellectual traditions:¹⁷ ‘Periodicals functioned as points of reference, debate, and transmission at the heart of an internally variegated and often internationally connected counter-cultural sphere [...] a network of cultural formations.’¹⁸

Given the background outlined above, this study first of all sets out to supply information about the cultural and intellectual context within which Nietzsche’s literary reception occurs. Consistent with Bornstein’s approach of ‘examining modernism in its original sites of production’,¹⁹ my method is to consider the discursive context of certain avant-garde coteries associated with Nietzsche’s emerging legacy – attempting to identify the image of radical Nietzscheanism in the cultural and intellectual discourses that surround it. In line with my focus on the interrelated aspects of

¹⁶ Charles Allen, Frederick J. Hoffman, and Carolyn F. Ulrich, *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 72.

¹⁷ Brooker and Thacker, pp. 2-3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁹ George Bornstein, *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 1.

Nietzsche's reception and literary modernism, my study will begin by examining selected little artistic and periodical coteries, all of which were in some way responsible for the dissemination of Nietzschean ideas in England. Little magazines such as *The Eagle and the Serpent* (London, 1889-1903), *The Freewoman/New Freewoman/The Egoist* (London, 1911; 1912-1913; 1914-1919), *The New Age* (London, 1907-1922), as well as its progenitor, the Leeds Arts Club, provide a basis for a fresh historically informed look at the development of the conception of Nietzsche among literary and avant-garde circles. These publications present us with an opportunity to study in depth the dynamic and evolving character of radical literary Nietzscheanism: from early turn-of-the-century responses, where Nietzsche serves to furnish progressive notions of egoism, creative genius and regeneration, to a later, more theoretically-focused discourse of Nietzscheanism, as seen for instance in Dora Marsden's editorials in *The Freewoman*, with Nietzschean notions of genealogy, subjectivity and introspection centered primarily on then-current theories of dualism and individualism.

I have chosen to focus on these periodicals not only because of their direct relation to the authors under examination here but also because of their role in documenting the changing image of radical Nietzscheanism through their respective discourses of radical egoism/individualism (sexual, social, aesthetic). Given the space constraints, I have not included in my discussion Margaret Anderson's *The Little Review*, an important American mediator between Nietzsche, radical thought, and literature. My discussion instead has been focused on providing a context for the history and evolving tradition of what constitutes 'radical egoism/individualism' and its affiliations with Nietzschean philosophy in Britain. In terms of the origins of this tradition, in *Culture and Anarchy* David Weir suggests how the beginnings of modern radical individualism lie within Nietzsche's model of individualism – one of the main reasons for his appeal among 'those artists at the fin de siècle whose increasing

marginalization from society could be taken to certify their “advanced” status in it.²⁰ The periodicals selected help substantially to expand on Weir’s point and elucidate further connections between Nietzsche, avant-garde, and individualism. Furthermore they help to provide convincing evidence for a continuous and critical preoccupation of writers and intellectuals such as G. B. Shaw, Dora Marsden, Wyndham Lewis, and James Joyce with the philosopher and his tradition – which carries us into the modernist period.

A glance at the pages of *The Egoist* raises some of the questions that inform my study. In the advertisement page from the September 1918 issue it is announced that bound volumes of the long-defunct periodical *The Eagle and the Serpent* are now available by The Egoist Limited: ‘it will cost you £1’.²¹ Next to that there are order forms for *Tarr*, Wyndham Lewis’s first novel, which had appeared in serial form in the periodical the year before, as well as James Joyce’s *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, also previously serialized in the *Egoist*. What impression can be drawn from such a curious ensemble? What can we make of the fact that *The Egoist*, a former feminist anarcho-individualist review and, by then, an official organ of literary modernism, decided to include in its order list *The Eagle and the Serpent*, the earliest coterie that dared to talk about Nietzsche and radical egoism in England? And what about Joyce and Lewis? Given the fact that they had both – at least in their youth – showed sympathy for Nietzschean views, an interest which, as I will try to demonstrate, continued to manifest itself in the portraits of artists and egoists in their fiction, what can we conclude about the ways in which they responded to such traditions, and how do they contribute to them?

²⁰ David Weir, *Culture and Anarchy: The Aesthetic Politics of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), p. 169.

²¹ ‘Ads Section’, 1 September 1918, *The Egoist: An Individualistic Review. Volume 4, 1917-1919* (New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967), 1 September 1918, p. 122.

This thesis follows both a chronological and a thematic order. Chapter One focuses on particular networks of Nietzschean activity in England – *The Eagle and the Serpent*, the Leeds Arts Club, and *The New Age*. Taking into consideration the specifically Nietzschean agendas of particular periodical and artistic coteries, as well as those of some of the individuals involved in them, this chapter examines the expressions of Nietzschean radical egoism within the avant-garde milieu and sets up a large part of the intellectual and cultural context for this study. More analytically: Part I of this chapter, opens with a discussion of *The Eagle and the Serpent* and examines its role in both reflecting and forming the complex ways in which Nietzsche's name came to be intertwined with socially and aesthetically progressive concerns of the period. This periodical provides a vast array of information pertaining to the early reception of Nietzsche in an English context. It serves both as an introduction to the phenomenon of Nietzsche's dissemination, reflecting its diversity. It also helps to establish valuable links between early radical Nietzscheanism and other later intellectual coteries, such as the Leeds Arts Club and *The New Age*. Starting with this early agent of Nietzschean egoism, in Part II my discussion broadens geographically to take in account the Leeds Arts Club, another early forum of dissemination, which assimilated Nietzsche into its cultural project. I offer a brief discussion of its cultural politics with reference to some of its principal members and contacts (Mary Gawthorpe, Alfred Orage, Holbrook Jackson, and George Bernard Shaw) in order to explore its underlying connections with both the radicalism of *The Eagle and the Serpent* and with later Nietzschean organs such as *The New Age* and *The Freewoman*. Part III goes on to review the contribution of *The New Age* to Nietzsche's growing reputation in England. It is examined for its importance as another principal locus of Nietzschean dissemination in England, particularly in terms of its affiliations with literary modernism. It is studied for the valuable insights it provides into the complex and diverse ways in which the early

Nietzschean advocates appropriated Nietzsche, and into the plethora of responses Nietzsche's legacy would elicit from variegated groupings, not only of the left but, as names like Levy and Ludovici suggest, of the conservative right. In this context I discuss selected articles by contributors such as G. B. Shaw, Dr. Charles Whitby, Alfred R. Randall, Angelo S. Rappoport and Janko Lavrin, in which Nietzschean individualism is defended as a kind of cultural *pharmakon*, an alternative to notions of cultural degeneration and decadence.

Chapter Two is concerned with G. B. Shaw and his response to concurrent Nietzschean radical trends as evidenced in the portraits of Nietzschean egoist radicals in *The Philanderer* (written 1893; published 1898), *The Devil's Disciple* (1897), and *Man and Superman* (1903). Shaw's portrayal of these Nietzschean radicals is analysed as response to contemporary notions of radical socialist individualism and notions of artistic freedom. In the light of Shaw's role in the formation and dissemination of a socialist Nietzschean ethic (as discussed in Chapter One), I examine the extent to which these types of Nietzscheans portray an emerging kind of social and artistic consciousness, a consciousness formed out of the trials and often failures of Shaw's heroic supermen.

Chapter Three examines the ways in which Nietzschean thought provided a kind of egoist platform for articulating demands for sexual and cultural emancipation and re-evaluation in *The Freewoman*. Part I begins with an examination of how Nietzsche was perceived within early feminist discourses and looks at which aspects of his thought aroused popular interest. For the purposes of this inquiry I have concentrated on such articles as G. L. Harding's 'Spinster in the Making' and his derogatory analysis of educated women as 'superwomen of the intellect', as well as feminist pamphlets like Samuel George's *In Woman Super-man?*, for these are typical examples of the fashionable and rather crude discourse of feminist Nietzscheanism. Part II and Part III

discuss how *The Freewoman's* Nietzschean discourse provides a counter-discourse to popular forms of Nietzscheanism among feminists and anti-feminists alike. A careful examination of articles by D. Marsden, Dr. Whitby, H. Cecil Palmer, and J. M. Kennedy, allows insights into a more subtle type of individualism – subtle in the way it uses Nietzschean theory to challenge such Edwardian discourses of sex-radicalism and progressive trends of ‘superwomanhood’, and to also re-define them through a discourse of anti-dualism and creative selfhood.

Taking into consideration these contemporary debates on Nietzsche in the context of radical egoism and aesthetics, Chapter Four examines the sex politics of Wyndham Lewis’s *Tarr*. Its main focus is the individualistic artist and, also, gender relations. Lewis’s examination of the theme of sex-duality in the novel (which, as I will argue, is grounded in a Nietzschean Apollonian/Dionysian aesthetic model) significantly contributes to then contemporary discussions about individualistic politics and aesthetic vitalism. First, focusing on Lewis’s featuring of the two contrasting female characters, Bertha and Anastasya, I suggest that Lewis is preoccupied with the prevailing Nietzschean aesthetic ideas about art and sexuality. In my opinion, *Tarr* aims to problematise such rigorous distinctions between art and life, an idea prevalent in early modernist aesthetic debates that dealt with art and Nietzsche, as seen for instance in Shaw’s early drama, where men of genius (both artists and revolutionaries) are portrayed as either obstinate (and abstinent) egoists or failed radicals, resigning impulsively to the female characters and their ‘Life Force’. As I argue, the prevalent notion of the artist-genius, that of the artist as a kind of Egoist-celibate, wedded to art for life, is reconceived through Lewis’s individualistic pair, Tarr and Anastasya. *Tarr’s* distinctive sexual politics, both in relation to Lewis’s characterization of Anastasya as well as Tarr’s vitalistic ethic, is in my opinion offered as a kind of study in ‘egoism’. Instead of offering another solitary artist, one irreversibly obliterated by the fear of

'woman' and what this represents, Lewis proposes Tarr as his 'superman=chimpanzee' and casts Anastasya as Tarr's equal and a fellow egoist. This untypical pair of egoists (a man and a woman) triggers interesting questions regarding then prevalent ideas of individuality and sex politics. In this respect the novel offers fascinating insights into Nietzschean aesthetic and individualistic notions of the period.

Chapter Five examines James Joyce's reworking of the figure of the artist-egoist in *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. I attempt to contextualise Joyce's interest in egoist aesthetics within a certain kind of radical Nietzscheanism contemporary to the writer while focusing on Joyce's ongoing preoccupation with different models of egoism, as evidenced in the character of Stephen Dedalus. More specifically, a comparison between the extrovert, radical and cosmopolitan spirit, which is so characteristic of *Stephen Hero's* proto-egoism, and the self-immersed, almost reclusive outlook of the published version, suggests Joyce's complex positioning within a certain literary tradition, permeated by Nietzsche's presence. Overall, then, this chapter is an account of Stephen's different 'visions' of egoism: it evaluates the extent to which the 'visions' might be taken as an indication of Joyce's critical engagement with the emerging trends of radical Nietzscheanism in the context of modernity, this engagement being both inward and outward-looking.

Chapter One

Nietzsche's reception in England (especially in periodicals)

1.1 The Early Century Nietzschean Context: *The Eagle and the Serpent* (1898-1903): Nietzsche, Radical Egoism and the Avant-Garde

This part of the chapter begins with an overview of *The Eagle and the Serpent*, the earliest English little periodical concerned with the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. An examination of this London-based periodical serves as a kind of prelude to my study; it frames the heterogeneous cultural field of Nietzsche's early reception. As I aim to show, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, although only a short-lived experiment, stands out as a particularly useful document, shedding light on the early intellectual and cultural context in which Nietzsche's thought was accommodated. It is not only a source of information about this initial phase of Nietzsche's reception, but also provides clues about the dissemination of Nietzsche among radical and avant-garde circles. As this chapter aims to demonstrate, its importance lies in its affiliations with early British Nietzscheans; in the information it provides about the Nietzschean literature available at the time; and in conditioning, at least to some degree, the reception of his ideas in radical and literary coteries of the time.

As will be argued, in order to appreciate *The Eagle and the Serpent's* broader contribution, it is necessary to consider in detail the periodical's distinct brand of Nietzschean egoism. Surveying the traits and characteristics of this peculiar periodical opens a window on an early moment in literary history. I will also attempt to show that in the periodical's attempt to merge anarchist politics, socialist ethics, and Nietzschean individualism, one may see the fascinating and multifaceted origins of a form of early radical Nietzscheanism. This part of the chapter, then, serves as a

good starting point towards a more adequate impression of the early radical agenda associated with Nietzsche's Anglophone reception. It gives some of the reasons for the distinct fascination with Nietzsche amongst artistic and literary circles, and offers valuable information about the origins of literary egoism/individualism in relation to Nietzschean thought. These observations will prove particularly interesting when I later examine the later phase of Nietzsche's reception, as encountered in *The Freewoman* and the respective brand of radical individualism proposed therein.

While the cultural value of the periodical has been greatly downplayed by Thatcher and Bridgwater,¹ Michael Bell's recent survey of Nietzsche's impact on modernist culture notes this periodical's role as one of the two principal loci of the dissemination of Nietzschean thought in an English context – the other being *The New Age*, which I treat elsewhere in this study.² Indeed, in terms of its role in the early diffusion of Nietzschean thought, *The Eagle and the Serpent* can be credited for its launch of an independent translation project of Nietzsche's work. *The Eagle and the Serpent* printed, in instalments, Thomas Common's English translation of the first part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, as well as small fragments from works such as *The Case of Wagner*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, *The Gay Science*, and *Beyond Good and Evil*. Another project of the periodical, its initiative towards establishing the so-called 'people's universities', or 'Nietzsche clubs', is also suggestive of the periodical's role as an early disseminator of Nietzschean thought, providing valuable connections with other concurrent mediums of Nietzschean dissemination such as the Leeds Arts Club.

The Eagle and the Serpent was launched in 1898, and publication ceased in 1903. In his cultural survey of the 1890s, Holbrook Jackson, a renowned literary

¹As discussed in the general prologue, the recent turn of modernist literary studies towards the study of periodical culture makes possible the shift away from traditionalist 'studies of influence' and their one-dimensional treatment of Nietzsche's relation to literary modernism.

² Bell, pp. 61-62.

critic and one of the two founding members of the Leeds Arts Club (an early milieu that combined radical politics, arts, and Nietzsche), remembers it as ‘the earliest British journal avowedly upholding an egoistic philosophy’.³ As it proclaimed, the paper was dedicated to the study of the concept of egoism. There was a variety of articles on the subject: discussions on the subject of egoism versus altruism, egoism’s social, political, and aesthetic ramifications and its links to contemporary aesthetics and literature.

The Eagle and the Serpent was primarily the effort of John Basil Barnhill (1864-1929) who under the fictitious name Erwin McCall aimed to initiate an interest in philosophic egoism by introducing the individualism of Friedrich Nietzsche to an English audience. Barnhill, or ‘Volcano’, as he preferred to sign most of his editorial commentary, intended the periodical to be a forum for those interested in studying the concept of egoism and the possible application of it in areas such as politics, ethics, sociology, arts, and literature.⁴ With some help of the anarchist writer Malfew Seklew, who appears to have served occasionally as co-editor from 1900 onwards, Barnhill would develop an impressive network of correspondence with intellectuals interested in Nietzsche and philosophic egoism. G. B. Shaw, Thomas Common, Havelock Ellis, professor Henry Lichtenberger, the Wagnerian critic and scholar Walter Crane, the writer W. H. Mallock, all offered occasional letters. Radical individualists such as H. H. Levy (editor of *Personal Rights* of London), Benjamin R. Tucker, James L. Walker (the writer of *The Philosophy of Egoism*) also contributed their opinions on certain occasions.

³ Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties: A Review of Arts and Ideas at the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Grant Richards, 1913; London: Cresset Library, 1988), p. 156.

⁴ It might be hypothesized that the American Barnhill adopted the pseudonym to avoid confusion with his other interests. He was a libertarian writer and editor of various polemic journals. His papers and correspondence is now in the Labadie Collection at the University of Michigan.

Because of its experimental form and ambiguous agenda, this periodical is quite difficult to define. Edward Carpenter sent his ‘best wishes’ and the *Academy* (of London) hailed it as ‘the quaintest of new journals’.⁵ G. B. Shaw, who became a subscriber after Barnhill sent him a copy of the first number, noted how ‘the journal, as far as I can judge, promises to be sufficiently foolish to make people think; and its quotations are excellent.’⁶ As both its title and its first subtitle suggested, the periodical chose to describe itself as a radical review whose aim was to expound a vitalistic philosophy of egoism. As the caption below its title indicated, in this form of egoism, the pride of the eagle, ‘the proudest animal under the sun’, and the wisdom of the serpent, ‘the wisest animal under the sun’ (according to Nietzsche’s prophet, Zarathustra), ‘were set out to reconnoitre’. As its title advertised, *The Eagle and the Serpent* espoused a ‘Philosophy of Life as Enunciated by Nietzsche, Emerson, Stirner, Thoreau, and Goethe’ struggling ‘for the Recognition of New Ideals in Politics and Sociology, in Ethics and Philosophy, in Literature and Art’. This rather long title would have A. R. Wallace suggest: ‘Your title is too long! Cannot you reduce it to two [key notions]? Why not THE EGOIST? Motto – “Wisdom and Self-Reliance”.’⁷

The periodical echoed the calls of Nietzsche, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Thoreau, as well as Casanova, Ibsen and others for a life lived deliberately and in opposition to the voices of normality, respectability, and conformity. Its format reveals its focus to be more cultural than political. However, it was adamant in its allegiance to the American little radical periodical *Egoism*, ‘the only pioneer organ of egoism’, with its shared stated purpose: to ‘make the Ego – the I, the master rather

⁵ ‘Benedictions and Maledictions’, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 June 1898, pp. 46-48 (p. 48).

⁶ G. B. Shaw, Letter, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 April 1898, ‘Comments on *The Eagle and the Serpent*’, p. 21.

⁷ Alfred R. Wallace, Letter, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 April 1898, ‘Comments on *The Eagle and the Serpent*’, p. 21.

than the slave of its environment',⁸ as well as to Benjamin R. Tucker's anarchist *Liberty*.⁹ With reference to the latter, it saw itself as *Liberty*'s delegated authority in England, carrying forward some of the views and attitudes adopted there. The periodical's stress on internationalism, its emphasis on social reform, as well as its opposition to the political means of achieving social goals, are indicative of such aspirations. One of the aspects of this internationalism was the periodical's great emphasis on continental literature and culture. Special numbers on French literature were planned to appear, promising translations of Montaigne, Stendhal, Chamfort, and Rabelais as well as on Nietzsche and modern dramatists, Ibsen, Shaw, and Maxim Gorki. From all these however only a special number on Nietzsche managed to materialise.

The Eagle and the Serpent seemed quite capable of sustaining itself, at least for a time, despite its uneasy finance. In the 1899 February issue Barnhill reassured his readership that 'the editor can keep *The Eagle and the Serpent* afloat as a quarterly with his present support' and implores subscribers to help financially: 'Money talks. Pledges of aid may be sent to E. McCall, 23, Linden Mansions, Highgate Hill, London.'¹⁰ This victory was only short-lived and, despite the periodical inclusion of star contributors like Shaw, uneasy finance and shortage of contributors necessitated the occasional omissions of certain issues (mainly the ones pertaining to literature) in the following years. Publication finally ceased in 1903. The abysmal financial state of the periodical would be frequently satirized by Barnhill himself. In the editorial

⁸ There are regular advertisements for *Egoism*, a monthly periodical published in Oakland, California by Georgia and Henry Replogle from 1890-1898. The advertisement reads: *EGOISM: Egoism's purpose is to make the Ego – the I, the master rather than the slave of its environment.* *The Eagle and the Serpent* and its publishing company 'Eagle Publishing Company, Fleet Street, 185, London, E.C, England', was their London agent. 'Ads Section', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 February 1898, p. 14.

⁹ *Liberty* was the first American periodical to publish Nietzsche in 1892 as well as G. B. Shaw, whose essay 'A Degenerate's View of Nordau' (later reprinted as *The Sanity of Art*) appeared there in 1895.

¹⁰ Barnhill [writing as McCall], 'Notes and Announcements', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 12 February 1899, p. 101.

column 'Saving the World' from 1901 he gives a clear indication of its chronically insolvent condition:

In reply to many letters sympathetic and otherwise: Please make our grave (which certainly will be our first and possibly our last resting place) by the side of a laughing sycamore tree and on a plain slab, without frills erect this epitaph: HERE LIES (AS USUAL) THE EDITOR OF *THE EAGLE AND THE SERPENT*, the most gifted borrower the world has ever seen. He touched nothing which he did not 'milk'. He left his promissory autograph in every known language and encircles the earth with a coterie of creditors on whom the sun will never set. We hope we ne'er shall look upon his like again

[Signed] MANY MOURNERS AND MORE CREDITORS.¹¹

A short life span would be the natural lot for a periodical of this kind. Given its financial instability, its engagement with radical politics and its vexed relationship with mainstream public, it is a wonder how it managed to sustain itself for a period of almost five years. The passage above, though ostensibly a lament, is really a boast of the non-conventional, almost bohemian attitude towards money. Its parody suggests in a way its degree of originality and radicalism, reinforcing its image as an honest and uncompromising publication which, irrespective of its financial difficulties, refused to make compromises with public taste. This idea was of course connected with the radicalism and avant-gardism it represented. In the column 'Benedictions and Maledictions', a 'Paris Bohemian' notes: '*The Eagle and the Serpent* is sharp enough to make the right sit up, the dull collapse; it is vulgar enough to dismay the scholarly, scholarly enough to disgust the vulgar', and adds: 'In London it ought to be a roaring success.'¹²

In a small section called 'Finding Ourselves Out' quotes by famous writers are provided, confirming the periodical's rocky relationship with a larger, mainstream public and an equally rocky relationship with conventional journalism: "The public

¹¹ McCall, 'Saving the World: Answers to Earnest Light-Shunners', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 July 1901, p. 48.

¹² Paris Bohemian, Letter, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 12 February 1898, 'Benedictions and Maledictions', p. 106.

is a great ass.” – Carlyle | “That prodigious ass - the British public.” – Huxley | “The public - how many fools does it take to make a public?” – Chamfort | “The people is a beast of muddy brain.” – Campanella.’¹³ Further, in ‘Finding the Journalists Out’ a New York journalist (who prefers to maintain his anonymity) confesses:

There is no such thing as an independent daily press. We are all slaves! [...]. The business of the journalist is to distort the truth; to lie outright; to pervert; to vilify; to fawn at the feet of Mammon, and to sell his country and his race for his daily bread. We are all tools and vassals of rich men behind the scenes [...]. We are intellectual prostitutes, and our time, our talents, and our possibilities are all the property of other men.¹⁴

Therefore, one might argue, although not a little periodical in the conventional sense (as it did not publish modern literature other than the translations of Nietzsche), it does share some of the little periodical’s most common features: it defined itself in opposition to the larger surrounding cultural environment and expressed discontent and scepticism concerning popular press and its control of public opinion.

Related to its plan to ‘save the world’ was its project of introducing Nietzsche to ‘young students of egoism’, at least, partly through translation projects. The two volumes of *The Eagle and the Serpent* contain the first part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as well as translated extracts from other works previously not available.¹⁵ The June 1899 Number launched Thomas Common’s translation of ‘Zarathustra’s Prefatory Discourse’, a project followed up in the October issue (15th October), which was a special ‘Nietzsche Birthday Number’. In this issue, Common, a frequent contributor to the periodical and one of Nietzsche’s first English translators, complained that the official publication of the English edition of Nietzsche was conspicuously delayed by the London firm which had acquired the

¹³ New York Journalist, Letter, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 12 February 1899, ‘Finding Ourselves Out’, pp. 101-102 (p. 101).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹⁵ In the column ‘Notes and Announcements’ of the December issue 1898 we read that: ‘Those who desire to see the completion of the translation of the first part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* can forward that end by sending to Mr. Thomas Common, 112, George St., Edinburgh, a contribution to the Translation Fund’, ‘Notes and Announcements’, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 December 1898, pp. 85-86 (p. 86).

rights. He also complained about the high price of the first three volumes. *The Eagle and the Serpent* with its independent commitment to publish Nietzsche (starting with *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*), hoped to resolve this by providing translations at a lower price and at a faster pace than that of its authorized translators, thus making his works more easily accessible to a wider audience.

A similar independent project of translation had been initiated in France in such avant-garde Parisian reviews as *Le Banquet* and *Le Mercure de France*, as early as 1893. These two periodicals were formed by young intellectuals who via such translation projects sought to claim Nietzsche's growing legacy for their own purposes. In discussing the avant-garde reception of Nietzsche in France, Christopher Forth notes that 'the controlling influence of the [French] avant-garde in the publication of Nietzsche was of central importance for the formation of the philosopher's public image.' Nietzsche, he says, would be perceived as 'part and parcel of this radical sector of French letters.'¹⁶ The logic behind the French translation project was not all that different from Barnhill's, who via the periodical hoped to initiate an interest in the philosopher for 'young egoists', thus promoting a radical and avant-garde understanding of him.

The periodical liked to fantasize a certain project of cultural revival inspired by a Nietzschean social ethic of self-creation and self-knowledge. It aspired to be a 'guide, philosopher and friend', to respective 'students and apostles of egoism.'¹⁷ Several files of so-called 'radical literature'¹⁸ were prepared as part of its education project.¹⁸ The periodical proposed the study of *Zarathustra* alongside Benjamin

¹⁶ Christopher E. Forth, *Zarathustra in Paris: The Nietzsche Vogue in France, 1891-1918*, (Dekalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois Press, 2001), p. 37.

¹⁷ Thomas Common, Letter, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 April 1898, p. 16.

¹⁸ 'Our Loan Library' section contains 12 different files of literature. The editor says: 'Pending the forming of local libraries, we have decided to start a small circulating library for the purpose of propagating our ideas. The small fee charged goes towards maintaining *The Eagle and the Serpent*', 'Our Loan Library', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 December 1898, p. 89. The circulating library was part of the P.U (People's University), which as Barnhill notes is advised

Tucker's *Instead of a Book: a Fragmentary Exposition of Philosophical Anarchism* as well as books of renowned anarchists such as Proudhon and Bakunin, advancing the understanding of Nietzsche alongside principles of radical individualism and anarchism. In this context Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* would acquire a particularly radical meaning. Understood in connection to such literature this book would stand for the liberation of the self from any form of authority, be it religion, property, or government. In addition to this portrait of Nietzsche as a radical, the additional inclusion of studies by Lichtenberger, Brandes and Ellis (on top of the proposed curriculum) conveys the central role aesthetics played in this Zarathustrian insurrection. Focusing on the subjective and respectively the introspective character of Nietzsche's philosophy, those studies interpreted his work as signalling a break with old philosophical tradition, highlighting those elements in Nietzsche which support free self-determination and creativity. Although all these writers' exegesis of Nietzsche suggest fascinating links between his philosophy and a turn-of-the-century ethos of creative individualism, the writer who perhaps provides the most direct connections between Nietzsche, radical egoism and culture in the context of the periodical, is the American anarchist John Beverley Robinson. Robinson on several occasions wrote for the anarchist periodical *Liberty* and also wrote a number of essays on philosophical egoism published elsewhere. He is probably best known for translating into English Pierre Joseph Proudhon's most important book, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*. In his essay 'Egoism' he points out the importance of Nietzsche and Max Stirner for modern egoism:

Modern egoism, as propounded by Stirner and Nietzsche, and expounded by Ibsen, Shaw, and others is [...] the realization by the individual that he

to 'meet fortnightly or monthly for mutual discussion'. Its object was to 'afford the masses the means of self-enlightenment and self-advancement, which a selfish aristocracy has deprived them of [...]. In the first instance it will organise in all centres of population Radical circulating libraries of such books', 'The People's University', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 December 1898. p. 89.

is an individual; that as far as he is concerned, he is the *only* individual [...]. The most profound egoist may be the most complete altruist; but he knows that his altruism is, at the bottom, nothing but self-indulgence.

But egoism is more than this. It is the realization by the individual that he is above all institutions and all formulas; that they exist only so far as he chooses to make them his own by accepting them [...]. All the ideals which men generally think are realities, you have learned to see through; you have learned that they are *your ideals*.¹⁹

Robinson's references to both Nietzsche and Max Stirner in the passage above in relation to philosophic egoism are not at all surprising. Turn-of-the-century discussions over Nietzsche and Stirner's kinship abound – both were seen as prophets of individualism. As Lawrence S. Stepelevich notes, a good reason for this was the fact that Stirner's revival was 'concurrent with the discovery and publication of Nietzsche in the Anglophone world – with Stirner playing the role of a proto-Nietzsche.'²⁰ What also quickened the 'Stirner renaissance' was an interest in anarchy. Although some declared Stirnerite anarchists (such as John Henry Mackay) dismissed Nietzsche's aristocratic egoism as non-systematic and in many ways as abusively contradictory to Stirner's original message, other anarchists, like Emma Goldman saw both as prophets of contemporary anarchism. In 1906, Goldman published *Mother Earth*, a monthly journal in which she covered current affairs from an anarcho-feminist perspective and reprinted essays by writers such as Nietzsche and Leo Tolstoy. Her views on Nietzsche and anarchism are perhaps best reflected in her autobiography, in an anecdote she recounts between her and James Huneker:

One evening we were gathered at Justus's place at a farewell party. James Huneker was present and a young friend of ours, P. Yelineck, a talented painter. They began discussing Nietzsche. I took part, expressing my enthusiasm over the great poet-philosopher and dwelling on the impression of his works on me. Huneker was surprised. 'I did not know you were interested in anything outside of propaganda,' he remarked. 'That is because you don't know anything about anarchism,' I replied [...]

¹⁹ John Beverly Robinson, 'Egoism' (*Reedy's Mirror*, 1915; repr. London: S. E Parker, 1988), pp. 1-2. Robinson was one of the most important figures in American individualistic anarchism. For more on Robinson and added bibliographical information see James J. Martin, *Men Against the State* (Colorado Springs: Ralph Myles Publisher, 1970).

²⁰ Lawrence S. Stepelevich, 'The Revival of Max Stirner', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 35 (1974), 323-328 (p. 324).

[Nietzsche's] aristocracy was neither of birth nor of purse; it was of the spirit. In that respect Nietzsche was an anarchist and all true anarchists were aristocrats.²¹

To return to Robinson's essay. Radical egoism, as this writer understands it, draws a parallel between the philosophy of Nietzsche and Stirner, and the drama of Ibsen and Shaw – the egoism of the former finding expression in the social aesthetics of the new modern drama of the latter.²² G. B. Shaw's article for *The Saturday Review*, partly reprinted in *The Eagle and the Serpent*, adopts a similar perspective. There the writer remarks how:

Nietzsche's criticism on morality and idealism is essentially [...] at the bottom of Ibsen's plays. His pugnacity, his power of putting the merest platitudes of his position in rousing, startling paradoxes; his way of getting underneath moral precepts which are so unquestionable to us that common decency seems to compel unhesitating assent to them, and upsetting them with a scornful laugh.²³

Shaw's observation about the intrinsic link between Nietzsche and Ibsen was also shared by *The Eagle and the Serpent*. In the February issue, 1898, Nietzsche receives a similar kind of treatment. In it Nietzsche is mentioned as the 'master-builder' philosopher of a new age. 'We believe', Barnhill says, 'as one of the greatest

²¹ Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, 2nd edn (New York: Knopf, 1932; New York: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 126. This debate over Nietzsche's and Stirner's kinship is still current today. John P. Clark notes how the question of Stirner's influence on Nietzsche has received a great amount of attention 'in view of the obvious similarities between the writings of the two thinkers in both style and content' (p. 13). In the topic of Stirner's philosophy and how it further relates to some of Nietzsche's principal tenets Clark takes notice of how Stirner's stress on the unique ego foreshadows Nietzsche's emphasis on the creative individual – with 'the former's *Unmensch* [...] [as] a prototype for the *Übermensch* of the latter' (p. 14). Furthermore the critic observes how both thinkers attempt to show the pursuit of power underlying human motivation. At any rate, he concludes, Stirner's analysis of Christian morality and altruism and his call for an egoistic ethics can be seen as a preface to Nietzsche's latter's development of the genealogical method with its demand for a re-evaluation of existing values (p. 13-14). John P. Clark, *Max Stirner's Egoism* (London: Freedom Press, 1976).

²² The rise of modern drama and the introduction of Nietzsche into a radical milieu are parallel phenomena. Such early affinities between Nietzsche and radical egoistic thought and, in extension, the association of his philosophy with the modern drama of Ibsen and Shaw would not be without justification. Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, a theoretical treatise on Greek tragedy and modern art (as exemplified in the opera of Wagner) would have made an informed impact on writers and aesthetes as early as the 1890s. For more see Allen, Hoffman, and Ulrich, p. 72. Also, Georg Brandes's essay on Nietzsche must be credited for being the earliest theoretical work proposing links between Nietzsche and contemporary art and culture.

²³ G. B. Shaw, 'Nietzsche in English', *The Saturday Review*, 11 April, 1896, p. 374; repr. [extract], *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 November 1898, p. 77.

prophets of Egoism he [Nietzsche] is one of the master-builders of the future.²⁴ Such allusions to the philosopher indicate the extent to which members of both radical and anarchist camps seem to have used Nietzsche's war against ideals and morality as a support for a new philosophical 'immoralism'. It seems that Nietzsche's vehement critique of herd morality and moral imperatives (as crystallized in a genealogical critical method)²⁵ was employed in these radicals radical re-evaluation and anti-idealism which turned morality on its head. Robinson writes: 'The ordinary man – the idealist – subordinates his interests to the interests of his ideals, and usually suffers for it. The egoist is fooled by no ideals.'²⁶ Nietzsche's new 'science of morals'²⁷ favours 'examination, interrogation, dissection, vivisection' and is used accordingly to attack the Christian morality and its articles of faith, such as, for instance, altruism and pity.²⁸ Nietzsche's proposal for a modern philosophical method and a new typology of morals, his philosophical project of both investigation and destruction of prevailing ideals, common practices, and accepted presuppositions would at the time have held particular interest for fellow 'vivisectionists', aesthetes, and radicals alike. In the case of radicals like Robinson, Barnhill, and Shaw, this impression of Nietzsche as a 'vivisectionist' of modern morals was inexorably bound with a wish to promote a new social egoistic aesthetic. This attacked the tendency of a Christian-based ethic to praise altruism, pity, self-abnegation, selflessness, and humility. In one of its first issues the editor of *The Eagle and the Serpent* makes the observation:

²⁴ *The Eagle and the Serpent* 15 February 1898, p. 7.

²⁵ Nietzsche's three treatises in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, "Good and Evil," "Good and Bad", "Guilt," "Bad Conscience," and the Like' and 'What is the Meaning of Ascetic Ideals' concentrate on the deadly dominion of this kind of morality and its likely origins.

²⁶ Robinson, p. 2.

²⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Part 5. On the Natural History of Morals', in *Beyond Good and Evil*, ed. by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 75-93 (p. 76).

²⁸ This modern science of 'vivisection' of morals is given further elaboration in Part 5 of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

We trust that we have sufficiently indicated the type of altruism against which the proudest animal under the sun and the wisest animal under the sun wage uncompromising warfare [...] the altruism by which the exploited are taught to bless (and curse not) the Shylocks who despitefully use them and to enter an imaginary heaven through the pu(t)rifying process of a living hell.²⁹

Barnhill's observation strikes a rather strident Nietzschean chord. As the passage above indicates, egoism as understood by the editor would help to educate 'the exploited' so they can one day rise above 'herd morality', namely, institutionalised morality and altruistic ethics. Inspired by the pride and wisdom of Zarathustra's two favourite animals, the periodical would place its ideal of an anti-Christian ethic against the ethics of altruism, in an effort to distinguish itself from the moral code of the herd which denies the creative individual the potential to outgrow the limitations society imposes. In articles such as 'Altruism – That is the Enemy',³⁰ 'altruism' is thought as being synonymous to 'exploitation'. In fact, altruism and exploitation are like 'siamese twins',³¹ and this theme underlines the core argument of the attack. Other columns such as 'The Religion of Egoism', 'The Calvary of Egoism', 'The Land of the Altruists', 'Many Letters of Egoism versus Altruism', the editorial notes 'Finding Myself Out', 'The Altruist Lie in a Nutshell', all offer opinions on the topic. Books on the ethics of egoism such as John Badcock's *Slaves to Duty* were advertised in *The Eagle and the Serpent*, a book promising to 'demolish and place respectfully on ice the various "Duty" fetishes by which the average man is enslaved.'³²

²⁹ Barnhill [writing as Volcano], 'The Land of the Altruists', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 April 1898, pp. 20-21 (p. 21).

³⁰ Volcano, 'Altruism – That is the Enemy', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 February 1898, pp. 3-5.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³² John Badcock Jr., *Slaves to Duty* (London: Reeves, 1894; repr. Colorado Springs: Ralph Myles, 1972). Badcock was a libertarian writer who along with Barnhill and Malfew Seklew pioneered radical egoism in Britain during the last decade of the nineteenth century. In his book, acknowledging Nietzsche and Benjamin R. Tucker as his inspiration, Badcock launched a sustained attack against 'duty', as a disguise for the power of some men by others and as an obstacle to the individual's self-determination. As S. E. Parker notes in his introduction to the new edition, Badcock played an active part in the 'free currency' and 'free love' movements of the 1890s. The editor of *Liberty* Benjamin Tucker wrote about *Slaves to Duty*: 'A unique

Although *The Eagle and the Serpent* would soon shift its focus to more cultural and literary matters, a Nietzschean-inspired rationale would colour early pieces such as 'Our Egoist Prime Ministers'. Targeting current politics, Barnhill rejects Salisbury's economic policies regarding trade unions, discarding the prime minister's measures as nothing less than altruistic sophistry.³³ In addition to such general issues as government corruption and hypocrisy, the rejection of external authority and the majority rule, *The Eagle and the Serpent* touches on specific social problems they sought to remedy. Articles such as 'Can the Poor be Saved by the Pity of the Rich?', for instance, were meant as assaults on so-called 'state altruism'.³⁴ In this article such Christian practices as charity and benevolence are attacked as insufficient state measures masking the urgent issue of poverty. According to Barnhill low living standards and inhumane working conditions could not be solved through 'benevolent acts' alone; proper state action and awareness was what was truly required.³⁵

In certain British socialist quarters, the periodical's debate between egoism and altruism was interpreted as a discourse of equality and self-reliance. Seen from a political perspective, Nietzschean egoism of this kind points to a way of living compatible with their own project of social amelioration. Quoting an article from the left-wing *Clarion*, Barnhill notes the favourable reception of *The Eagle and the Serpent's* creed of egoism:

In the *Clarion* (March 19), Dr. Wallace called attention to the fact that *E. AND S.* looks at altruism and egoism from the standpoint of how best to stop exploitation [...]. He finds our title to mean 'self-reliance and wisdom'. He quotes approvingly our 'Creed and Aim', and adds that our

addition to the pamphlet literature on Anarchism in that it assails the morality superstition as the foundation of the various schemes for the exploitation of mankind' {In Charles A. Dana, *Proudhon and the Bank of the People* (New York: Benj. R. Tucker, 1896), p. 69}. S. E. Parker, 'Introduction', in *Slaves to Duty* (Colorado Springs: Ralph Myles, 1972), pp. 3-6. It has to be noted that the original publication included an appendix consisting of the essay 'Egoism' by Robinson.

³³ McCall, 'Our Egoist Prime Ministers', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 February 1898, p. 7.

³⁴ McCall, 'Can the Poor be Saved by the Pity of the Rich', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 September 1898, pp. 61-62.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

demand for egoistic or self-interested action on the part of the exploited means simply 'that we are the fools if we choose landlords, capitalists, soldiers or lawyers to govern us [...]. In originality the *Eagle and the Serpent* is very refreshing. I hope it may meet with support'.³⁶

While for some socialists this egoistic outlook on the egoism-altruism question seemed to find a parallel in their socialist ethos of equality, the periodical's ambiguous editorial policies, its literary agenda and relentless comedy purposely rendered political fraternizing almost impossible. The relations between Nietzsche and politics at the time were very complex, but it is clear that Barnhill envisaged the development of a Nietzschean egoistic ethic which would help dissociate Nietzschean philosophy from direct political or economic formulas. In response to some Nietzscheans whom Barnhill identifies as 'orthodox', this new kind of Nietzschean school offered its adherents a very different conception of Nietzsche, one which hoped to overcome political and economic convictions.³⁷

Barnhill meant *The Eagle and the Serpent* as a model 'small periodical' and as part of a group of other small publications, all of which were aimed at being 'intellectual symposiums, inviting the opinion of diverse political and social groups, for the sake of argument and the elaboration of their theories.' He liked to think that such wide-ranging contributions would help making its issues 'a feast of reason and a flow of soul.'³⁸ The American anarchist Malfew Seklew (and later associate editor of the periodical) praised *The Eagle and the Serpent* as being 'almost an ideal of a reform publication'.³⁹ He also praised it 'for its ability to pitilessly examine self, systems and sciences.' Seklew and other radicals would credit *The Eagle and the Serpent* for being 'candid' and 'open', and for being cautious against political daydreaming, 'the Godly gush of the come-to-Jesus "reformers"'. Seklew concludes:

³⁶ A. R. Wallace, Letter, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 'Comments on *The Eagle and the Serpent*', 15 April 1898, pp. 21-22 (p. 21).

³⁷ McCall, 'A Warning to Nietzscheites who Believe in Rent and Interest', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 February 1898, p. 5.

³⁸ McCall, 'Editorial Note', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 February 1898, p. 9.

³⁹ Malfew Seklew, 'Benedictions and Maledictions', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 June 1898, p. 47.

I recommend it because it is not afraid to shock its readers by exposing the vices of the parasites who have a paradise here, nor lampoon the follies of the proletarian, who in this purgatory so eagerly swallows the shallow-minded sophisms of soothsaying sky-pilots and sycophantic sciolists.

Indeed, while the periodical advocated social amelioration and self-emancipation, it eschewed political ideas which evoked utopian models of society or nostalgia for a remote and idealised political past. In the issue of June 15, 1898, the editor made the observation:

We may observe that an expansion of the cerebrum would not hurt most of us and that dreams of an era of universal benevolence belong rather to the realm of poesy than to that of social science.⁴⁰

The periodical's overall style and editorial policies, as well as the kind of Nietzschean egoism it advocated, were fundamentally conditioned by this concern. This position is embodied in the various editorial policies, its ethic of open debate, as well through a self-reflective style, which rather than providing objective truths and solutions, questioned itself constantly by way of comic prose and self-parody. Opposite to the serious and often romantic tone political propaganda employs, Barnhill's periodical made a caricature out of its politics. Editorial Notes as 'Saving the World' are indicative of how the periodical choose to present its ambitions in mock-heroic language – a typical attitude of the periodical, which before the first year's end would decide to drop its first subtitle for the more suitable *The Eagle and the Serpent: A Journal of Wit, Wisdom and Wickedness*. *The Eagle and the Serpent* seems to have aimed laughter as an appropriate weapon against ideological dogmatism and naive progressivism. Flamboyant editorial notes giving advice on 'How to Attain Will-Power', 'How to Play the Game of Life',⁴¹ stand as evidence of its editor's ability to laugh at his own pretensions to seriousness. In the editorial

⁴⁰ McCall, 'Benedictions and Maledictions', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 June 1898, p. 47.

⁴¹ 'A University of Love, Love as Music and Will-Power', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 September 1902, p. 63. In fact the editor promises lessons on all these topics for 3/6, or a dollar bill adding: 'For Terms address the Editor', *ibid.*, p. 63.

column 'Messianic Disillusionments' with the subtitle 'The Confessions of a Disgusted Saviour', Barnhill takes great care to make a mockery out of the periodical's messianic hopes. Humorously recalling the prophet's famous saying in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 'to learn how to laugh at yourselves, ye higher men, as one must laugh', Barnhill advises potential future reformers to do the same, adding further:

We resume our apology for saving the world – there is nothing, perhaps, which calls for more apology [...]. Every reformer must have thought of himself, in the apt language of Nietzsche's 'Zarathustra', as a kind of 'kind-hearted old fool'.⁴²

A fascinating mix of scepticism, positivism and self-parody runs through the periodical, furnishing its cry for reform, self-emancipation, and regeneration. Its light-hearted look at modern politics and culture was a staple of its egoistic politics suggesting a deep-seated conviction that in this epoch of transition, in which God, and along with him all forms of beliefs and convictions have ceased to be convincing, perhaps the only sincere approach may be that of a self-parodist. A Zarathustrian-like humour combined with a sceptical (though affirmative) spirit seems to have been integral to *The Eagle and the Serpent's* project of regeneration – indicating a sober, yet positive approach regarding the future and the new age yet to dawn. Nietzsche's own philosophical style provides perhaps a good example for assessing the kind of political scepticism the periodical adopted. In *The Anti-Christ* Nietzsche indicates that scepticism is a necessary device of the future philosopher-reformer.⁴³

⁴² 'Messianic Disillusionments: The Confessions of a Disgusted Saviour', *The Eagle and the Serpent: Special Issue on Why do the Ungodly Prosper*, [1902(?)], pp. 79-80.

⁴³ In fact Nietzsche distinguishes between two types of scepticism. There is the 'weak' form of scepticism that characterizes the thought of contemporary philosophers, whose scepticism prevents them from committing themselves to anything (sections 204-7 of *BGE*) in whom Nietzsche detects a kind of paralysis of the will. The second 'stronger' type is characteristic of the philosopher of the future (sections 209-11). For further discussion, see Paul J. M. van Tongeren, *Reinterpreting Modern Culture: An Introduction to Friedrich Nietzsche's*

One should not let oneself be misled: great intellects are sceptics. Zarathustra is a sceptic. The vigour of a mind, its *freedom* through strength and superior strength, is *proved* by scepticism. Men of conviction simply do not come into consideration where the fundamentals of value and disvalue are concerned. Convictions are prisons [...]. A spirit which wants to do great things, which also wills the means for it, is also a sceptic.⁴⁴

The September issue, 1900, dedicates a large part on the subject of ‘the death of God’ and Zarathustra’s new philosophy of the future. It reprints a famous passage from Book Three of *The Gay Science* where Nietzsche refers to the event of the death of God and its consequences:

When Buddha was dead his shadow still continued to be seen for centuries afterwards in a cave, in an immense frightful shadow. God is dead; but, as the human race is constituted there will perhaps continue to be caves for millenniums in which his shadow will be seen.⁴⁵

The passages reprinted discuss in detail ‘the greatest modern event – that “God is dead,”’ namely ‘the belief [that] the Christian God has become unworthy of belief’, and the ensuing problem of nihilism, the question of whether ‘existence [has] then a significance at all.’⁴⁶ According to Nietzsche, the death of God is a historical and cultural phenomenon which ‘has now began to cast its first shadows over Europe’, and involves nothing less than a demolition of the basic structures of belief and value upon which European thought has been founded.

The third passage offered by the periodical for study discusses in detail Schopenhauer’s type of pessimism. It selects a passage from *The Gay Science* in which Nietzsche attacks Schopenhauer in favour of a new philosophy based on

Philosophy (West Lafayette, Ind., [Great Britain]: Purdue University Press, 2000), and in particular ‘Nietzsche’s Sceptical Critique of Scepticism’, pp. 148-154, Chapter Three.

⁴⁴ *The Anti-Christ*, Section 54, p. 184. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

⁴⁵ ‘Nietzsche on Atheism, Pessimism, Schopenhauer, & c.’, trans. by Thomas Common, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 September 1900, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

affirmation.⁴⁷ This includes Nietzsche's proposal for an ethic of affirmative pessimism, in exchange for Schopenhauer's ascetic resignation. In the advent of the 'death of God', the passage reads:

Our hearts [...] overflow with gratitude, astonishment, presentiment and bright; our ships can at last start on their voyage once more in face of every danger; every risk is again permitted to the knowing one; the sea the sea, again lies open before us; perhaps there was never such an 'open sea'.⁴⁸

This affirmative ethic embodied in Nietzsche would be of particular importance in connection to the periodical's overall project of cultural regeneration. In the 'Reformer's Discouragements and Consolations', Barnhill imagines himself as a radical reformer armoured with two great weapons, music and Nietzsche:

For ourselves we find two great consolers-music and Nietzsche [...] the earnest reformer must indulge plentifully in consolation (always a sort of wise dissipation, perhaps) if he could escape the mad house.⁴⁹

The importance Barnhill ascribes to philosophy and art is shown in this passage above. In order to gaze into the horrible abyss of modern culture the ideal reformer needs to be armed with the beneficent power of music and Nietzsche. A certain element of cheerfulness and gaiety is also required by the reformer. The spirit of gravity of the old tables of Law, namely, of old values and convictions, should be replaced by a Zarathustrian ethic of affirmation and cheerfulness. Borrowing a passage from the *Twilight of the Idols* Barnhill uses Nietzsche to support this:

It requires no little skill to maintain one's cheerfulness when engaged in a sullen and extremely responsible business; and yet, what is more necessary than cheerfulness? 'A Transvaluation of all Values', that note of interrogation, so black, so huge that it casts a shadow on him who sets it up – such a doom of a task compels one every moment to run into

⁴⁷ As Nietzsche says in the passage quoted here, in Schopenhauer we deal with a philosophy haunted by the shadow of religion, one which provides scarcely more than a 'compromise, a persistence in and adhesion to the very same Christian-ascetic moral perspectives' it struggles to overcome, *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁹ McCall, 'Reformer's Discouragements and Consolations', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 February 1898, p. 10.

sunshine, to shake off a seriousness which has become oppressive, far too oppressive. Every expedient is justifiable for that purpose.⁵⁰

Barnhill's image of the ideal reformer as a cheerful dancer seems to allude to Zarathustra, the 'laughing prophet', who incites his 'higher men' to laugh and dance.⁵¹ Without a doubt, the role of art and particularly music plays a vital role in the kind of social reform that Barnhill advances. His reference to music and philosophy emphasizes his basic assumption that without a love of culture social action is impossible. Such a hypothesis is further supported by Nietzsche in *Ecce Homo*. There Nietzsche likes to envision the Dionysian 'party of life' of the near future:

That party of life which takes in hand the greatest of all tasks, the higher breeding of humanity, together with the remorseless destruction of all degenerate and parasitic elements, will again make possible on earth that *superfluity of life* out of which the Dionysian condition must again proceed. I promise *a tragic age* the supreme art in the affirmation of life.⁵²

That kind of Dionysian philosophy which Nietzsche describes above is a kind of vitalism. It is what Nietzsche calls affirmative pessimism, pessimism of affirmation out of the spirit of life – the only temperament proper for the future philosopher, artist and reformer. This 'superfluity of life' and its celebration, in the form of either Dionysian joy or Zarathustra's child-like innocence is central to Nietzsche's vitalistic philosophy and serves as a critical response to the modern condition of nihilism and its affects. As he tells us in *Beyond Good and Evil* this 'superfluity' possesses of 'formative, curative, moulding and restorative forces', 'a sign of great health' which 'grants to the free spirit the dangerous privilege of living *experimentally* and of being allowed to offer itself to adventure.'

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

⁵¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 259.

⁵² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is* (London, New York: Penguin Classic Series, 1992), 'The Birth of Tragedy', 4, p. 52.

In this Dionysian-like, affirmative form of Nietzschean politics one finds much in connection to the question about *The Eagle and the Serpent*'s cultural politics and the kind of Nietzschean aesthetics it advocated. *The Eagle and the Serpent* was aimed at 'Free Spirits or Spirits Struggling to be Free' and as the editor declared in the issue [...] it was committed to 'a philosophy of life'. Its basic creed and aim was:

Three thousand years of sorrowful experience make the foregoing propositions too evident to us. The object of *THE EAGLE AND THE SERPENT* is to make them equally evident to all mankind. We stand for the art of life and the life of art – we stand for that freedom which is the life of art and can alone teach us the art of living. When we have converted a body of believers to these views, then our mission will have – begun.⁵³

The periodical's philosophy of life has a number of points and applications. Its repeated references to a philosophy of will, love and life, all attempt to approach the larger problems with which it is concerned, namely, its concern with modern culture and the modern individual. Articles on egoism and aesthetics, egoism and the 'sex question' suggest some of the various applications Nietzschean egoism might have in current matters, art, politics, aesthetics, and ethics. Editorial notes such as 'the Infernal Feminine, or, Love as War',⁵⁴ and various extracts from Nietzsche's works followed by questions and topics such as 'Should Philosophers Marry?', or, 'A Sexual Appreciation of Luther, Goethe, Kant, Schopenhauer',⁵⁵ suggest this kind of affirmative joyful ethic. In them Nietzschean egoism is seen as a kind of philosophy of joy and of life, advancing an ethic of commitment. It is a creed which advances perpetual creation, constant self-seeking and demands purpose, knowledge and strength. Egoists should be like Zarathustra's higher men, who do not sacrifice themselves as the herd morality advises them to, and express themselves in opposition to it. A proper egoist should be like Nietzsche's 'higher men', an

⁵³ McCall, 'Our Creed and Aim', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 September 1898, p. 50.

⁵⁴ Volcano, 'The Infernal Feminine, or, Love as War', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 September 1898, p. 51.

⁵⁵ 'Extracts from Nietzsche', 1 October 1900, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, pp. 15-16.

individual who does not see reality as a burden or as something to be lamented and is respectively in harmony with it. As a higher man and free spirit he should believe neither in guilt nor would he look to the heavens for a “thou shalt – he is not a believer.’ He echoes Zarathustra’s doctrine of the body and selfhood: ‘Ego, sayest thou, and art proud of that word. But the greater thing – in which thou are unwilling to believe – is thy body with its great sagacity; it saith not “ego”, but does it.’⁵⁶ This image of Zarathustra as a prophet of affirmation, self-creation and vitalism, and respectively of Nietzsche as a prophet of the new age, seems to have supplanted the periodical’s broader concern with modern culture, supporting its project of self-education and inspiring modern free spirits to live experimentally and courageously during times of transition. An example of this can be seen in the December issue, 1898. In an article by Barnhill, ‘The Religion of Egoism’ we read, ‘[b]y the egoist-philosopher (Hail to thee! death-dedicated apostle!) we mean the man who has the courage to proclaim the law of universal gravitation in ethics – that each ego is the centre towards which all things gravitate’, and goes on to say:

EMERSON the Egoist said: ‘All laws are laughable but those which men make for themselves.’ It is time to say that all Bibles are to be rejected save that which we write for ourselves. The Bible of Jesus, of Goethe, of Heine, of Emerson, of Whitman, of Thoreau, of Nietzsche, – all these may help us somewhat but we must have pride enough to demand a Bible not borrowed from the neighbours. A slave might rest content with a Bible writtten by another, the free man must write his own. Vicarious suffering, vicarious salvation are out of date [...]. The Egoist learns to say: – ‘You too, have a divine record’ [...] we demand an original, an egoistic, salvation [...]. Jove and the lions never weep, but often laugh. ‘The artist only reaches the last summit of his greatness [...] when he learns how to laugh at himself – he alone can go forward.’⁵⁷

The periodical not only preached but also attempted to put this kind of affirmative Nietzscheanism into practice. It recognized that for such a reform to take place, a

⁵⁶ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 14.

⁵⁷ McCall, ‘The Religion of Egoism (I.) A Prayer for more Bitterness. (II.) A Bible not Borrowed from the Neighbours. (III.) An Egoist’s Confession of Faith in Himself. (IV.) The Calvary of Egoism’, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 December, 1898, pp. 82-85 (p. 82).

new form of social education should be provided, one which would involve the assessment of prevailing norms and evaluations, while enhancing the development and advocacy of alternative modes of social life. An upheaval in ideological values was what was truly needed and this could happen only via a quiet revolt, a slow and gradual revolution in the ways the individual perceived himself and his surroundings. In accordance with such a vision, *The Eagle and the Serpent* proposed the forming of 'people's universities', or 'Nietzsche clubs' whose members would meet fortnightly or monthly for mutual discussion with the aim to 'study the problems of social reform and the subject of Egoism'. The issue from June 1898 provides a list of the newly-founded 'egoist clubs' and gives names and addresses of their secretaries:

Malfew Wilkes, 11, Hounds Gate, Nottingham. W. Robinson, 135, Willoughby Street, Bew Lenton, Nottingham, Leonard Hall, 43, Alma Street, Eccles., near Manchester. H. M. Reade 27, Walter Street, Hightown, Manchester. J. N. Green, 40, Leyton Park Road, Leyton, Essex. W. J. Robins, 195, Polygon, St. Pancras, London. C. Moorhouse, 11, Handley Street, Sheffield, Henry Bool, 69, E. State Street, Ithaca, N.Y., U.S.A. J. Greevz Fisher, 78, Chapel Allerton, Leeds. Messrs. Jaggard's Library, 39, Renshaw Street, Liverpool.⁵⁸

This is a long and impressive list and includes the names of the people interested in forming egoist-Nietzsche clubs in cities like Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Nottingham, London. Such projects were interestingly commented upon by men of letters such as Shaw himself, who in a letter of support to the journal in the November 1898 wrote:

[...] It is noteworthy that the Fabian society was formed by the division of a pre-existing group into two sections; one, the Fabian society, taking up the political and economic side of the social question; and the other, then called the Fellowship of the New Life, and still in existence as the New Fellowship, taking up the ethical and philosophical side. The result is noteworthy. The Fabian society has exercised a great influence, and has attained, perhaps, the maximum of success possible to such organizations. The New Fellowship, though composed largely of the same men, has exercised practically no influence at all, because it had really no new ideas [...]. It was not until after 1889, when Ibsen and

⁵⁸ McCall, 'An Egoist University and Circulating Library', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 June 1898, p. 43.

Nietzsche began to make themselves felt, that the really new idea of challenging the validity of idealism and duty, and bringing Individualism round again on a higher plane, showed signs of being able to rally to it men beneath the rank of the geniuses who had been feeling their way towards it for centuries. Had the Fellowship started with any glimmering of this conception, their history might have been different. As it is, seems to me quite possible that a Nietzsche society might hit the target that the Fellows of the New Life missed, and might repeat on the ethical plane the success of the Fabian society on the political one.

Yours faithfully, G. B. Shaw.⁵⁹

Both Thatcher and Bridgewater quote Shaw's letter in full and take it to be the inspiration behind Orage's and Jackson's formation of the Leeds Arts Club four years later.⁶⁰ Shaw hoped that this form of 'Nietzsche societies' might provide the right balance between the ethical and philosophic tenets of societies such as the Fellowship and the vision of political renewal shared by Fabians. In such examples like Shaw's one sees how Nietzschean egoism was taken to provide a kind of alternative social discourse, one likely to reconcile the intrinsic tensions between politics and culture.

The Eagle and the Serpent came to an abrupt end in 1903. However this is no indication that the periodical had not been on the whole successful in its program and cause. *The Eagle and the Serpent* was the first London little periodical which identified in Nietzsche an individualistic element. It supplied the basic material for an engagement in the philosophical parameters of egoism (by way of Nietzsche) and its possible applications. Its aim was to propagandise egoism, individualism, and freedom of expression, not just become the mouthpiece a particular ideology and was tolerant of social heterogeneity and difference. The emphasis was on an ethic of creativity, insurrectionism and will power: it was the individual first and foremost that ought to realize his potential and seek his liberation, his self-amelioration,

⁵⁹ G. B. Shaw, Letter, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 April 1898, 'Nietzsche as a Social Reformer: Or, the Joys of Fleecing and Being Fleeced', p. 27.

⁶⁰ For more see Thatcher, pp. 186-187, as well as his account of Holbrook Jackson and the Leeds Arts Club, pp. 233-235; Bridgewater, pp. 64-65.

through the cultivation of his mind and soul. Its principal task was to find a means to express a new social ethic which would stand for the liberation of the human mind from all forms of authority except that of the self – a task which it thought would be best achieved via a Zarathustrian ethic. In this respect, its advocating of Nietzschean egoism as an agent of social formation may have been meant not as an alternative ideology, but as an alternative to ideology; an ethic co-opted by radicals, anarchists, and artists alike, centering only on the promotion of the very ethic of individualism and freedom it envisioned. My aim in this chapter has been to provide a basis for a discussion of this unique variety of egoism and its related Nietzschean radicalism. My aim in the following chapters will be to demonstrate that an interest in these radical and egoistic elements did not disappear with the periodical. Although its project of ‘saving the world’ remained incomplete, this element of egoism seems to have continued to exercise its influence upon Nietzsche’s functioning within radical and literary circles. Elements of its radical legacy seem to be retained in later Nietzschean forums like the Leeds Arts Club, which in 1903 would launch its own project of a Nietzschean ‘underground’. And fifteen years later *The Eagle and the Serpent* would again appear in regular advertisements in *The Egoist* which offered bound files for sale alongside contemporary literature such as Wyndham Lewis’s *Tarr* and James Joyce’s *A Portrait*.

1.2 Holbrook Jackson and The Leeds Arts Club as an Early Platform of G. B. Shaw’s and Nietzsche’s Philosophic Outlook

As pointed out before, the central aim of this chapter is the examination of Nietzsche’s radical legacy in the context of the emerging ‘new age’. In the previous section we saw how as early as 1898 *The Eagle and the Serpent* combined

individualist radicalism with an interpretation of Nietzsche allied to the periodical's broader vision of cultural and social education. Following my analysis of *fin de siècle* periodical culture, this part begins with a discussion of the growing fascination with Nietzsche beyond the space of this particular periodical into the cultural field and the broader circulation of Nietzschean themes among British left-leaning circles. After the demise of the periodical an interest in Nietzschean radicalism continued and it again appears in such artistic coteries as the Leeds Arts Club. In this context, Nietzsche was ideologically embraced by some socialists for whom Nietzsche's affirmative and engaging rhetoric became synonymous not only with rebellion and the destruction of the old order but also fired their millennial hopes and aspirations about reform and change in the advent of a new age.

Initiated by socialists such as Alfred R. Orage, Holbrook Jackson and their circle of friends, the Leeds Arts Club adopted Nietzsche as a theoretical weapon originally intended to strengthen and provide an inspiration for their overall socialist project of cultural renaissance. In this Arts Club, as I intend to show, we see clear traces of an early type of Nietzscheanism, a Nietzscheanism which advocated a new social ethos of action, vitality and creativity via the cultivation and development of the individual. Jackson and Orage believed that the various social ills of the day could not be fixed through the established political process. They saw reform as possible only through a cultural reevaluation of society as a whole. In addition, they saw culture as integral to the process of regenerating society – culture as a vehicle of re-evaluation and re-construction and their understanding of Nietzsche was inseparable from their belief that economic and political change alone was insufficient to meet the spiritual and social necessities of the coming upheaval.

After an introductory sketch of the history of the Leeds Arts Club, which constituted an early attempt to set up something akin to a 'Nietzsche society' as

proposed by *The Eagle and the Serpent*, I turn my attention to the particular way in which Holbrook Jackson, a Fabian socialist and a co-founder of the club, saw the philosopher. Jackson's championing of a Shavian-Nietzschean anti-bourgeois aesthetic, 'a new modern philosophic egoism'⁶¹ that praised eccentricity, creativity and individuality, is a particularly interesting example of early radical Nietzscheanism, providing links between the early radical Nietzscheanism of the *Eagle and the Serpent* and that of modernist writers such as George Bernard Shaw. Jackson co-opted certain Nietzschean themes in his writings and projects with the purpose of animating a certain new cultural ethos – one particularly close to G. B. Shaw's early assessment of Nietzsche. By interpreting Nietzsche through the modern aesthetic school of Ibsen and Shaw, as well as through the prism of Barnhill's egoism, Jackson hoped to make Nietzsche a source of inspiration for a cultural reassessment of socialism, whose objective was to place the concept of the individual at the centre of any social, cultural, or intellectual betterment.

It was through the enthusiasm and initiative of Alfred. R. Orage and Holbrook Jackson that the Leeds Arts Club came into being. The men met one day in 1900, in Walker's Bookshop at Briggate, Leeds. An account of this is given by Jackson in the preface to his biography of Bernard Shaw:

My dear Orage – You will remember how, some years ago, we were thrown together by the Fates in that smoky chaos which is known to geographers and others as Leeds [...]. It was in a book-shop [...] after a while I heard you throw the intelligence department of the emporium out of gear by inquiring for a volume by a modern writer, well enough known among thoughtful people, but evidently a dark continent to Leeds.⁶²

According to Phillip Mairet, Orage's biographer, Orage was most probably inquiring about the very expensive volume of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Jackson,

⁶¹ Holbrook Jackson, *All Manner of Folk: Interpretations and Studies* (London: Grant Richards, 1912), p. 16.

⁶² Holbrook Jackson, *Bernard Shaw* (London: Grant Richards, 1907), p. 9.

who was himself already a keen Nietzsche enthusiast offered to lend Orage his volume.⁶³ A firm friendship and intellectual partnership would ensue, of which were born the Leeds Arts Club (founded in 1903), the Fabian Arts Club (1907), and *The New Age* (1907).

According to Tom Steele, Orage had taken little notice of Nietzsche's work until he met Jackson, who had himself come across Nietzsche in *The Eagle and the Serpent*.⁶⁴ A lace merchant and a Fabian socialist, with various connections within the Fabian community, Jackson had moved from Liverpool to Leeds a year earlier. Although Leeds was one of the fastest-growing cities in the country, he felt rather dissatisfied with the limited cultural and intellectual resources the place offered to young intellectuals. He felt that in Orage he had found a kindred spirit, one capable of appreciating the impoverished state of the arts and the society in general. Their intellectual kinship was spontaneous.

Soon, a certain circle of friends would be formed around them: young men, socialists, intellectuals and the like, all seeking an outlet for expressing openly and fully their new and controversial ideas on culture and politics. Jackson writes: 'we turned quiet corners of local cafés into temporary forums, often extending the lunch-hour in a way quite heretical in Yorkshire.'⁶⁵ The Leeds Arts Club was born out of these discussions. Jackson conceived the Leeds Arts Club as a cultural soundboard for the disaffected urban intelligentsia, a space for dialogue and self-expression. For him, dialectics, the art of discussion and debate and, by derivation, the investigation of truth by discussion, were an important tool of social reform. Convinced that 'the worship of abstract ideas, be they never so beautiful, must end', and that the 'aim of

⁶³ Philip Mairet, *A. R. Orage: A Memoir* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1936), p. 21.

⁶⁴ Tom Steele, *Alfred Orage and the Leeds Arts Club* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), p. 4.

⁶⁵ *Shaw*, p. 12.

the modern world should be the marriage of idea and action',⁶⁶ he seems to have based his vision of a perfect discussion forum on the timeless ideal of the Athenian Agora. In one of his early critical essays we read:

The aim of the Greeks was to connect ideas with common affairs. That was the meaning of all their great discussions [...]. No thought, not even the most sublime, is complete in itself, and the value of an idea can only be determined by the test of practice.⁶⁷

This idea and the central place accorded to a life of action (as opposed to a life of contemplation and studied abstention) underpin the agenda of the club. Jackson's perception of Nietzsche not as a kind of contemplative anchorite but rather as a philosopher-combatant, an exponent of 'militant personalism',⁶⁸ would develop in parallel with this idea. In addition, Jackson's (and by extension, the club's) advancement of Nietzsche as an antidote to the decadence of middle-class morality would add considerably to the spirit of avant-gardism, eccentricity and insurrection that permeated the club. As Steele points out, Holbrook Jackson always thought that the ostensible, but not admitted aim of the club was to 'reduce Leeds to Nietzscheism'.⁶⁹ The doctrine of the club may be summed up in its syllabus. It proposed to study 'the ideas expressed in art and philosophy, religion, and politics, and to consider these ideas in their actual bearing upon social life'.⁷⁰ The underlying principles upon which the club was established, particularly its urgent demand to insert ideas into daily life and to promote 'constructive', edifying criticism 'deep into the evils of modern urban life', were made plain in its manifesto. It stresses

[...] the association of art and philosophy with actual life [...] however destructive its criticism of modern social conditions may be, their final aim is not destruction but construction.⁷¹

⁶⁶ *All Manner of Folk*, p. 23.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁶⁹ Steele, p. 68.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁷¹ The motto of the club was printed on the back page of the club's regular lecture program. Program for the lecture given by Shaw in 1909. Leeds Public Library. The Leeds Arts Club Archive.

As Steele notes, ‘part of the Club’s excitement was its dedication to “life as experiment”’, which was incidentally the title of one of Jackson’s talks to the club. ‘No Victorian Shibboleth, it seemed was safe [...]. All values were to be transvalued.’⁷² Overall, the Club expressed the tendency of young intellectuals to depict themselves as a kind of secret intellectual aristocracy, who together embarked upon the task of invigorating and reshaping the current conceptions of morals, society, and ethics. Phillip Mairet’s memoir of Orage and Jackson’s early days in Leeds confirms this:

There was plenty of real gaiety among the men, doubtless encouraged by Nietzsche’s *Joyful Wisdom*. But behind such words as those above, half-jest and half-earnest, there were real moral conflicts, personal ethical dilemmas, and – in the atmosphere the club produced – not a little flouting of conventions and libertarian experience.⁷³

Intended as a radical alternative against academicism on the one hand and philistine mentality on the other, the group sought to introduce modern writers such as Nietzsche, Ibsen, and Bernard Shaw and to provide a public voice for non-conformist ideas. For Jackson one of the central aims of the club was to attack pedantic philosophy and academic art and, equally, to emphasize the importance of applying artistic ideas to life.⁷⁴ There were special nights when G. K. Chesterton, Edward Carpenter or George Bernard Shaw would attend and give lectures. Mairet adds:

For the Leeds Arts Club was a sensational success. The local *bourgeoisie* were *flabbergasted* when the shocking views of such as Nietzsche, Ibsen, and Shaw were acclaimed in their midst by this heterodox seminary, and advocated with a mixture of aestheticism, moral earnestness, and egoistic flippancy. They went away horrified, and yet returned again unable to withstand the temptation of such outrageousness.⁷⁵

⁷² Steele, p. 258.

⁷³ Mairet, p. 25.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Such success inspired people in neighbouring towns, such as Bradford and Hull, to form their own clubs.⁷⁶ Isabella Ford, the pioneer socialist and feminist, was one of the Club's earliest members and for a while, a leading member of its committee.⁷⁷ As her biographer notes, the Leeds Arts Club encouraged her to share her views on both socialism and literature. In this Arts Club she found a congenial environment for developing and expanding her ideas. It 'gave her a much-needed breathing space at a time when her life as a political agitator, was becoming more and more hectic.'⁷⁸ Her interest in literature and particularly in Ibsen and modern drama (whom she regarded as a forerunner of socialist thought) found an enthusiastic and well-prepared audience.⁷⁹

According to Mary Gawthorpe, another early member, 'it was stimulating, refreshing and nourishing to be a member of the Leeds Arts Club, circa 1904.'⁸⁰ Gawthorpe was a Yorkshire born woman of working-class background and, like Orage, a primary schoolteacher. Arguably her involvement in it had a strong influence upon her later development. Gawthorpe, both as a suffragette and political activist, as well as the founder and co-editor (together with Dora Marsden) of the anarcho-feminist review *The Freewoman*, was energized by her early experiences in the club. *The Freewoman*, as Chapter Three reveals sustains important connections between the early forms of radical Nietzscheanism, feminism and modern literature. Alongside its project of political and cultural emancipation, the journal advocated a certain militant individualism. It may be argued that the club may have been instrumental in arousing Gawthorpe's interest in the social and aesthetic aspects of individualism, an interest which is stated in one of her letters to Marsden where she

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 26.

⁷⁷ She was a close friend of Edward Carpenter and member of the ILP. She was a socialist activist, as well as a novelist and journalist.

⁷⁸ June Hannam, *Isabella Ford* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 88.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 88.

⁸⁰ Mary Gawthorpe, *Up Hill to Holloway* (Penobscot, Me: Traversity Press, 1962), p. 197.

contemplates the radical agenda of *The Freewoman*.⁸¹ In this letter, alongside her suggestion to corroborate with Huntly Carter and Allen Upward (both *New Age* connections) as well as Dr. Whitby and Rebecca West, she sketches out the new shape of the periodical as a vehicle of individualism: 'If I had the means and you were not averse from the proposals I would make *The Freewoman* a fighting weapon for pure disinterested individualism on such lines as this.'⁸²

While it is Orage who is traditionally credited with developing the Nietzschean side of the Club, Jackson, in practice, played an equally active role. In her memoirs, Gawthorpe writes: 'Holbrook Jackson [was the one] responsible for introducing both Nietzsche and the volumes [of Nietzsche] to the Leeds Arts Club.'⁸³ For individuals like Gawthorpe, the radical activism that Jackson's Nietzscheanism typified would perhaps have seemed a more attractive alternative to Orage's mystical interpretation. It must be pointed out, that while both Jackson and Orage found in Nietzsche a modern cultural educator, there are important differences in the ways these two men chose to pursue their Nietzscheanism. Orage's would be nourished by an interest in theosophy, and a certain idealistic socialist ethic which reminded G. K. Chesterton of 'W. B. Yeats's own fascination with mysticism.'⁸⁴ Jackson's, on the other hand,

⁸¹ As Bruce Clarke points out, despite Gawthorpe's inability to take up any major editorial responsibilities for *The Freewoman* due to poor health caused mainly by the severe maltreatment she endured during the WSPU demonstrations, she continued to do much work behind the scenes. Her connections with A. R. Orage and his circle turned out especially useful. According to Clarke, Gawthorpe played a 'pivotal early role in moving Marsden toward the literary orbit of *The New Freewoman*.' Bruce Clarke, *Dora Marsden and Early Modernism: Gender, Individualism, Science* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), p. 91.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

⁸³ Gawthorpe, p. 201.

⁸⁴ Orage was an active member of the ILP Club where he was a popular lecturer and debater. Together with socialism and political journalism he would develop a parallel interest in Theosophy and would become a prominent speaker in the theosophical platforms of the North. As Pierson notes, 'like [Edward] Carpenter and others in the socialist movement he was blending the mysticism of the east with the evolutionary optimism of late Victorian culture.' Stanley Pierson, *British Socialists: The Journey from Fantasy to Politics* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 36. Spiritualism, psychology and politics would mix in a unique way within Orage's type of Nietzscheanism, producing a strongly visionary philosophy. His first book on Nietzsche, *Consciousness, Animal, Human, and Superman* (London: Theosophical Publishing, 1907) was based on a series of lectures given to the Theosophical Lodges of Leeds and

emphasized the radical, artistic and individualistic side of Nietzsche's philosophy. A possible source for this might have been *The Eagle and the Serpent* to which Jackson subscribed. Another source was his friendship with George Bernard Shaw, whom he must have met through the Fabian Society.

As Jackson admitted later in his seminal study *The Eighteen Nineties: A Review of the Art and Ideas at the Close of the Century*, Nietzsche was seen as a reaction of dismay and agitation of the younger generation against the 'soul-sickness' of a *fin-de-siècle* culture of decadence.⁸⁵ In his view, Nietzsche and, in particular, Nietzschean egoism, would express the new generation's search for alternatives to European decadence. He notes that, as early as the turn of the century, '[Nietzsche's] idea that the highest of all things is not mankind but the self, the individual ego' was an important source of inspiration. Jackson credits Nietzsche alongside Stirner and Ibsen with introducing this new belief in the self. He says:

The decadence was a form of soul-sickness [...]. But there was also another form of the soul's unrest which sprang out of an excessive vitality straining at the leash of custom. It was the unrest of an age which had grown too big for its boots.⁸⁶

For Jackson, this literary tradition in general and Nietzsche in particular expressed a demand for 'new conceptions of life and morality and mankind', the unrest of the age', its need to redefine existing values.⁸⁷ In addition, Jackson saw Nietzschean egoism as a significant force to be taken into account. This we can see from both his critical essays from the period, and his involvement in the Club's aesthetic manifesto. Although there are interesting correspondences between

Manchester. For Orage the conception of Nietzschean 'Overman' came to express a conviction of a higher state of being and awareness. Orage's Nietzscheanism is a fairly well worked line of research. See Tom Steele, *Alfred Orage and The Leeds Arts Club*; Stanley Pierson, *British Socialists: The Journey from Fantasy to Politics*; and Tom H. Gibbons, *Rooms in the Darwin Hotel: Studies in English Literary Criticism and Ideas, 1880-1920* (Nedlands, W. A.: University of Western Australia Press, 1973).

⁸⁵ *The Eighteen Nineties*, p. 160.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 160.

Jackson's appropriation of the philosopher and the Nietzschean egoism of *The Eagle and the Serpent* – his would be of a less anarchistic kind – consistent with his broader socialist program. Less interested in the political side of Nietzsche, he placed the emphasis on the aesthetic and cultural value of his philosophy, ultimately choosing to read him through the lens of the radical egoism of Ibsen and Shaw.

Man and Superman, G.B. Shaw's most serious attempt towards a study of the Nietzschean concepts of the Overman and the will-to-power, was published in 1903, the year the Leeds Arts Club opened its doors. Jackson, who was developing a reputation as a literary critic and a free-lance journalist, was a personal friend of Shaw and later his first authorized biographer. Shaw, for whom socialism involved far more than a new economic and political scheme, had something of an established reputation within this circle as a schismatic. As Ian Britain in *Fabianism and Culture: A Study in British Socialism and the Arts, c. 1884-1918* notes, Shaw's high position in the hierarchy of the [Fabian] society, would not stop his rallying against his fellow-Fabians, whom he often accused of 'philistinism'. Shaw's attack was primarily directed against what he saw as the 'Fabian Society's restricted political scope which seemed to neglect altogether such areas as culture and the arts'.⁸⁸ Shaw's letter to *The Eagle and the Serpent*, in which he supports the periodical's proposal of Nietzsche societies, also makes a similar point about the need to consider integrating arts, philosophy with politics and social life. For some of the more artistically inclined Fabians, like Jackson and Shaw, neither the Webb's 'scientific' brand of Socialism nor their own conception of reforming society by gradual humanitarian state legislation appeared tractable or effective without a parallel emphasis on culture and education. Jackson made a related point about function, arguing that a politico-economic socialist scheme would be insufficient without the

⁸⁸ Ian Britain, *Fabianism and Culture: A Study in British Socialism and the Arts, c. 1884-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 9.

involvement of arts and culture. In a letter to the secretary of the society, Edward Pease, Jackson complains that he 'had always felt that the society had focused upon the scientific and political aspects of socialist propaganda at the expense of Arts and Philosophy'. In this letter, he claims that

[the society's] potential had been narrowed by a permeating traditional atmosphere characterising society's Executive; the higher echelons of the society whereas having developed a sound socialist attitude towards politics and sociology refused to do the same for the domain of arts.⁸⁹

According to Jackson, the two paths to solving this problem were Shaw's socially conscious aesthetic and Nietzsche. Jackson saw Shaw and, by extension, Nietzsche as the advocates of a new philosophy of '*vitalized action*', a philosophy capable of providing answers to the problems posed by the modern social system, 'which had become a chaos and a desolation, as our urban surroundings constantly reminded us'.⁹⁰ In the context of the Leeds Arts Club, these two directions became inextricably entwined through the kind of aesthetic Orage and Jackson promoted. As Mairet notes, 'their project was for a movement of cultural reform. It was to be primarily aesthetic in its motives, but with much more far-reaching aims.'⁹¹ While Orage was elaborating his Nietzscheanism mainly through his interest in mysticism and psychology, Jackson sought to animate the Club's vision of aesthetic reform via a Shaw-Nietzsche alliance. Jackson's early determination to advance Shaw as the champion of socially conscious modern art, counterposed to both the bourgeois culture and the urban mentality, coexisted with his Nietzscheanism.

⁸⁹ It is important to note here that the Fabian Arts Club, which had been founded on similar principles by Orage and Jackson in 1907, was a further crystallization of this shared desire for a forum where the role of arts and culture could be discussed. Mairet informs us that a special Fabian Arts Group was founded which held its meetings in Clifford's Inn and at a room in Fleet Street. Holbrook Jackson became honorary secretary. The membership included those Fabians who were somewhat disaffected with the Webbs's ideas: Bernard Shaw, Sydney Olivier, H. G. Wells. Lowes Dickinson, Aylmer Maude, Gerald Gould, and Dr. Eder, were some of its prominent members. Most of them gave lectures, as did star guests like W. B. Yeats, Belloc, G. K. Chesterton, and Professor Lethaby. Despite its success, this Arts group's independent and anti-traditional tendencies would soon cause too much discomfort to the parent party, and swift action was taken to break off its official connection with the club. Mairet, p. 36.

⁹⁰ Shaw, p. 12.

⁹¹ Mairet, p. 22.

One of the emphases of the Club was the promotion of modern drama, which for Jackson held a particular significance.⁹² Jackson emphasized the function of the theatrical medium as a social force, a useful tool of education and political change, a potential 'vehicle of social reform' and presented Shaw as a pioneer of the New Drama movement. On the 5th December 1904 he delivered a talk on Bernard Shaw which intended as a kind of introduction to 'a radically new cultural politics'. From the surviving programs (currently in the Leeds Public Library), it appears that Jackson's was interested in studying the role held by Shaw's drama with an emphasis on reform in private and public life. From looking at the material in the Leeds Arts Club Archive, it seems that Jackson's continued to promote Shaw's new drama even after 1907, when he and Orage moved to London. Although a year earlier Jackson had resigned from the post of Honorary Secretary (a place soon after taken by A. W. Waddington and Miss A. K. Kennedy), he continued to advocate Shaw's theatre as the wellspring of a new radical cultural aesthetic. A programme from 1909, 10th December, announces a lecture by George Bernard Shaw on 'Art and the Nation'.⁹³ This lecture was given in the University Hall, College Road, Leeds and was chaired by Jackson. The programme is furnished with an introduction which describes Shaw as one of the 'most original, the most fascinating and the most provocative of contemporary minds'. He is praised as having established a 'new tradition [...] [of] social theatre'; 'his plays, novels, essays, and lectures are all suggestions for a way out.' Jackson saw that Shaw's theatre was a comprehensive criticism of the modern social system, a 'fearless' and 'honest' one, an aesthetic medium bold and strong in its devotion to realism and modernity. This modern, anti-idealistic and anti-

⁹² Steele also mentions that 'it was through this idea that play-writing and production became important activities, leading to the Club's sponsoring a Playgoers society in 1907 for the promotion of drama and Opera and eventually in 1925 Leeds Civic Playhouse', pp. 70-71.

⁹³ Lecture Program, G. B. Shaw, 'Art and the Nation', 10 December 1909, Leeds Public Library. The Leeds Arts Club Archive.

traditionalist aesthetic would enable the audience to ‘look at our age in this frank way and not through the eyes of historic myth, literary convention or outworn tradition.’ This was a eulogy to Shaw in which the latter’s socially conscious aesthetic was regarded as a valuable ally against the ‘ugliness, wastefulness, and the cruelties of our social system.’

In works such as *All Manner of Folk: Interpretations and Studies* as well as *George Bernard Shaw*, Nietzsche is primarily interpreted through the prism of philosophic egoism adopted by affiliated thinkers such as Ibsen and Shaw.⁹⁴ All three thinkers are valued as principal examples of a type of new philosophic ‘militant personalism’, which, far from being academic, ‘laughs at all theories which will not stand the test of personal practice [...] it believes in action, in living its philosophy and practicing its idealism.’⁹⁵ As Jackson explains, ‘militant egoism’ signified a new type of modernist philosophic egoism, an avowedly dynamic one where mere philosophical speculation and discipleship would be discarded. This kind of individualism also underpins Jackson’s thoughts regarding contemporary art criticism and the overall judgement of the value and quality of art. He writes:

Criticism is the art of comparing the ideas and actions of others with one’s own, and whether it be personal or impersonal it is always in the nature of the confession of self on the part of the critic. Some critics have been fully conscious of this natural outcome of their art. The well-known words of Anatole France will come readily to the mind. ‘As I understand it’, he says, ‘and as you allow me to practice it’, criticism, like philosophy and history, is a sort of romance, and all romance, rightly taken, is an autobiography.⁹⁶

And concludes: ‘It is not my intention to propagate a doctrine or to seek converts to a point of view; my desire is merely to indicate a process in the psychology of

⁹⁴ Opening with a passage from Nietzsche *All Manner of Folk* is a highly intuitive critical study of literary figures such as Poe, Whitman, Carpenter, and Thoreau. Jackson devotes a whole chapter to Nietzsche, whom he considers in the light of this philosophical and literary tradition.

⁹⁵ *All Manner of Folk*, p. 17.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

personality.⁹⁷ From the above it is evident that Jackson recognizes the subjective element in all knowledge, philosophy, history, and, in extension, in art and aesthetic criticism – while stressing the role of individual psychology in the process of interpretation and reflection. Talking about the need to revolutionize art criticism in light of new modern aesthetic currents, Jackson discusses the value of an aesthetic that could potentially find a way of harmonizing the two realms of contemplation and action, idea and practice. The new artistic attitude is embodied in Bernard Shaw and in particular in the emphasis he puts on action rather than on contemplation. According to Jackson, Shaw's critique of reason,⁹⁸ his view of the intellect and morality as a phenomenon limiting the free exercise of thought, and, in turn, his advocacy of a 'return to the instinctive life',⁹⁹ serves to introduce a new aesthetic which suggests new directions at imagining and constructing reality. Jackson sees this new modern aesthetic most explicitly embodied in Bernard Shaw, whom he sees as the exponent of a new individualistic art of performance, action, and experimentation.

These associations between Shaw and modern aesthetics are further pursued and systematized in his book on Shaw, a study meant primarily as an exegesis to this new philosophic and aesthetic outlook that the dramatist proposed.¹⁰⁰ In it Jackson sets his argumentation primarily through a Nietzschean theoretical framework to advance Shaw as an exponent of a new socially conscious individualistic aesthetic.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 18.

⁹⁸ Jackson writes in *Shaw*: 'Shaw, recognizing the errors of the age of reason, advocates the era of the will. Just as we must look upon the institutions as the tools of a generation to be discarded or improved upon by succeeding generations, so must we recognise that the intellect and its methods of expression are, in the same way, means of life, and not ends in themselves', pp. 232-233.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 225.

¹⁰⁰ Shaw had authorized Orage and Jackson to write a critical biography of him, although eventually the book appeared under Jackson's name only. Their shared vision of politics and aesthetics is crystallized in this part-critical study, part-biographical venture, which was simultaneously a tribute to Shaw as 'Social Playwright', Shaw as 'Fabian', and Shaw as '(Dionysian) Philosopher'. Jackson was purposely recruited by Shaw to help propagandise for him, and this critical study is evidence of that, with Shaw co-ordinating the publication and providing meticulous corrections before its final publication.

According to Jackson Shaw's drama followed the tradition of Ibsen and Nietzsche and was destined to merge together these writers' aesthetic into a coherent system.

According to the critic, Shaw's plays were not merely social criticism – instead they were meant to introduce a new kind of philosophy. In this critical study, Shaw emerges as an egoistic philosopher, a thinker of a new, Dionysian order, preoccupied with life and its essence. According to Jackson, Shaw's social theatre would be part of this tradition which if 'not exactly *beyond good and evil*, is at least beyond any good and evil other than that which is generated in *the individual*.'¹⁰¹ Rather than simply a socialist dramatist, Jackson presents Shaw as a new type of iconoclastic reformer, who like Nietzsche is not afraid to philosophise with a hammer:

Many of those who appreciate his ideas as well as his wit complain at times that Shaw is more destructive than constructive [...] the modern reformer is of necessity an iconoclast first and a builder afterwards. But there is plenty of evidence in Shaw's case at least that iconoclasm is followed immediately by construction.¹⁰²

Jackson's analysis sought to pinpoint the individualistic, unconventional and radical aspects of Shaw's aesthetic ethic and his theorizing was heavily inspired by a Nietzschean idiom. 'The Philosopher' chapter examines Shaw's philosophical system in detail, paying particular attention to the notions of 'Life Force' and 'world-will' with recurrent allusions to Nietzschean theory.

In particular, Nietzsche is linked with such Shavian characters as Dudgeon and Tanner, who are contrasted with the cast of 'Ibsen's plays, which depict and symbolize the net of convention and destiny in which all men are caught. [...] Bernard Shaw's [...] characters have tasted with more appreciation the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil.' The critic adds: 'They don't only taste, but are inclined to enjoy. Shaw's philosophy is the expression of this attitude towards life.'¹⁰³ In his

¹⁰¹ *Shaw*, p. 30.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

view, Shaw's conception of life is akin to Nietzsche's, for whom life is overcoming, the transformation and constant experiment with itself.

In this study, Jackson made creative use of the Nietzschean concepts of the will-to-power and the *Übermensch*, by attempting to make them speak for a new vitalistic aesthetic, as initiated by Shaw. He saw the Shavian concept of the Life Force as the most profound idea in this philosophy, an idea which Shaw shares with Nietzsche. 'The central idea in his philosophy is the conception of the underlying energy of life as the world-will. He has conceived this as a force, the Life Force – as he calls it – eternally seeking expression by instruments of greater certainly and power.'¹⁰⁴

In particular he relates Nietzsche's concept of the will-to-power with Shaw's advocacy of a 'return to the instinctive life' as well as with the latter's repudiation of moralism as expressed in the form of 'Duty':

The Life Force grows out of order following upon right action [...]. His [Shaw's] repudiation of duty makes it clear that right action is not something following upon authoritative concepts. It does not spring out of 'ought' or 'should.' And, on the other hand, his negation of all formulas – the golden rule is that there are no golden rules' – makes for the abolition of all arbitrary distinctions in such considerations. It actually throws the thought of action upon the individual. Instead of saying to man, as the moralists did, 'Do what you ought to do', he says, 'Do what you want to do' [...] the repudiation of Duty is the first step towards progress.¹⁰⁵

For Jackson this philosophy of self-reliance and self-reflection of Nietzsche and Shaw could help towards a personal and cultural development, through an insistence on individual creativity and experimentation. 'It is important', he writes, that 'we should be ourselves, especially in an age like the present, when the majority of people are content to live second-hand lives.'¹⁰⁶ For Jackson, Bernard Shaw's vitalism advocates 'as boldly as Nietzsche' a philosophy of desire and instinct. He

¹⁰⁴ Shaw, p. 202.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 220.

¹⁰⁶ *All Manner of Folk*, p. 14.

sees both as being exponents of a new philosophy that affirms action, experimentation and joy – one that counteracts decadence, passivity and ‘negation’, as opposed to Schopenhauer, who ‘did not imagine that life was the remedy, but death.’¹⁰⁷ In that sense, Shaw’s advocacy of the concept of the Life Force and of a return to the instinctive life is the recognition that the only genuine motive force of life lies in instinct. ‘Man’, he argues ‘by substituting duties for instincts, has actually sterilized life’s power of growth – has thrown the Life Force into the necessity of having to perpetually repeat the same forms instead of creating new ones.’¹⁰⁸ ‘Therefore, it is the business of man to become conscious of the aim of life by contemplation and experiment. He must not seek the fruits of action, but action itself.’¹⁰⁹ In *Shaw*, Jackson professed that what Shaw’s philosophical attitude would have established was ‘a cultivation of the will for change’, as well as ‘the critical sense of the individual’, both necessary components ‘for the social mechanism to be activated.’¹¹⁰ This social aesthetic was not meant to preach in the sense in which the moralist preaches. Its value rather rests in its potential to inspire, vitalize the modern individual to re-evaluate his current condition, and provide a stimulus for arousing the individual to action. In an article in *Rhythm*, ‘A Plea for Revolt in Attitude’ Jackson envisions a new kind of modern art which takes its cue from Nietzsche, for whom art served as a kind of instrument, a ‘stimulus, a sort of tonic of the will’, and Bergson, who sees art as an instrument of suggestion:

This new artistic attitude will recognize art both as an instrument of suggestion and a stimulus of the will, the spirit, the imagination and it will demand from it the transference of its suggestion and stimulus to its own actions. Those who adopt the attitude will no longer content themselves with praise of art. If art suggests anything and they like it,

¹⁰⁷ *Shaw*, p. 210.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

they will seek the thing suggested. Thus will art be re-valued, and the new value will not end in a dream but in an action.¹¹¹

In the second part of this chapter I have addressed some of the main reasons why Nietzsche came to be endorsed by certain active socialists. The Leeds Arts Club is an example of such an endorsement. There, Nietzschean motifs came to be incorporated into the agenda of radical socialism. I have examined the Leeds Arts Club as an early example of Nietzschean activity in England and the growing appreciation that socialists like Jackson expressed for Nietzsche's radical philosophy. The Leeds Arts Club represents an early attempt of young intellectuals to engraft Nietzsche into an agenda of cultural and intellectual radicalism. It was a group of individuals who saw in culture, Nietzsche and the arts an ideal accompaniment to their dream of social regeneration. This kind of radical Nietzscheanism was often preoccupied with overcoming the legacy of an overtly moral Victorian age, plotting the overthrow of long-established idols and old ways of life. For some more artistically oriented socialists, such as Jackson, Nietzsche provided a language that helped him give expression to the more radical, intellectual and aesthetic side of their socialism. In particular, his understanding of Nietzsche not only as a kind of philosopher of action, will, and individuality but also as a kind of cultural educator greatly supplied the dream of cultivating a new self-willed socialist consciousness. Nietzscheanism of this sort then proposes Nietzsche both as a kind of educator and tonic. Strengthened by the social vision of Shaw it was supposed to provide a certain social remedy to the chaos and morbidity of modern life. Jackson's own advancement of a Shavian-Nietzschean engaged aesthetic hailed the virtues of experimentation in life and art as the proper path towards individual self-advancement.

¹¹¹ Holbrook Jackson, 'A Plea for Revolt in Attitude', *Rhythm*, 1 (1911), 6-10 (p. 10).

1.3 From Ego-*Mania* to Ego-*Latria*: Selected *New Age* Aesthetic and Cultural Responses to Nietzschean Egoism (1907-1921)

The third early principal location of Nietzschean dissemination that I will be discussing is *The New Age* journal, which appeared as Orage and Jackson's joint project in 1907. *The New Age*'s favourable response to Nietzsche takes several forms. There is its close collaboration with some of the key early Nietzscheans. There is the array of articles dealing implicitly or explicitly with Nietzsche. There are recurrent allusions to him and his philosophy in the correspondence columns on cultural, aesthetic, social and political topics. Lastly, there is the form of the periodical itself, its editors' shared commitment to a new cultural aesthetic, a certain ideological imperative going back to the early days of the Leeds Arts Club and the Nietzschean spirit that informed it. In this transition, from the more spatially-specific Nietzscheanism of the Leeds Arts Club coterie to the one underlying the enterprise of *The New Age*, one begins to see, as I will argue, the integration of an earlier socialist ethic into the broader intellectual agenda of modernism, and the subsequent development of Nietzsche's ideas and legacy to later writers and thinkers.

The significance of *The New Age* as a conduit of Nietzschean ideas with literary modernism is recently noticed by Michael Bell, who noted the value of the periodical both as a forum of literary modernism and as key medium for circulating Nietzschean ideas in an English context.¹¹² Indeed in the pages of the periodical we will find a profusion of references to Nietzsche – with Nietzschean concepts informing a number of then-current aesthetic and cultural discourses. However, since it is not possible to discuss all of them here, I have selected four examples which illustrate the existence of vital and explicit connections between Nietzsche, literature,

¹¹² Bell, p. 62.

and culture – particularly in relation to concurrent aesthetic trends and discourses of degeneration/regeneration. There four examples are: George Bernard Shaw's *The Sanity of Art*,¹¹³ a pamphlet study addressing Max Nordau's *Degeneration*; 'Sex and Superman' by Dr. Charles Whitby and Alfred R. Randall related to the issue of the Superman ideal, genius and sexuality;¹¹⁴ Angelo S. Rappoport's article 'Nietzsche, Ibsen, Kierkegaard',¹¹⁵ a favourable study of Nietzschean individualism and its relation to modern culture and aesthetics, approaching it through the tradition of Ibsen and Kierkegaard; and 'Nietzsche Revisited',¹¹⁶ by Janko Lavrin, who finds in Nietzsche's so-called 'pathological subjectivism' his own creative alternative to the degeneration of modern culture. I analyze these articles focusing on their positive response to notions of egoism/individualism which serves to counteract prevalent mainstream ideas of degeneration and decadence – like the ones spawned by Nordau's *Degeneration*. All these *New Age* articles turn Nordau's original conception on its head by exploring the various positive and affirmative uses of Nietzsche's individualism.

For its editors *The New Age* was an attempt to extend their intellectual and professional horizons beyond Leeds. The two men had moved to London as freelance journalists in 1906. A year later, they bought *The New Age*, a small Christian socialist periodical, which had been declared bankrupt earlier that year. They had financial support by G. B. Shaw and Lewis Wallace. Shaw contributed five hundred

¹¹³ George Bernard Shaw, *The Sanity of Art: An Exposure of the Current Nonsense of Artists Being Degenerate* (London: The New Age Press, 1908).

¹¹⁴ Charles J. Whitby, 'Sex and Superman', *The New Age*, 27 April 1911, pp. 621-622; Alfred E. Randall, 'Sex and Superman', *The New Age*, 4 May 1911, pp. 20-22; Charles J. Whitby, 'Sex and Superman', *The New Age*, 11 May 1911, p. 46; Randall E. Alfred, 'Sex and Superman', *The New Age*, 18 May 1911, pp. 69-70; Charles J. Whitby, 'Sex and Superman', *The New Age*, 25 May 1911, pp. 94-95; Charles J. Whitby, 'Sex and Superman', *The New Age*, 29 June 1911, p. 213.

¹¹⁵ Angelo S. Rappoport, 'Ibsen, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard', *The New Age*, 19 September 1908, pp. 408-409; 26 September 1908, pp. 428-429.

¹¹⁶ Janko Lavrin, 'Nietzsche Revisited', *The New Age*, 10 November 1921, pp. 21-22; 24 November 1921, pp. 42-43; 8 December 1921, pp. 65-66; 22 December 1921, pp. 88-90; 9 February 1922, pp. 188-189; 20 April 20 1922, pp. 321-323.

pounds which came from *The Doctor's Dilemma* royalties. Wallace, a financial banker with whom Orage shared theosophical interests, matched his contribution. Shaw's eagerness to be of assistance on this project was not restricted to offering money but at the same time he was reluctant to be publicly associated with the journal. In one of a series of letters to Jackson on this subject from July 1907, he writes: 'Don't put my initials in it. I must not lend my name to an attack on the Cabinet just now.'¹¹⁷

As Pierson has suggested, the establishment of *The New Age* could be seen as an extension of the Leeds Arts Club's effort to nurture a shared discursive space which would enhance man's artistic and spiritual life as well as his economic and political being.¹¹⁸ As Jackson later confessed to Orage, *The New Age* would be a concrete way of advancing their intellectual expedition further: 'We have pitched our tents in London, and our intellectual partnership has been concentrated in a still more practical way in our co-editorship of *The New Age*.'¹¹⁹ The earlier Nietzschean spirit underlay the broader socialist project of the periodical. Some measure of this undercurrent can be drawn from the first editorial by Jackson and Orage, titled 'The Future of the New Age'.¹²⁰ This editorial served as a kind of manifesto for the periodical's future agenda. As self-proclaimed 'genuine philosophic reformers', the editors saw as their chief task the bringing together of a group of individuals who shared an interest in renewing modern ethics, and not necessarily much else. 'First in imagination and then in fact' this was a renewal which had as its basis 'the will of man'. In their manifesto Orage and Jackson dream of *The New Age* as a kind of 'commonwealth of free and responsible individuals'. In keeping with the spirit of the

¹¹⁷ *The Holbrook Jackson Library: A Memorial Catalogue: With an Appreciation by Sir Francis Meynell* (Bishop's Stortford: E. Mathews, 1951), p. 63.

¹¹⁸ Pierson, p. 197.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹²⁰ Holbrook Jackson and Alfred R. Orage, 'The Future of the "New Age"', *The New Age*, 2 May 1907, pp. 8-9.

Leeds Arts Club, the editors insisted in making it a model forum of open discussion and free dialogue. Their aim as stated in their manifesto was to promote a kind of discursive community which far from confining its pages to dogmatic statements would instead invite ‘the services of “men of good intent” of every shade of opinion’.¹²¹ Using a characteristically Nietzschean phraseology, they go on to say:

Believing that the darling object and purpose of the universal will of life is the creation of a race of supremely and progressively intelligent beings, *The New Age* will devote itself to the serious endeavour to co-operate with the purposes of life, and to enlist in that noble service the help of serious students of the new contemplative and imaginative order.¹²²

What this passage seems to suggest is that *The New Age* was informed by an *Übermensch* ethic not unlike the one seen underlying the cultural agenda of the Leeds Arts Club. The two editors seem to have managed to integrate their earlier Nietzschean vision within the cultural (and socialist) agenda of the new periodical, promoting what Ann L. Ardis has described as ‘a neo-Nietzschean view of art and philosophy as vital evolutionary forces’.¹²³ The difference between this periodical and other leftist radical reviews of the time was that from the very beginning Orage’s and Jackson’s vision was less about economics and politics than for a kind of revolution of both the collective and individual spirit. It was about the breeding of a modern social conscience, which, through the ‘great forces of literature, art and

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 9. This attitude of openness is evident in the periodical’s attitude towards then-current fashionable strands of Nietzschean thought, to which it served as a kind of platform. From very early on *The New Age* came to harbour a range of contradictory Nietzschean viewpoints, forming a mosaic of varied ideas indicative of the intellectual climate of London Bohemia. The heterodox community of *New Age* Nietzscheans formed under Orage’s encouragement, exemplifies further the attitude endorsed there, what Ann Ardis argues was an unshakable conviction in ‘the principle of unbounded and open-ended discursive interaction’. Ann L. Ardis, ‘Democracy and Modernism: *The New Age* under A. R. Orage (1907-22)’, in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, ed. by Brooker and Thacker, pp. 205-225 (p. 220). Orage offered Levy and his circle of friends (mostly Nietzsche devotees and collaborators in his translation project) a platform for their conservative position on politics, aesthetics and current affairs, with some, as for instance Ludovici, holding permanent columns. This brought them frequently at odds with the socialist worldview espoused by most of the journal’s contributors, including Orage himself.

¹²² Ibid., p. 8.

¹²³ Ardis, p. 214.

philosophy', would help spread the ideas of self-betterment and cultural reformation.¹²⁴

It is not difficult to see how such a notion came about. Early Nietzschean ideals portraying the self as an infinitely growing, actualizing potential, mixed with then-current cultural and social discourses regarding progress and regeneration. In his 1906 study *Friedrich Nietzsche: The Dionysian Spirit of the Age*¹²⁵, Orage adopts Nietzsche's concept of the Superman and blends it with his own millennial discourse of reform and regeneration. Observing how 'all life is either ascendant or decadent',¹²⁶ he discusses the condition of 'current humanity', which shows signs of a spiritual regression: it does not 'possess any qualities, lacking intelligence and will.' In this state of consumption, he says, there it is vital necessary to establish new standards for the evolution of the modern consciousness: 'we have first to develop a caste of mind that shall be qualified to undertake the creation of a superior race.'¹²⁷ "The Superman" if he is to appear at all, must be willed – in plain words, and must be bred.'¹²⁸

This leitmotif of affirmative utopia was intended to make *The New Age* especially attractive to young intelligentsia. For the young, progressive and artistically-minded audience *The New Age* would come to represent a kind of battle standard for the educated revolutionary. A sense of this spirit is given in Storm Jameson's memoir. Recalling her youthful days as a student in London, she writes:

And talk – my God, how we talked. Generations since ours have talked as feverishly, but not with our confidence, or our illusions. The difference between them and us is that we knew we were at the frontier

¹²⁴ 'The Future of the "New Age"', p. 8.

¹²⁵ Alfred R. Orage, *Friedrich Nietzsche: The Dionysian Spirit of the Age* (London: T. N. Foulis, 1906).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

of a New Age [...]. We were socialists of a sort [...] Orage's *New Age* was our Bible, the source of half our ideas – the less anarchical half.¹²⁹

In this intellectual climate it is not surprising than Nietzsche would quickly become integrated into the broader discourse of regeneration *The New Age* advocated. From very early on Nietzschean egoism would be brought to bear upon debates about the state of modern culture and aesthetics, and more specifically on whether or not contemporary art is indicative of a condition of either the degeneration, or the sanity of modern culture. The originator, or at least, the great popularizer of the concepts of 'degeneration' and 'egomania' in contemporary aesthetic and cultural discourses, was Max Nordau, a German doctor and an art critic. His *Degeneration* (1893 in German; 1895 in English), a pioneering medico-cultural treatise on modern art and ideas was met, at least at first, with enormous interest. The book was dedicated to Caesar Lombroso, Professor of psychiatry and forensic medicine at the Royal University of Turin, and claimed to be an attempt 'at a really scientific criticism' of the contemporary decadent art as symptomatic of a wider cultural degeneration. Nordau saw art and philosophy as the principal conduits through which an epoch communicates its values and mores. He was greatly disturbed by the prevailing attitudes in art and philosophy, and railed at length against *fin de siècle* artistic grandmasters such as Wilde, Tolstoy, Zola, Whitman and Nietzsche, trying to prove that most of them were physiological and psychological degenerates. For him 'they all show the same lacuna, inequalities, and malformations in intellectual capacity, the same somatic and psychic stigmata.'¹³⁰

In *Degeneration* Nordau devotes a whole chapter to Nietzsche's work, which he examines as a record of the philosopher's psychological and physiological disease – a disorder he terms as 'egomania'. For Nordau, egomaniacs were social and moral

¹²⁹ Storm Jameson, *The Journey from the North* (London: Collins Press, 1969; Virago: 1970), pp. 65-68.

¹³⁰ Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), p. 241.

‘invalids’, in whom the healthy consciousness of the self is lacking completely. Since the sufferers were thus entirely incapable of taking into account the external world, the ‘not-I’ of societal norms and objective principles, their value-judgment became entirely blurred.¹³¹ The degenerate is akin to Robinson Crusoe, ‘who in his imagination lives alone on an island, and is at the same time a weak creature, powerless to govern himself. The universal moral code does not exist for him’.¹³²

One point of the essay which is of particular interest is Nordau’s analysis of Nietzsche’s style of writing. In his ‘Egomania’ chapter Nordau paid particular attention to Nietzsche’s text and provided a close psychiatric reading of some passages based on his theory of degeneration. According to Nordau, Nietzsche’s style implied that his philosophy was not the product of a conscious, rational mind but rather the result of unconscious, instinctual drives. In fact the language employed by Nietzsche reveals a writer totally immersed in the self and the self’s unconscious, a sign, undeniably, of an egomaniacal want of altruism and the uncontrollable overflowing of instinctual urges. Nordau professed that without a doubt Nietzsche’s language was that of unreason, coloured by extreme emotions not tethered to reality, but by the ‘excitation of the centres forming motor presentations’.¹³³ Moved by the ‘senses’, it was the opposite of rationalized, conceptual thought and therefore the language of a hysteric; This record of ‘chronic obsession’,¹³⁴ which if approached from the perspective of psychiatry, might be said to indicate abnormal stirrings in the unconscious, a mind (and certainly a body) resistant to the external reality was in fact, he contends, a pathological record of repressed emotions and ‘fugitive ideation’¹³⁵ which remain unknown or enigmatic even to Nietzsche. Further, his

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 249.

¹³² Ibid., p. 259.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 461.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 459.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 463.

vocabulary, his obsessive allusions to laughter, and at the same time the text's disruptions, its inconsistencies, the inclusion of 'wholly incomprehensible, meaningless sounds',¹³⁶ reveals the extent to which his unconscious tries to mask its suffering and despair through a discourse of playfulness and health. Underlying the façade of laughter and pride is the hysteric fear of an unconscious will expressing its impotence and frustration. In the concluding remarks to the chapter on egomania he notes: 'I have devoted very much more space to the demonstration of the senselessness of Nietzsche's so called philosophical system than the man or his system deserve.'¹³⁷ Nietzsche and his work is a paradigmatic example of a 'sexually psychopathic nature',¹³⁸ guilty of 'confound[ing] the conscious with the unconscious man', and of representing the individual 'not of knowledge and judgment, but of blind craving, requiring the satisfaction of his lascivious instincts at any price [...] not the moral, but the sensual, man.'¹³⁹

Nordau's attack on modern art as pathological, sensual, and egotistic and hence a reflection of decadent times was bound to provoke a reaction among the intelligentsia, and sure enough it did. Almost immediately after the English translation appeared G. B. Shaw published 'The Sanity of Art: An exposure of the Current Nonsense about Artists being Degenerate' (1895). His essay was one of the first Anglophone polemics against *Degeneration*. It appeared in the American anarchist newspaper *Liberty* as a 113 page long letter to its editor Benjamin R. Tucker. In 1908 Orage and Jackson asked Shaw's permission to reissue 'The Sanity of Art' as the first in a series of intended pamphlets on culture and the arts to be

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 463.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 452.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 452.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 471.

published by the *New Age* press in co-operation with the Fabian Arts Group, which they had themselves helped to create the previous year.¹⁴⁰

This essay counters Nordau, whom Shaw puts down as one of the typical ‘philologico-medical triflers’,¹⁴¹ a typical bourgeois philistine – and explores the many ways in which Nordau’s analysis can be re-evaluated and given a more constructive conclusion. Turning the thesis of degeneration on its head Shaw argues that art in this form has potential for generating sanity, highlighting its capacity for renewal and a kind of Nietzschean becoming, as it were.

Although in the original essay there are no explicit reference to Nietzsche, the emphasis being primarily on figures such as Wagner, Ibsen, and Schopenhauer (*The Quintessence of Ibsenism* had appeared a couple of years earlier, in 1891, and *The Perfect Wagnerite* in 1898) – however the 1908 preface suggests otherwise. In it Shaw argues:

I know no harder practical question than how much *selfishness* one ought to stand from a gifted person for the sake of his gifts or on the chance of being right in the end. The *Superman* will certainly come like a thief in the night, and be shot accordingly; but we cannot leave our property wholly undefended on that account. On the other hand, we cannot ask the Superman to add a higher set of virtues to current respectable morals; for he is undoubtedly going to empty a good deal of respectable morality out like so much dirty water, and replace it by new and strange customs, shedding old obligations and accepting new and heavier ones. Every step of his progress must horrify conventional people; and if it were possible for even the most superior man to march ahead all the time, every pioneer of the march must be crucified [...]. In my last play, *The Doctor's Dilemma*, I recognised this by dramatising a *rascally genius* [artist].¹⁴²

As if trying to correct the earlier omission, Shaw’s new preface goes on to make explicit reference to Nietzsche’s Superman ideal, the innate ‘selfishness’ that this doctrine entails, as well as its relation to the aesthetics of his latest play, as shown in his employ of a morally and physiologically degenerate (consumptive) artist. As

¹⁴⁰ G. B. Shaw, *The Sanity of Art* (London: The New Age Press, 1908).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 9. My emphasis.

Shaw notes in the new preface, *The Sanity of Art* provides the fundamental for approaching the question of ‘the eternal strife between the artist-philosophers and the Philistines.’¹⁴³ Shaw’s essay was on the whole a defence of modern art, expressing at the same time dissatisfaction with standards of public taste and the kind of art designed to satisfy it. What is more, it exhibits his overall concern about the artistic medium, advocating the need for art to be free of moral judgment – to be autonomous and self-regulated, while, at the same time, confirming its social reality and function.

Overall, in Shaw’s account, an aesthetic of moral individualism in which art serves as a means to elevate man beyond an externally imposed system of laws and public opinion, is the sole authentic aesthetic imperative. In the essay Shaw notes further how:

Creeds and laws come to be regarded as applications to human conduct of eternal and immutable principles of good and evil; and breakers of the law are abhorred as sacrilegious scoundrels to whom nothing is sacred. Now this, I need not tell you, is a very serious error.¹⁴⁴

Shaw’s aesthetic theory relies on some Nietzschean ‘beyond good and evil’ ideal and uses Henrik Ibsen and Maxim Gorki as its primary examples. As opposed to ‘philistine art’ which covers up and perpetuates the outdated morals and customs, Shaw sees in the art of Ibsen and Gorki a kind of aesthetic through which one may start doubting the sacredness and stability of existing moral systems, the ‘immutable principles of good and evil.’¹⁴⁵ As Shaw argues further, modern art, its disregard for convention, etiquette and propriety is potentially a powerful tool, one capable of shocking the individual out of his slavery to outdated codes of conduct and customs. Gorki scandalizing New York for instance¹⁴⁶ is one such case in whom one sees the

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 51-52.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

urge to move beyond the hypocrisies of current institutions (the institution of marriage in his case), or the case of Ibsen who was first received ‘with a shriek of horror’.¹⁴⁷ ‘Every step in morals is made by challenging the validity of the existing conception of perfect propriety of conduct’, he notes, adding how dissent and ‘heterodoxy’¹⁴⁸ in taste and opinion as well as free will and creativity are invaluable tools in opening up the potential of one’s own subjectivity – facilitating its emergence.

Further, Shaw borrows a quote from Georg Brandes, ‘to obey one’s senses is to have character [...] he who allows himself to be guided by his *passions* has *individuality*’,¹⁴⁹ to support the idea that the ‘will’ is superior to ‘reason’: ‘placing reason and morality above the individual “will” is ‘a damnable error’, he says.¹⁵⁰ Art, according to him, proves successful only when it achieves to reflect the highest aspirations (as for instance in Wagner) and the deepest aversions (Ibsen) of which human nature is capable, without the comfortable mask of reason and decorum. What is truly needed, he maintains, is an art which allows a clear insight into human nature; an art that sets the wheels of progress in motion capable of inviting one to stand back and take an honest look beyond ‘laws, religions, creeds, and systems of ethics’.¹⁵¹ In his conclusion to the essay he writes:

We can now, as soon as we are strong-minded enough, drop the Nirvana nonsense, the pessimism, the rationalism, the supernatural theology, and all the other subterfuges to which we cling because we are afraid to look life straight in the face and see in it not the fulfilment of a moral law or of the deductions of reason, but the satisfaction of a *passion* in us of which we can give no *rational* account whatever.¹⁵²

Another defence of art against notions of moral and aesthetic ‘degeneration’ comes from Dr. Charles Whitby, a frequent contributor to *The New Age* and *The*

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 39. My emphasis.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 59. My emphasis.

Freewoman/New Freewoman. His series of letter rejoinders to *The New Age* published under the title ‘Sex and Superman’ is a further instance where Nietzschean terminology is drawn into discussions pertaining to cultural and aesthetic matters. This ‘Nietzschean epistolary’ appeared in the form of seven consecutive letter rejoinders to the editor from April 27 to June 29, 1911. ‘Sex and Superman’ is a discussion about the relation between artistic creativity and morality, and in particular the relationship between art and sexuality, a topic Whitby approaches through the discourse of psychology. His letters serve as a response to one of Alfred E. Randall’s earlier articles to *The New Age* in which Randall had made a comment that ‘those who regard sex as a paramount interest are not supermen, but “fornicators”’.¹⁵³

Arguing against the equation of art and morals, Whitby uses the concept of the superman as a kind of aesthetic trope to challenge Randall’s comments about aesthetic impurity and decadence. Artists should not be judged by conventional standards of morality since

[...] men have the qualities of their defects: hence the vices of great men are part of their equipment. Mr. Randall will hardly deny that the works of men like Stendhal, Wilde, and Verlaine owe much of their excellence to those very qualities from which the moralist shrinks in horror.¹⁵⁴

Expanding upon the question of whether the artist’s value is to be estimated by measure of common moral standards or genius of craft, he contends that such distinctions are not satisfactory, for art is by definition the product of instinctual passion. Drawing on the notion of the superman, Whitby discusses writers like Byron, Stendhal, Dante as some of the great ‘supermen’ of craftsmanship and artistry, and argues for the close relation between sexual drives and artistic creativity in their work:

¹⁵³ Whitby, p. 621.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

Sir, [...] I must go on to say that from my point of view Byron was also one to whom sex (in the *concrete*, you understand) was of paramount importance. For Mr. Gribble has made it quite clear that it is to Mary Chaworth that the world owes Byronism – the quintessential product of the genius of her thwarted lover. Dante vowed in youth that he would one day write of Beatrice what had never yet been written of any woman, a resolve which was carried into execution in the ‘Divina Commedia’. He therefore, like all those supermen [...] was evoked by the sex stimulus (in *my* sense of the words).¹⁵⁵

Ironically, Whitby says, the true daemon of genius in all these individuals was nothing less but the figure of their beloved, the ‘feminine’ in disguise, a sexual passion internalized and expressed as an eternal aesthetic ideal. In all of these examples of supermen-artists one sees clear evidence of ‘the sex stimulus’ channeled and sublimated into an art of pure and timeless beauty – an insight, that, as he concludes, makes imperative that we begin to drop such common misconceptions about pure and impure art.¹⁵⁶

A faith in the self and in turn, a trend of *ego-latria* (‘latria’ is the Greek term for faith) was also expressed by other *New Age* contributors. A favourable impression of individualism and Nietzsche can be seen in ‘Nietzsche, Ibsen, and Kierkegaard’ published the same year as *The Sanity of Art*. Rappoport, a lecturer on Modern Literature at Birkbeck College, London, takes up a discussion about Ibsen, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, whom he calls the ‘three Argonauts of the ideal’.¹⁵⁷ According to him, all three were advocates of the notion of individualism. Their philosophic egoism and broader subjectivism emerged, he argues, primarily as a response to the broader spirit of their age:

The first port where all three landed was that of Individualism, of self-realization. They had appeared in an age [...] which had crushed the development of free personality, making the individual as Emerson said ‘to be reckoned in the gross, in the hundreds of thousands, of the party, the section to which he belongs’.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Whitby, p. 213.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

¹⁵⁷ Rappoport, p. 429.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 429.

Rappoport notices the differences between them. Whereas Ibsen's and Kierkegaard's philosophy was looking forward for a kind of polishing of values, 'not for a new morality, but for a revised one [...] remaining within the walls of the ancient structure'¹⁵⁹ – Nietzsche's Dionysian philosophy, on the other hand, dared to 'laugh' at the 'corpse of religion, morality and culture.' He was set on a quest for the Greek educational ideal of 'kalokagathon',¹⁶⁰ the platonic notion of physical, moral and mental perfection. Like Shaw, Rappoport draws a connection between the doctrine of the *Übermensch* and the affirmative egoism that underlines Nietzsche's ethic: 'Individualism, Egoism, Self-consciousness, and Self-realization' are the basis the teaching of the 'Superman, the homo singularis, the *Übermensch*';¹⁶¹ Nietzsche, the 'grand amoureux'¹⁶² as he describes him, aimed to put forward a new type of man, a superman distinctly different from Ibsen and Kierkegaard's, one determined to break down the bridge between past humanity and the future, and to invent himself anew.

For Rappoport, Ibsen's types, as found in *Hedda Gabler* and *Rosmersholm* are, in some ways, dramatic projections of his ideal supermen. However, to the question whether they are of the same intellectual material as Nietzsche's, he replies in the negative.¹⁶³ The fundamental difference between them is that Nietzsche's philosophical tenets offer a sense of affirmative overcoming and redemption, and suggest a new rhetoric of power and strength by which the individual may live according to his aesthetic principles. While Ibsen and Kierkegaard, in their effort to criticize and revise morality, still remain entangled 'within the walls of the ancient structure',¹⁶⁴ Nietzsche breaks down the philosophical bridge behind him and strives to attain an aesthetics beyond good and evil. His philosophical ideal should not be

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 429.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 429.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 408.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 429.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 429.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 429.

seen as immoralism per se, Rapoport informs us, but rather as, ‘a state of moral innocence [...] where what is beautiful is also moral’, breaking the bridge behind him and past tradition.¹⁶⁵

Janko Lavrin, another *New Age* contributor provided with another fascinating reading of Nietzsche’s case of ‘degeneration’, what he designates as being a case of ‘artistic pathology’. In 1921 Orage, who had assumed full responsibility of the periodical after Jackson’s departure, asked Lavrin to include the latter’s monograph on Nietzsche, *Nietzsche-An Approach*, as part of *The New Age* series on culture and art. A Lecturer of Slavonic Studies at Nottingham University, Lavrin had already published various ‘psycho-critical’ studies on contemporary writers such as Ibsen and Dostoyevsky, all of which were generally very well received by *The New Age* coterie.

In the second instalment titled ‘Pathology and Art’, Lavrin dwells on the subject of Nietzsche’s ‘pathology’,¹⁶⁶ and in particular on the debate of degeneration and creativity:

One of the subtlest problems of the psychology of artistic creation is the relation between ‘insanity’ and genius, or – to put it more modestly – between pathology and art [...]. At any rate if we take modern Art or Literature, we find that many of its important representatives were on the verge of abnormality, or of a complete *degeneracy*.¹⁶⁷

The mention of degeneracy in this context is revealing. Drawing its material from the contemporaneous developments in the fields of psychology and literary criticism, Lavrin revisits the case of Nietzsche’s degeneration both in terms of its aesthetic as well as its cultural value. Nietzsche’s philosophy is interestingly described as ‘an intimate psychological document’ which transcribes its pain and suffering into his work. At the same time Nietzsche is perceived as the embodiment of the exceptional

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 429.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Nietzsche Revisited. II-Pathology and Art’, p. 42.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42. My emphasis.

individual-genius, as well as the philosopher convalescent par excellence. As Lavrin argues, Nietzsche's style of philosophizing is 'personal',¹⁶⁸ 'subjective' and proceeds from the 'dark cellar' of his unconscious,¹⁶⁹ and, as in the case of artistic creation, 'through which one "confesses"' or 'discharges the accumulated inner pressure', it is a continuous uncovering.¹⁷⁰

However, far from seeing it as a record of imbecility and hysterical delusion, as Nordau did, Lavrin attributes restorative, therapeutic powers to this new form of 'subjective' philosophy. As he maintains, the driving force behind his philosophy is his insatiable thirst to recover: '[H]is penetrating analysis, his morbidly moody temperament, his biting satire, his dithyrambs and ecstatic hymns to Life' indicate rather a new type of life ethic, which 'is always the expression of one's personal vital needs, and a reaction against accumulating suffering.'¹⁷¹ For Nietzsche philosophy is practiced as a form of therapy, expressing a will to recuperate. In this sense, Nietzsche is figured as the convalescent tragic philosopher in whom life is still affirmed, despite its adversities and innate *malaise*. Lavrin adds:

The problem of Nietzsche as the representative of modern consciousness is of far greater interest than that of Nietzsche as mere 'philosopher'. Moreover, as soon as we approach him in this way, we cannot pass by the question: What is Nietzsche's place in modern life and culture? What is really tragic and really vital in him from the standpoint of our present spiritual needs and crisis? In short, what can our post-war period learn from his dilemma, his striving and his failure?¹⁷²

In his article 'The Tragic Individual', published immediately after the conclusion of the war he provides his own answers to these questions: 'Many comfortable old illusions have been destroyed during the last four years; many philistine "ideals" and ideologies have been drowned in blood [...]. The naked Reality showed its Medusa

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁷² Lavrin, 'Nietzsche Revisited. I-Nietzsche and Nietzscheans', pp. 21-22.

head', he notes.¹⁷³ Drawing on Nietzsche, in whose philosophy he sees a kind of ethic of strength, individuality, and tragic affirmation, he argues that for modern culture to overcome the 'spiritual philistinism' to which it has succumbed, it is essential that the modern individual approaches life as Nietzsche did, through a 'robust' 'creative will' and tragic perspective:¹⁷⁴

The pessimistic attitude is merely negative and therefore uncreative, while the tragic attitude is an overcoming of pessimism through pessimism itself. A tragic individual approaches life, not through a ready-made optimism or sentimental idealism, but by bravely facing our existence in its most negative aspects, and consciously striving to transform it just because of its vulgarity and evil [...]. It is perhaps the only attitude that leads to a creative transvaluation and transformation of life.¹⁷⁵

This first chapter has attempted to throw some light on the early discourses on Nietzsche and individualism in the context of what Lavrin has termed radical modernism. As shown, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, the Leeds Arts Club and its brainchild, *The New Age*, are particularly interesting sites for the light they throw on the form of these discourses, providing a crucial framework for beginning to unravel the unique ways in which Nietzschean themes and notions found their way into contemporary aesthetic and cultural idiom. The following chapters build on and expand on the individualistic aspects of this tradition and its various manifestations.

¹⁷³ Lavrin, 'The Tragic Individual', *The New Age*, 25 April 1918, pp. 502-503.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 503.

¹⁷⁵ Lavrin, 'Nietzsche Revisited. II-Pathology and Art', p. 44.

Chapter Two

G. B. Shaw's Social Drama and Nietzschean Aesthetics: Portraits of Nietzschean Socialist 'Radicals' in *The Philanderer* (written 1893; published 1898), *The Devil's Disciple* (1897) and *Man and Superman* (1903)

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I documented *The Eagle and the Serpent's* radical reading of Nietzsche and the impact of Nietzschean discourse in the Leeds Arts Club as well as in the thought and work of some active socialists, Holbrook Jackson and Alfred R. Orage. While drawing on selected articles from *The New Age*, I demonstrated the growing importance of Nietzschean thought in contemporary aesthetic and cultural discourses – particularly with reference to then-fashionable notions of vitalism and individualism. I also showed how Nietzschean discourse served to furnish then-current notions of regeneration. With this in mind, I now want to explore in some detail G. B. Shaw's engagement with Nietzsche. In particular I want to examine the respective 'portraits' of radical individualists in *The Philanderer*, *The Devil's Disciple*, and *Man and Superman*. I see Shaw's portrayal of Nietzschean radicals in these three plays as a response to contemporary ideas of radical socialist individualism. This response is framed predominantly in terms of the writer's preoccupation with modernist aesthetics, questions of selfhood and theories of cultural evolution.

The ideological relationship between Bernard Shaw and Nietzsche has been explored by David Thatcher and Patrick Bridgwater. Both their studies take considerable interest in Shaw's play *Man and Superman* (1903) which, as they argue,

served as a catalyst for popularizing certain Nietzschean ideas within an Anglophone milieu such as the notion of the *Übermensch*.

Both scholars discuss the intellectual kinship between Shaw and Nietzsche. What they fail to do is to take into account the intellectual context within which Shaw's drama emerges. Their readings tend to present the Shaw-Nietzsche nexus as a highly problematic intellectual misalliance. For instance, in discussing *Man and Superman*, Thatcher acknowledges Shaw's key role in the dissemination of Nietzschean themes in the Anglophone setting; yet he also writes: 'Shaw [...] wrongly enjoys [...] the popular reputation of having been influenced by Nietzsche.'¹ Similarly, for Bridgwater, Shaw's engagement with Nietzschean ideas in *Man and Superman* stems not so much from a genuine understanding of Nietzschean philosophy as from his desire to give his existing fascination with Ibsen and Wagner a new fashionable twist. Bridgwater sees Shaw's superficial Nietzscheanism as divorced from the writer's socialist ethos. As Bridgwater concludes, 'in social and political terms he [Shaw] regards him [Nietzsche] as "inept".'²

Thatcher, on the other hand gives a more charitable interpretation. He states, with reference to *Man and Superman* and *Major Barbara*, that Shaw 'probably had a better first-hand acquaintance with Nietzsche's work than he has generally been given credit for or even that he himself, for various reasons, wished to admit.'³ He reads *Man and Superman* as a conscious attempt to inject Nietzschean terminology into a socialist ethic: 'grafting the Nietzschean figure to a socialist programme the superman helped Shaw to hold fast to a belief in Socialism.'⁴ Nonetheless such an alliance presents this scholar with inherent paradoxes: socialist ideals prove unsuited for Nietzsche's brand of aristocratic individualism. For Thatcher, Shaw's attempt to

¹ Bridgwater, p. 59.

² Ibid., p. 63.

³ Thatcher, p. 217.

⁴ Ibid, p. 200.

bring Nietzschean ethics under a socialist aegis remains an enigma – as he sees socialism and Nietzschean philosophy as mutually exclusive. In this chapter I examine Shaw in the context of the emerging radical Nietzscheanism as discussed in Chapter One. As I will demonstrate there are important links between Shavian and Nietzschean versions of radicalism that have not been followed through and which require attention. Both Thatcher and Bridgwater fail to notice the references (sometimes explicit, sometimes implied) to Nietzschean individualism in Shaw's own descriptions of some of his earliest plays.

2.2 *The Philanderer* (written 1893; published 1898)

At the end of the nineteenth century Nietzsche was becoming an increasingly important figure among the intelligentsia. Shaw's early letters, prefaces and *Eagle and the Serpent* contributions reveal a concern with Nietzsche that predates by some ten years the conception of *Man and Superman*. While *Man and Superman* (published in 1903, staged in 1905) was certainly Shaw's best orchestrated attempt at introducing Nietzsche to an English audience, it was by no means the first one. The first reference to Nietzsche and in particular to what Shaw calls the 'new socialist-Nietzsche generation' appears in *The Philanderer* (written 1893, published 1898, staged 1905). This, as Shaw would confess later in a letter to William Archer, was partly an attempt to put onto the theatre stage what he called 'the new socialist-Nietzsche generation.'⁵ More references to Nietzsche appear in another early play, *The Devil's Disciple*, in whose preface Shaw draws links between the main characters 'diabolonian ethics' and Nietzsche's beyond 'good and evil' morality. More direct connections between Shavian and Nietzschean individualism can be

⁵ Letter to William Archer from 24th January 1900. In *Collected Letters/Bernard Shaw*, ed. by Dan H. Lawrence (London: Reinhardt, 1965-88), II, p. 138.

drawn from a letter in *The Eagle and the Serpent* from 1898 where Shaw presents his notion of the superman. This chapter goes on to examine the different types of radical individualism as embodied by the various modern ‘supermen’ and ‘superwomen’ of these three plays. My intention is to highlight some of the key features of these types of individualism. In particular, I want to focus on how they relate to Nietzsche and contemporary Nietzschean trends as well as how they may have offered a fertile ground for Shaw’s drama.

As mentioned above, early traces of Shaw’s preoccupation with Nietzsche, or rather Nietzscheanism, may be found in *The Philanderer*. In a letter to William Archer Shaw has this to say about the play:

In *The Philanderer* [...] I put on the stage for the first time a dramatization of those three generations which we have both seen arise: the old fashioned pious people, the generation of Ms Fawcett, Lydia Becker, Stuart Mill & c, and the *new Socialist-Nietzsche generation*.⁶

The Philanderer is Shaw’s second play. Written in 1893 (in three months, March-June)⁷ it was found to be technically unsuitable and was not performed until much later (1905)⁸. However, in 1898 it was published as part of the collection of *Unpleasant Plays*. As Susan Carlson notes, *The Philanderer* is, arguably, one of the least studied Shavian plays. The play has been largely ignored by critics who regard it as being a ‘dated’ comic portrait of the contemporary fashions and trends.⁹ Described by Shaw as a ‘topical comedy’,¹⁰ the play is set in the early eighteenthies and is a humorous, albeit somewhat crude, portrait of the fashionable bohemian Londoners. Most of the play is set in an Ibsen Arts coterie, and the action involves several love affairs, one of the most interesting being that between Leonard

⁶ Ibid., p. 138. My emphasis.

⁷ Anthony Matthews Gibbs, *A Bernard Shaw Chronology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 109.

⁸ Ibid., p. 163.

⁹ Susan Carlson, *Women and Comedy: Rewriting the British Theatrical Tradition* (Michigan: Michigan University Press, 1991), p. 97.

¹⁰ George Bernard Shaw, *Plays Unpleasant*, ed. by Dan H. Lawrence (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), p. 97.

Charteris (the eponymous philanderer) and Grace Tranfield. Act I opens in Grace's living room, where the couple is being discovered by Julia Craven, one of the many victims of Charteris's 'philanderisms'. The rest of the play takes place in the library of the Ibsen Club, of which all three characters are members.

While, on the surface, the play appears to be a wry response to the Ibsen craze of the day, Shaw's reference to Nietzsche in the letter to Archer indicates that there is a lot more to it. While current scholarship has somehow failed to notice the Ibsen-Nietzsche nexus that underlies the play, contemporary reviews of the play seem to have been more perceptive in this respect. In 1905, H. L. Mencken, the American literary critic and editor of *The Smart Set*, for instance, discussed the play as a commentary on contemporary individualistic Nietzschean trends. He observed how *The Philanderer* was written in an age of 'groping individualism', representing 'a pack of individualists at war with the godly':¹¹

But when Shaw wrote *The Philanderer* a wave of groping individualism was sweeping over Europe, the United States and other more or less Christian lands [...]. Poor old Nietzsche had something to do with this uprising. His ideas regarding the orthodox virtues, mangled in the mills of his disciples, appeared on every hand. Iconoclasts, amateur and professional, grew as common as policemen.

Very naturally, this series of phenomena vastly amused our friend from Ireland.¹²

As has been shown in the previous chapter there are several close points of connection between the emergence of modern individualism and the vogues for Nietzsche and Ibsen. Correspondences between Ibsen and Nietzsche may be seen as early as 1889 – when Georg Brandes, the eminent Danish critic, and a dedicated champion of Ibsen published his study on Nietzsche, 'Friedrich Nietzsche: An Essay

¹¹ Henry Louis Mencken, *George Bernard Shaw: His Plays* (Boston; London: J. W. Luce, 1905), pp. 28-29.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

on Aristocratic Radicalism'.¹³ Brandes has been rightfully credited for being Nietzsche's first exegete, introducing him as a kind of philosopher of aristocratic radicalism and individualism. He put down a solid theoretical foundation for other early interpreters in European intellectual circles. For Brandes, who had a personal relationship with both men¹⁴ and claims that they regarded him as 'ally',¹⁵ Nietzsche emerges as a kind of philosopher of independence and individualism – a pioneer of 'radical aristocratism' concerned with what might be called 'the problem of the 'cultural philistinism'.¹⁶ In his study both Ibsen and Nietzsche are described as contributors to 'the development and the moulding of the individual personality',¹⁷ as pioneers of the new morality and culture – and, as Brandes characteristically notes, deciding 'which of them has had the deepest effect on the contemporary mind' is quite difficult.¹⁸ The connection of both men with individualism and anti-idealism is something that Shaw also notes in his letter-proposal concerning the formation of 'Nietzsche-Egoist' Clubs to *The Eagle and the Serpent*. As he argues there:

It was not until after 1889, when Ibsen and Nietzsche began to make themselves felt, that the really new idea of challenging the validity of idealism and duty, and bringing *Individualism* round again on a higher plane, showed signs of being able to rally to it men beneath the rank of the geniuses who had been feeling their way towards it for centuries.¹⁹

Interestingly, references to Ibsen and Nietzsche as pioneers of the 'new individual' can be found in contemporary periodical culture as early as 1894 – and specifically in *Lucifer*, a London theosophical-literary review edited by Annie Besant. In two

¹³ Brandes's designation of Nietzsche's philosophy as 'aristocratic radicalism' was met with enthusiastic approval by Nietzsche. In a letter to him from 1887 he writes that this analogy was 'the cleverest thing' I have yet read about [myself]]. For a discussion of Brandes' championing of Nietzsche see Ernst Behler, 'Nietzsche in the Twentieth Century', in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. by Bernd Magnus and Kathleen H. Higgins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 281-322 (p. 289).

¹⁴ He was a personal friend of Ibsen although his correspondence with Nietzsche began quite late, only two years before the latter's lapse into insanity.

¹⁵ Georg Brandes, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. by A. G. Charter (London: Heinemann, 1914), p. 108.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹⁹ G. B. Shaw, Letter, p. 27.

Lucifer articles in the January issue, 1894, Ibsen and Nietzsche are discussed as exponents of a new notion of selfhood. Both thinkers are associated with ideas of will-power and individualism: in the case of Ibsen, this is expressed for instance in *Rosmersholm*, where one sees the new individual of a ‘dauntless and undivided will’;²⁰ and, in the case of Nietzsche respectively, in the lesson of Zarathustra, who teaches how a high-minded man can find his own self and develop it:

Self-education of this kind is deliverance from all those commonplace opinions which since his youth have been at work to destroy his greatness and originality; therefore this self-education is called the ‘assertion of the self’ and is a living antithesis of the doctrine of the abnegation of self.²¹

Jackson’s writings in 1909 summed up the reception of Ibsen and Nietzsche, and placed it within the context of a tradition of philosophical individualism. The critic saw both men as part of a long tradition of modern philosophic individualism which they helped to revolutionise. As he argues, they were both involved in initiating a new form of modern individualism, what he terms as ‘militant personalism’ – an ethic grounded upon a polemic, dynamic and self-affirming rhetoric that advocates ‘authenticity’, ‘eccentricity’ and self-actualization. It is a new and important gospel ‘especially in an age like the present, when the majority of people are content to live second-hand lives’,²² and Jackson expresses his disappointment by the crudely ‘fashionable’ application of it among sections of the intelligentsia:

We have many instances of the sort of thing in the advanced circles which receive inspiration from the(ir) works [...]. The *devoted egoists* of those entertaining coteries have so enthusiastically abandoned themselves to the dicta of their philosophic heroes, have so insisted upon themselves in accordance with the principles laid down by their masters, that they have ended by becoming nothing more than irritating echoes.²³

²⁰ Otway Cuffe, ‘Ibsen’s Works in the Light of Theosophy’, *Lucifer*, 15 January 1894, pp. 388-394 (p. 394).

²¹ G. H., ‘Friedrich Nietzsche and his Zarathustra Gospel’, *Lucifer*, 15 January 1894, pp. 423-427 (p. 425).

²² *All Manner of Folk*, p. 16.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 17. My emphasis.

This intellectual context suggests that during the time Shaw's play is set both thinkers were understood as part of a continuous tradition of individualism whose latest prophets they were. In *The Philanderer*, one can look for echoes of this nascent culture, which are filtered through Shaw's somewhat caustic sense of humour. More than simply a farce on fashionable Ibsenism, I believe, the play engages with modern notions of selfhood, creating a light comedy about the uses and sometimes the abuses of individualism, revealing both weaknesses and strengths in the action, and, respectively, the inaction, of some of its protagonists.

As Charteris informs us at the beginning of the play, admission to the Ibsen Club is a very serious matter. Rules are very strict. Only 'unmanly men' and 'unwomanly women' are accepted:

CHARTERIS The rules of the Club forbid [manliness and womanliness]. Every candidate for membership must be nominated by a man and a woman, who both guarantee that the candidate, if female, is not womanly, and if male, is not manly.²⁴

This is not without reason. This rule seems to be part of the kind of advanced agenda associated with the philosophy of the Club. As we soon find out via Charteris, a sort of Don-Juan and the Club's self-appointed philosopher, the Ibsen coterie is meant as a place for those seeking a safe haven from modern conventional attitudes, especially from the kind of 'suffering nobly endured and [the kind of] sacrifice willingly rendered by *womanly women* and *manly men*.'²⁵ Instead, the members of the Club are meant to be educated in the advanced un-romantic, un-idealistic, un-altruistic, un-stereotypical new way – and to act accordingly. In this atmosphere, the proper etiquette is to be as unmanly (if a man) and as unwomanly (if a woman) as possible, in other words to be as un-stereotypical and as individual as possible. Romantic ideals

²⁴ *The Philanderer*, p. 118.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 118. My emphasis.

of love and virtue are hence strictly forbidden: they are utterly 'abhorrent'²⁶ because they are all old conventions. Sentimental deviants, so to speak, are reported to the Club's committee for misconduct, as we soon find out. In Act III for instance, we witness a humorous scene where Julia, one of the least unconventional members of the Club, is reported by Grace who suspects her for being not as 'unwomanly' as she claims:

JULIA (*through her tears*) She's going to have me expelled from the club; and we shall all be disgraced. Can she do it, Daddy?

CRAVEN Well, really, the rules of this club are so extraordinary that I don't know. (*To Grace*) May I ask, Mrs. Tranfield, whether you have any complaint to make of my daughter's conduct?

GRACE Simply that Miss Craven is essentially a womanly woman, and, as such, not eligible for membership.²⁷

Arguably, the most diligent exponents of this philosophy are the couple Charteris-Grace, both, in a way, caricatured definitions of the New Man and the New Woman. Defying stereotypes and traditional sex roles, Shaw casts them as comical portraits of the new gender-free individual who try to think and, what proves even harder, to live the modern way. The play opens with the couple 'making love' and the stage instructions read:

*A lady and gentleman are making love to one another in the drawing-room of a flat in Ashley Gardens in the Victoria district of London. It is past ten at night. Incandescent lights, well shaded, are on the piano and mantelpiece. Near the piano is a sofa, on which the lady and gentleman are seated affectionately side by side, in one another's arms.*²⁸

Grace's drawing room serves as an idyllic set for what proves to be one of the rare occasions of romance between the two, a place where rules are temporarily suspended. In a style that seems to burlesque the conventions of melodrama, Charteris and Grace speak of their love: CHARTERIS (*impulsively clasping Grace*) 'My dearest love.' GRACE (*responding affectionately*) 'My darling. Are you happy?'

²⁶ Ibid., p. 118.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 157.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 99.

CHARTERIS 'In Heaven.' GRACE 'My own',²⁹ before they suddenly become conscious of the folly of the whole affair: CHARTERIS 'That must positively be my last kiss, Grace, or I shall become downright silly. Let us talk. *Releases her and sits a little apart from her.*'³⁰ A few moments later and with his senses coming back to him Charteris hurries to revoke his love vows: CHARTERIS (*he folds his arms and adds firmly*) 'My happiness depends of nobody but myself. I can do without you.'³¹ 'No woman is a property of a man' Grace gracefully will say in return, 'a woman belongs to herself and nobody else.'³²

With such half-serious, half-flippant remarks, the play opens with the two main characters doing what they seem best at: talk. In a style that parodies romantic love the scene introduces a major motif of the play: the reversal of gender stereotyping and the quest for selfhood – expressed in both these characters' frustrating search for the right path to choose: the love of the self or the love for each other. As becomes quickly apparent both Charteris and Grace have quite a bit of a philosophic streak. Charteris calls Grace his 'little philosopher'³³ and he himself enjoys the title of the 'great philosopher' among the coterie. As soon as love-making stops, they go back to their philosophizing. Deeply immersed in their theories, and true devotees to the 'unmanly' and respectively the 'unwomanly' cause, to 'the rational view – our view',³⁴ they see love as downright blasphemy – love in its old sentimental form is seen as crude hypocrisy, as 'too big a risk'.³⁵ As Charteris hurries to remind Julia:

CHARTERIS As a woman of advanced views, you were determined to be free. [...] Accordingly, you reserved the right to leave me at any time if you found our companionship incompatible with – what was the

²⁹ Ibid., p. 99.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 100.

³¹ Ibid., p. 140.

³² Ibid., p. 103.

³³ Ibid., p. 103.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 104.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 107.

expression you used? – with your full development as a human being.³⁶

Unlike Shaw's model Don Juan, John Tanner, who as Shaw informs us in the 'Epistle Dedicatory'³⁷ of *Man and Superman*, has 'discovered a moral in his immorality' and who is an affirmative sceptic, 'no longer assert[ing] himself by witty negations' nor 'concerned merely 'for the freedom of his own instincts'³⁸ – Charteris, it may be argued, comes off as a parody of egoistic excess, a mere philanderer. A master of philosophical theories, and a skilled sophist, a comedian and an ironist with too much wit and too little faith, Charteris likes to make game of all this advancement and its pretentious ways. Unlike Tanner, the lover of reality (as it will be shown further), Charteris claims not to like truth: 'as a philosopher it is my business to tell other people the truth; but it's not their business to tell it to me. I don't like it. It hurts.'³⁹ Individualism, as advocated by him is a philosophy Charteris milks for all it is worth, exploiting it to the best of his abilities. He has no trouble using it to woo some women (Grace) and discourage others (Julia) – forgetting how this freedom of his will must be exercised not only freely but also responsibly.

Although Charteris is the 'official' philosopher of the club, it is perhaps Grace the character who best deserves the title. Proclaiming herself as the 'New Woman' she loves lecturing others about the new morals and the new kind of love. As she tells Charteris: GRACE 'I gave her [Julia] a lecture on her behaviour which she will remember to the last day of her life.' CHARTERIS (*approvingly*) 'That was right darling.'⁴⁰ Just like Charteris, she is an ardent champion of the club's principles. However, unlike him, she also seems to believe in them. A true devotee to the cause, Grace is resolute in her convictions: to love someone 'too much' is to abandon

³⁶ Ibid., p. 108.

³⁷ George Bernard Shaw, 'Epistle Dedicatory', in *Man and Superman*, ed. by Dan H. Lawrence (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), pp. 7-38 (p. 14).

³⁸ Ibid., p. 14.

³⁹ *The Philanderer*, p. 140.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 161.

oneself, and to her this seems ‘terrible’. Love is a kind of war, a struggle for ‘power’, as she tells Charteris in Act III

GRACE Yes Leonard; but I’m an advanced woman [...]. I quite agree with your ideas [...]. I am much in earnest about them too; and I will never marry a man I love too much. It would give him a terrible advantage over me: I should be utterly in his power. That’s what the New Woman is like. Isn’t she right, Mr. Philosopher?

CHARTERIS The struggle between the Philosopher and the Man is fearful, Grace. But the philosopher says you are right.

GRACE I know I am right. And so we must part.⁴¹

Towards the end of the play, Grace, withdraws her love, for fear of losing her ‘advantage’, her ‘power’ over herself, providing a very sound philosophical explanation. Love (in this case sexual passion) she seems to suggest, is a power-struggle, a struggle of two individual wills, and is, in practice, self-destructive. Despite being ‘the only possible woman’ for Charteris, she knows she has to be heartless. ‘*Sitting down, placidly*’, she announces:

GRACE I am not at all miserable. I’m sorry; but I shan’t break my heart.

CHARTERIS No; yours is a thoroughbred heart: you don’t scream and cry every time it’s pinched. That’s why you are the only possible woman for me.

GRACE (*shaking her head*) Not now. Never any more.

CHARTERIS Never! What do you mean?

GRACE What I say, Leonard.⁴²

It might be argued that this passage is an instance of Shaw making fun of Grace and her rigid egoistic ‘commandments’, as it were. Grace’s ‘Thou shall not love’ rationale seems to deploy a vocabulary very similar to that of early Nietzschean egoistic discourse in what seems to me an uneasy blend of ethics of selfhood and self-development. Her observations about love and sexual passion seem to betray a Nietzschean spirit not untypical of the early discourse we see in such periodicals such as *The Eagle and the Serpent*, and more specifically in pieces as ‘The Infernal Feminine, or, Love as War’ and ‘Why Women Need Egoism’. In such early articles

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 141.

⁴² Ibid., p. 140.

one discovers fascinating examples of early egoistic debates which discuss love and sexual passion through a Nietzschean prism – evidence of proto-Nietzschean feminist ideas that come up again, only much later, in such places as *The Freewoman*.

‘The Infernal Feminine, or, Love as War’⁴³ written by ‘Volcano’ (a pseudonym for the editor) alludes to Nietzsche’s notion of love as set forth in *The Case of Wagner*. In his essay on Nietzsche, Brandes had noted how Nietzsche came to replace Schopenhauer’s ‘Will to-Life’ and Darwin’s ‘Struggle for Existence’ by one new concept, the ‘will-to-power’, which Brandes defines as ‘life seek[ing], not self-preservation alone, but self-increase’.⁴⁴ Employing this idea the article goes on to discuss sexual love as a manifestation of this will-to-power, an eternal battle of wills, and thus as ‘fate, as *fatality*, cynical, innocent, cruel-and thus true to *nature*’. This is a new kind of love: love as nature, as will, devoid of any ‘sentimental veneer’ or ‘hypocritical sentimentalizing’, not the over-romantic kind of love Nietzsche saw in Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde*, but rather of the *amor fati* kind Nietzsche saw in Bizet’s *Carmen*.

[Nietzsche’s] conception of love is (the only one which is worthy of a philosopher) is rare; it distinguishes a work of art among thousands of others. For, on an average, artists do like all the world, or worse even, they misunderstand love [...]. People imagine they are unselfish in love because they seek the advantage of another being, often in opposition to their own advantage. But for so doing they want to *possess* the other being [...]. And, indeed, it is high time to give our languid lovers, poets, and their lasses a conception of love worthy of a philosopher and a scientist [...]. Those who are shocked to hear that love is the war of the sexes [...]. Whenever two WILLS are forced into constant association – conflict is inevitable.⁴⁵

Being at the same time innocent and cruel, bitter and creative, this new kind of love needs also a new kind of woman:

⁴³ Barnhill, ‘The Infernal Feminine, or, Love as War’, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 September 1898, pp. 51-52 (p. 51).

⁴⁴ Brandes, pp. 35-36.

⁴⁵ ‘The Infernal Feminine, or, Love as War’, pp. 51-52.

If a woman intends [...] self-possession (body possession), speaking as a man we tell her candidly that she will find the eternal vigilance in the price of liberty. She will find that to defend herself against the wiles and the assaults of the foxy sex to which we have the honour to belong, she must wage war to the hilt of the knife.⁴⁶

In *The Philanderer* Grace experiences passionate love as conflicted and problematic – as a state of ceaseless war and subsequently as a threat. It appears that her outlook on sex as a power struggle borrows Nietzschean notions such as the will-to-power not to celebrate passion (as Nietzsche does himself) but to prove love an impossibility. Grace's militant egoism is marked by this paradox. The kind of pro-love sentiment evoked in *The Eagle and the Serpent* seems somehow to be lacking in Grace. The way she sees it, loving 'the Carmen way', so to speak, seems much too burdensome, much too overwhelming. The comedy issuing from Grace's somewhat Lysistratean ethic, her rigid determination to withhold her love in revolt against male power, what is interpreted as emotional incompetence by Julia, 'I suppose it is better to be like you, with a cold heart and a serpent's tongue. Thank heaven, I have a heart [...] you are a coward',⁴⁷ she tells her – raises interesting questions concerning the play's intentions. In a sense, Grace's somewhat ascetic ideas, the determination with which she decides to 'sacrifice' 'love' for 'self', seem intended as a sharp remark, a tragicomedy of the new freewoman, the woman who will love whom she wills, but ironically must not marry whom she loves. As Grace seems to suggest, for her the path from womanhood to selfhood must be a love-less one yet one she has to take. In rough terms the play is a comic reversal of the romantic plot. The play examines the individualistic conceptions which inform the two protagonists. Instead of concluding with the couple's union it ends with their separation. In the last scene, when all obstacles are overcome (Julia accepts defeat and marries Paramore), Grace bids Charteris goodbye.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 52.

⁴⁷ *The Philanderer*, p. 157.

Grace's applied 'unwomanliness' (i.e. egoism) however might be revealed to be 'Nietzschean' for yet another reason. Here is the description Shaw gives us of her:

The lady, Grace Tranfield, is about 32, slight of build, delicate of feature, and sensitive in expression. She is just now given up to the emotion of the moment; but her well closed mouth, proudly set brows, firm chin, and elegant carriage show plenty of determination and self respect.⁴⁸

A fair few critics think that much of the charm of *The Philanderer* lies in its autobiographical character.⁴⁹ As Gibbs informs us, the play's opening scene and the love-triangle (Grace-Charteris-Julia) are based upon an actual incident in Shaw's life. On the evening of February 4, 1893, Mrs. Patterson (Julia in the play) burst into Florence Farr's (Grace) living room, finding Shaw there – a quite heated episode that apparently marked the end of the relationship with Patterson. A month later he would begin writing the play, which he had by then resolved to call 'A Philanderer'. Shaw at the time was involved with both women, although he was trying to disentangle himself (albeit futilely) from Patterson and what he felt to be her possessiveness.⁵⁰ One may argue that real events and people just served as an incidental inspiration for what is essentially just a piece of socially conscious satire. Nonetheless, such information is not irrelevant to my purposes here. It is quite interesting to consider with reference to Shaw's Socialist Nietzschean generation comment, what might be the connection between the fictional egoist in the play and Florence Farr (the real character behind Grace). At first sight, there are some obvious parallels between them. They are of the same age (Farr was also 32 in 1892, when Shaw started writing) and both in a sense new freewomen *a la mode*. Farr, at the time, was mostly known as a performer of Ibsen and an avid Ibsenite herself. She played Rebecca West in the first English production in 1891. An actress, writer, mystic, socialist and

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 99.

⁴⁹ Carlson, p. 97.

⁵⁰ Gibbs, p. 109.

a feminist, she had met Shaw in the evening gatherings of the Socialist League at May Morris's house in Bedford Park, London in 1890 (one possible 'blueprint' for the Ibsen Club perhaps?). Farr, highly independent (both economically and intellectually), strong-willed and opposed to conventional morals, 'especially sexual and domestic morals' (as Shaw would later put it) resisted traditional gender roles. Completely disenchanted with the limitations of married life, as well as with its realities, she obtained a divorce from her husband, a fellow actor, and, not particularly keen on repeating the same mistake again, remained single ever afterwards. Paradoxically, while Farr remained sexually very active – Shaw refers to her 'Leporello list' –⁵¹ not only abstained from marriage but also according to her biographer, described herself as a kind of female 'hermit'.⁵² As Mary Greer notes Farr does not seem to have been particularly enthusiastic about the portrait of Grace. Her novel, *A Dancing Fawn*, which appeared in 1894, includes a parody of her affair with Shaw – possibly, Greer argues, as a retaliation for Shaw's treatment of her in *The Philanderer*.⁵³ Grace might well have had something in her of the wilful, individualistic Farr who doesn't seem to have shared Shaw's idea that a true superwoman needs her 'Tanner', who went on to write a novel *Life Among the Supermen* (never published however) and this was most likely a scoff at her life among Shaw and Yeats, and her love-struggle with them.⁵⁴ Interestingly, Thatcher

⁵¹ Shaw described his early acquaintance with Farr as such: 'She had no bounds to her relations with men whom she liked, and, already had a sort of Leporello list of a dozen adventures, none of which, however, had led to anything serious. She was in violent reaction against Victorian morals. And when the impact of Ibsen was felt in this country, and I wrote somewhere that "home is the girl's prison and the woman's workhouse," I became persona grata with her.' *Florence Farr, Bernard Shaw, and W. B. Yeats Letters*, ed., by Bax Clufford (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1971), p. 87.

⁵² Josephine Alexandra Johnson, 'Florence Farr: A Biography of a New Woman' (unpublished doctoral Thesis, University of Leeds, 1972), p. 348.

⁵³ Mary Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn: Rebels and Priestesses* (Rochester: Park Street Press, 1995), p. 130.

⁵⁴ It is common knowledge among Shaw's scholarship that she persistently resisted Shaw's Pygmalion-like attempts to mould her into his image of the ideal actress, for which, Greer notes, it seems Shaw never forgave her. This kind of struggle to extricate her 'self' from Shaw, not unlike Grace in the play might have been a key theme of an unfinished novel *Life Among*

notes how Florence lectured on several occasions at the Leeds Arts Club. Her militancy and her Nietzscheanism (she was ‘an advocate of Nietzsche’, according to her biographer)⁵⁵ can be seen later in her contributions to *The New Age*. It may be argued that for an advanced egoist and a feminist Nietzschean like Farr (whose interests ranging from socialism to feminism, mysticism, eugenics and literature), Shaw’s Nietzscheanism posed several questions. Her opposition to Shaw and his Nietzscheanism is most evident in some early *New Age* articles. In ‘G. B. S. and New York’,⁵⁶ Farr, clearly uninspired by Shaw’s modern superwoman (Anna in *Man and Superman*) says that, like most of Shaw’s other women, she too is ‘ornamental.’⁵⁷ Possibly, she was also less than impressed by the Shavian idea that women can only be mothers of the superman and cannot aspire to superhumanity themselves, as expressed in Anna’s maternal cry for the superman at the end of the play. Her criticism of Shaw’s ineptitudes as a Nietzschean continued in her review of Orage’s new book on Nietzsche, *Consciousness: Animal, Human, and Superman*. This review, dated 1907, is, on the whole, favourable. It is a short semi-spiritual, semi-psychological analysis of Nietzsche’s superman ideal, in which, Farr alludes to Shaw’s *Man and Superman*:

England has been trembling on the verge of the Socialism that levels down for half a century; and the shade of Nietzsche, more powerful in death than ever in life, overshadows the great reforming movement and informs it with aristocratic spirit [...]. Mr Orage’s mind is equipped by nature [...] to give us a far clearer idea of Superman or Aristocratic Consciousness than we gather from the songs of Nietzsche or from Shaw’s great classic, *Man and Superman*.⁵⁸

In reaction to Shaw’s take on the superman idea, she stresses the female regenerative aspect inherent in this concept, arguing that the superman is in fact ‘Woman’:

the Supermen, from which however only a small fragment survives. For more see Greer, pp. 130-133; 310-311.

⁵⁵ Johnson, p. 285.

⁵⁶ Florence Farr, ‘G. B. Shaw and New York’, *The New Age*, 23 May 1907, p. 57.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁵⁸ Florence Farr, ‘Superman Consciousness’, *The New Age*, 6 June 1907, p. 92.

This state of consciousness, now identified by leading modern thinkers as the state called superman, is mystically feminine [...]. It is often been said jokingly that Superman is *Woman*; but it is only *woman* in her symbolic sense of wisdom as the field of the new birth we all await.⁵⁹

Shaw's notion of the superman is traditionally sought in *Man and Superman* as represented in the union of John Tanner, Shaw's philosopher-genius and Anna, the embodiment of the 'Life Force'. However, a rough interpretation of the concept is offered in a letter Shaw wrote to *The Eagle and the Serpent* in 1898. In the special issue 'Why do the Ungodly Prosper?' the editor put forth the question of whether 'might is right'.⁶⁰ Shaw's letter-reply reads: 'whether might is right is not an issue since the most powerful will prevail, whether it is right or wrong'.⁶¹ As Shaw argues in his letter-response to Barnhill, what appears to be the real evil is the ostensible 'rightness of the masses', which precludes the advancement of the individual.⁶² Despite the obvious need for improvement, social and cultural amelioration cannot be maintained, as long as the modern age allows 'the rule of a standard Morality'. He writes:

But under the rule of a standard Morality evolution is limited by the fact that at a certain point of development the individual in whom the advance is manifested (say the Superman) is attacked and destroyed in the name of Right by other less developed individuals; so that in effect the race does will its own destruction on the plane of the Superman. And the attack presents itself to these less developed ones as an attack of right on might [...]. So much of the Superman of action.⁶³

According to Shaw, as long as the 'will of the masses' (i.e. mainstream culture) reigns, individuality cannot be exercised freely, and thus evolution comes to a halt. The average man's attempt to destroy the advanced individual, and, at the same

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 92. My emphasis.

⁶⁰ Barnhill, 'Our Sphinx's Fatal Question: Why Do the Ungodly Prosper?', *Eagle and the Serpent*. No. 18. *Special Issue on Why do the Ungodly Prosper*, [1902(?)], pp. 68-73.

⁶¹ Shaw's letter appears in this column under the heading: 'Not the Pope but Mr. Bernard Shaw' – and Barnhill remarks: 'We had hoped to present our readers with a Papal Bull on this subject, but can only offer them a few of the Irish variety from Mr. G. B. Shaw', p. 69. G. B. Shaw, Letter, *Eagle and the Serpent*. No. 18. *Special Issue*, pp 69-70 (p. 69).

⁶² Ibid., p. 69.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 69.

time, the effort of the individual-superman to rise beyond the average man's level is essentially the battle of good versus evil, of old culture and new culture, regeneration against apathy and decay. The true individual of action (superman) is proven in his battle against such evils, against the 'right' of mainstream culture and the 'right' of established conventions – an eternal seeker of his own sense of righteousness. This problem, namely, the battle between private will and the will of the community, the righteousness of the many versus the righteousness of the one, is an idea that underlies much of *The Devil's Disciple*, as I will argue further.

2.3 *The Devil's Disciple* (1897)

In discussing Shaw's early plays, Jackson notes how *The Devil's Disciple* was Shaw's first attempt to put forth the concept of the superman. As he argues in his study of Shaw, in the actions of 'Dick Dudgeon, Shaw's 'embryonic superman' we discover 'the real Shaw hero – the man who knows what he wants and wills his way to it', 'the incarnation of self-expression rather than self-suppression.' As Jackson tells us: he (Dudgeon) is a 'forerunner of the genuine Shaw conception of Man, who is really undeveloped Superman.'⁶⁴

It appears that Jackson's remark about the Nietzschean overtones in the play was not miles from what Shaw originally intended. In an introductory note written by Shaw for a Viennese performance of the play titled 'A Devil of a Fellow: Self-Criticism', Shaw refers to Nietzsche in relation to the play's exposition of puritanical attitudes.⁶⁵ The German translation of Shaw's introductory note was published in the

⁶⁴ Shaw, p. 190.

⁶⁵ G. B. Shaw, 'A Devil of a Fellow: Self-Criticism', *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 20 (2000), 247-252. This is the first publication of the original English text.

Viennese paper *Die Zeit* (a forum of Viennese Fabians),⁶⁶ on 22 of February 1903, three days before the opening of *The Devil's Disciple*. In it he makes particular reference to Nietzsche: 'The real test of Viennese criticism will be its understanding of the character of the Puritan. Only a Puritan can understand Nietzsche.'⁶⁷

In addition, the original preface to the play also reveals correspondences between Nietzsche and so-called 'diabolonian ethics', as embodied in the figure of Dick Dudgeon. Dudgeon, the 'devil's disciple', is symbolizing 'our newest idol, the Superman, celebrating the death of the godhead.'⁶⁸ As Shaw points out, his conception of Dudgeon's avowed Diabolonianism is meant as a continuation of the iconoclastic tradition of John Bunyan, William Blake and Nietzsche:

Let those who have praised my originality in conceiving Dick Dudgeon's strange religion read Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* [...]. But they need not go back to Blake and Bunyan. Have they not heard the recent fuss about Nietzsche and his *Good and Evil Turned Inside Out*? [...] There was never a play more certain to be written than *The Devil's Disciple* at the end of the nineteenth century. The age was visibly pregnant with it.⁶⁹

The Devil's Disciple is the first of the three *Plays for Puritans*. The action is taking place during the American Revolution in the town of Websterbridge, in New Hampshire. In a truly Nietzschean beyond good and evil mode, the play tells us the story of Richard Dudgeon, a self-professed anti-Christ (and egoist) turned Saviour (and altruist) on his deathbed. For reasons that remain unclear Dudgeon has a reputation of a 'bad man'.⁷⁰ When Essie, the youngest member of the family, asks about the nature of his wrongdoing, Judith, the priest's wife, tells her: You must not

⁶⁶ In fact the paper was edited by Isidor Singer and Heinrich Kanner, both members of the Viennese Fabian Society.

⁶⁷ 'A Devil of a Fellow: Self-Criticism', p. 252. The document had been in the possession of the Shaw archives in the British Library and was published only recently, in 2003.

⁶⁸ G. B. Shaw, 'Preface', in *Three Plays for Puritans. The Devil's Disciple, Caesar and Cleopatra, and Captain Brassbound's Conversion* (London: Constable and Company, 1947), pp. xxiv-xxv.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xxv.

⁷⁰ G. B. Shaw, *The Devil's Disciple*, in *Three Plays for Puritans*, ed. by Dan. H. Lawrence (London: Penguin Books, 2000), pp. 41-126 (p. 106).

ask questions about him, Essie. You are too young to know what it is to be a bad man.'⁷¹ A 'smuggler' by profession and a 'devil' by faith,⁷² we learn that he has left his town to 'live with gypsies', and that 'he has no love for his mother and his family'. 'A reprobate' and a 'lost sinner', according to his puritanical mother, and the town's outcast 'to whom the respectable people won't speak'⁷³, he seems to have deliberately broken off the ties both with his family and his community. As we soon find out his dissent is on his own terms. The structure of the play is built upon a fundamental dichotomy. The seeming 'goodness' of the 'Old Puritanism' as represented by Mrs. Dudgeon, versus the apparent evil nature of Dudgeon himself. This man is a self-professed priest of 'the other order [...] the Devil's Disciple'. As he tells Essie, his niece:

RICHARD I was brought up in the other service; but I knew from the first that the Devil was my natural master and captain and friend. I saw that he was in the right, and that the world cringed to his conqueror only through fear [...]. I prayed secretly to him; and he comforted me, and saved me from having my spirit broken in this house of children's tears.⁷⁴

In Act I Dudgeon returns to his home town upon hearing the news of his father's death. As lawyer Hawkins informs him, the will makes him the sole inheritor and the new master of the house, much to his mother's chagrin. Dick, as a genuinely unrepentant prodigal son tells her that from that moment onwards the house will be the church of his devilish joyful gospel, bidding Essie to follow him:

RICHARD [...] from this day this house is his [the devil's] home; and no child shall cry in it: this hearth is his altar; and no soul shall ever cower over it in the dark evenings and be afraid.⁷⁵

In Act II Dudgeon pays a visit to his neighbour, Antony Anderson, the Presbyterian minister of the town. Anderson leaves the house to attend to Mrs. Dudgeon who is

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

dying and leaving Dudgeon alone with Judith, Anderson's beautiful and much younger wife. Not a moment later, British soldiers rush into the house in search of Anderson. They are ordered to arrest the Reverend with the intention of hanging him as an example for the town's insurgence. Finding Dudgeon there the soldiers naturally mistake him for Anderson and he seems reluctant to contradict them. Despite his abdication of the old faith he acts according to the Christian duty of loving one's neighbour (perhaps a little too much, judging from his behaviour towards the priest's wife) and allows the soldiers to take him instead.

As discussed in the first chapter, radical Nietzscheanism as expressed in such loci as *The Eagle and the Serpent*, was, to a great extent, informed by philosophical egoism. In this frame, Nietzsche emerges as an exponent of radical egoism and a preacher of a new 'joyful' serpent-like philosophy of beyond good and evil. As James Walker argues in his *Philosophy of Egoism*⁷⁶ (a book Barnhill recommends to all his readers), the doctrine of individuality, as understood by radical egoists, is meant to wage war against the theocracy of the idea, which is in fact a blind adherence to a morality based on a good and evil division. Philosophic egoism serves to reveal the so-called 'logomachy of the Moralists.'⁷⁷ As Walker argues in his book, such Moralists have 'right and wrong, good and evil, Altruism and Egoism in their brains as opposites'; with them 'facts must be opposites, absolute opposites all the way through. This distinction is the moralists' rhetorical weapon, the driving force behind all their categorical 'thou-shalt' imperatives, such as the Christian virtue of duty, obedience, forgiveness, and sacrifice:

The Moralists, or Altruists, come with a tale of Duty, or moral obligation [...]. It is horrifying to them that I act on consciousness of satisfaction, on genial impulse, on calculation of gain, and not in submission to the Moralistic judgment of 'conscience'.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ James L. Walker, *The Philosophy of Egoism* (Denver: Katherine Walker, 1905).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Thus, what the radical egoists, like Nietzsche, believed, is that true conscience is innate and individual, rather than conditioned and communal.

According to Jackson, Dick Dudgeon, who ‘steps on to the stage surrounded by all the appurtenances of histrionic romance and does just what he wants to do, following the opposite to the conventional God, the Devil’⁷⁹ is one such egoist. By an intelligent conceptual shift, the play shows that the puritanical sense of goodness in the context of the play is inadequate, if not hypocritical. In discussing the Christian doctrine of unselfishness in the light of Nietzsche’s aristocratic radicalism, Brandes gives a clear definition about conventional moral notions of unselfishness and self-sacrifice:

Then there is the doctrine of unselfishness. To be moral is to be unselfish. It is good to be so, we are told. But what does that mean – good? Good for whom? Not for the self-sacrificer, but for his neighbour. He who praises the virtue of unselfishness, praises something that is good for the community but harmful to the individual. And the neighbour who wants to be loved unselfishly is not himself unselfish. The fundamental contradiction in this morality is that it demands and commends a renunciation of the ego, for the benefit of another ego.⁸⁰

Discussing morality in relation to Nietzsche’s notion of the superman-genius, Brandes notes: ‘The free, exceptional man’ who ‘feels in his innermost being that he cannot be compared with others is charged as being “immoral” because he broke with the tradition which the others regarded with superstitious fear.’⁸¹ In a similar tone, Jackson, in his discussion of Shaw’s notion of the superman argues how ‘[Shaw’s] moral hero does not say, as Goodness and Virtue said in the old plays, “Behold, I am good because I like goodness,” but “Behold, I am good because I am myself”’.⁸² From the above, one may infer, that Dudgeon, a model unrepentant prodigal son and prototypical dissenter, a character intended to mock convention and

⁷⁹ *Shaw*, p. 190.

⁸⁰ Brandes, p. 24-25.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁸² *Shaw*, p. 147.

the prescribed orthodoxies of many of his fellow townspeople, seems, one may argue, to be cast as an example of the new immoral, or rather, 'beyond-moral' virtues that Shaw envisions, and which in turn, Brandes and Jackson typically associate with Nietzsche's egoist-superman.

As Shaw would write to Ellen Terry on March 13, 1897, Richard is '*superior* to religion and morality as typified by his mother and his home [...] [and] love as typified by Judith.'⁸³ In Act II, Judith visits Dudgeon in the Town Hall, where he is held awaiting trial and tries to talk him out of his decision to sacrifice himself. When he once more refuses, she asks him for a reason:

JUDITH Oh, why will you not be simple with me – honest and straightforward? If you are so selfish as that, why did you let them take you last night?

RICHARD (*gaily*) Upon my life, Mrs. Anderson, I don't know. I've been asking myself that question ever since; and I can find no manner of reason for acting as I did.

JUDITH You know you did it for his sake, believing he was a more worthy man than yourself.

RICHARD (*laughing*) Oh! No: that's a very pretty reason, I must say; but I'm not so modest as that. No: it wasn't for his sake.

JUDITH (*after a pause, during which she looks shamefacedly at him, blushing painfully*) Was it for my sake?⁸⁴

Truly amazed by such a selfless action (from such a selfish man), she tells him that for such a deed there has to be a motive. Was it duty or perhaps love that made him act so? To this Dudgeon bluntly responds:

DUDGEON You know how much I have lived with worthless men-aye, and worthless women too. Well, they could all rise to some sort of goodness and kindness when they were in love.

*The word love comes from him with true Puritan scorn.*⁸⁵

And he goes on to say:

RICHARD What I did [...] I did in cold blood [...]. I had no motive and no interest: all I can tell you is that when it came to the point whether I would take my neck out of the noose and put another man's into it, I could not do it. I don't know why not: I see myself as a fool for my

⁸³ Bernard Shaw, *Collected Letters 1874-1897* (London: Max Reinhardt, 1965-1988), 1 (1965), p. 734.

⁸⁴ *The Devil's Disciple*, p. 91.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

pains; but I could not and I cannot. I have been brought up standing by the law of my own nature; and I may not go against it, gallows or no gallows. I should have done the same for any other man in the town, or any other man's wife. Do you understand that?⁸⁶

As Richard reveals to Judith, it was, after all, nothing but blind instinct that prompted him to act that way. As he tells to a frustrated, heart-broken woman in love, his act was neither a proof of love, as she secretly hoped, nor a testament of altruism, as common morality might see it. Driven not by a certain heroic code, nor a kind of romantic ideal, this act of genuine 'altruism' was in fact the product of a 'cold' blind will – the result of being true to his 'own nature.' It can be argued that in a sense, Dudgeon is conceived as the prototypical 'superman-man of action' as Shaw defines him in *The Eagle and the Serpent*, a model radical egoist lacking in good 'conscience' as typified by convention. In simple words, Dudgeon acts morally because he obeys a personal moral imperative – not because of an extrinsic 'have to', but of an intrinsic 'will to'. Brandes's analysis of moral conscience and individualism may be interesting to consider in terms of the model of egoistic conscience Shaw presents us with:

But what of the voice and judgment of conscience? The difficulty is that we have a conscience behind our conscience, an intellectual one behind the moral [...]. We can see quite well that our opinions of what is noble and good, our moral valuations, are powerful levers where action is concerned; but we must begin by refining these opinions and independently creating for ourselves new tables of values.⁸⁷

Such understanding of morality may be seen as comparable to the kind of conscience typified by the character of Dudgeon who is in his way subject to a puritan conscience, a strict individual conscience requiring high personal standards – standards superior to the ones customary 'rightness' dictates. His conscience is intended as a new free moral conscience, expressive of an egoistic ethic of will and strength imposed by the individual and no other. By defining himself against the

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 94.

⁸⁷ Brandes, pp. 25-26.

'right' ethic of his community, and by proving himself in essence 'good', the play poses questions about our conventional understanding of ideas such as 'heroism' 'duty' and 'love', and the way in which they are traditionally applied. Contrary to conventional stereotypes of romantic heroism, Shaw purposely proposes a godless saint, a heretic turned saviour, calling attention to the artificiality and often the hypocrisy underlying traditional moral conceptions of goodness and badness. It can be argued that overall the play is about challenging traditional ideals of good and evil. What Dudgeon's diabolonian individualism affects is exactly this. His portrayal as the quintessential 'evil' and the discovery of his essential goodness in the end are there to suggest, that the morality of good and evil is much more complex an issue than the audience might have thought.

To summarise what I have argued in this chapter, I have, so far, suggested that in Shaw's early drama in general, and in the two plays discussed above in particular, one sees evidence of a preoccupation with then-current Nietzschean attitudes and trends. While *The Philanderer* comes across as an early satire on the fashionable attempts at egoism, such works as *The Devil's Disciple* show a more serious engagement with Nietzschean radicalism on Shaw's part. It is possible, I believe, that there exists an interplay between *The Devil's Disciple* and other forms of radical Nietzscheanism, and it would have been worthwhile, if space had allowed, to look in more detail for likely correspondences between them.⁸⁸ Unfortunately because of

⁸⁸ Critics like Hannes Schweiger and James Hulse have convincingly demonstrated how the play was initially intended for a socialist audience. Hannes Schweiger, 'Bernard Shaw's Contributions to the Culture and Politics of *Fin de Siècle* Vienna', *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw's Studies*, 25 (2005), 135-146; and James Hulse, *Revolutionaries in London* (Michigan: Clarendon Press, 1970). According to Schweiger, the play was Shaw's conscious attempt to present himself as a progressive and unconventional socialist playwright violating the traditional conventions of drama, especially romantic drama (p. 135), while Hulse, notes how the figure of Dudgeon synthesizes Shaw's effort to 'reform the theatre by assaulting its favourite illusions and by introducing an unconventional ethic', p. 134. I believe that it would be interesting to consider, if time had allowed, *The Devil's Disciple* within the frame of Shaw's evolving social aesthetic. There is an ongoing preoccupation with Nietzschean vitalism in the work of Shaw, as is evident in other plays from that period, and it would have been interesting

practical limitations further discussion of such connections falls outside the scope of this thesis.

2.4 *Man and Superman* (1903)

Let us now consider *Man and Superman*. As Jackson further noted in his study of him, Shaw's art theorizing during the period 1898-1903 would be marked by a reconsideration of the aesthetics and overall function of social drama.⁸⁹ Indeed, *Man and Superman*, the play following *The Devil's Disciple*, typifies such concerns, signalling Shaw's shift towards a more subtly propagandistic aesthetic agenda. As it will be shown, in this play, 'the most recognisably "Nietzschean" of all Shaw's plays'⁹⁰ according to Thatcher, the notion of Superman acquires a more concrete shape and substance – it becomes Shaw's basis for elaboration on such ideas as 'Life Force' and 'Art-Philosophy', which, in their turn, provide further insights into the kind of philosophy that underpins Shaw's vitalistic social aesthetic. Interestingly enough, the play was defined by Shaw as a philosophic comedy. It was first published in book form in 1903 and contains Shaw's 'Epistle Dedicatory' to a former colleague, which serves as a kind of preface. Shaw also includes a somewhat lengthy revolutionary tract called 'The Revolutionist's Handbook and Pocket Companion' and a small supplement of aphorisms, titled 'Maxims for Revolutionaries'. It seems logical to assume that John Tanner, the revolutionary of *Man and Superman* and the fictional author of 'A Revolutionary's Handbook and Pocket Companion' (published as an appendix to the play), was meant as the 'superman' character in the play. It may be argued, albeit somewhat tentatively that Tanner, like Dudgeon, is in a way

to compare and contrast it with the more anarchical tones of Nietzschean radicalism, as echoed in *The Eagle and the Serpent*.

⁸⁹ Jackson p. 173.

⁹⁰ Thatcher, p. 189.

following in the tradition of Shaw's supermen-rebels. Indeed, he seems to have retained some of the radical qualities of his predecessor. His fate as a superman-egoist, however, proves less glorious. As Shaw tells us, Tanner, a sworn revolutionary as well as 'a member of the Idle Rich Class', 'comes to birth as a stage-production of the tragic-comic love chase of a man by a woman [...] he is the quarry instead of the huntsman.'⁹¹ In the last act, Tanner is romantically ambushed by Anna Whitefield's seductive power (Shaw's 'Everywoman' and 'Life Force'), and their love struggle turns into a comedy act, with Tanner desperately trying to free himself from her enticing grip:

TANNER I will not marry you. I will not marry you.

ANN Oh, you will, you will.

TANNER I tell you, no, no, no.

ANN I tell you, yes, yes, yes.⁹²

Finally, at the end of Act IV, Shaw's superman, still human-all-too-human, lets himself be enchanted, this time admitting surrender:

ANN Well, I made a mistake: you do not love me.

TANNER (*seizing her in his arms*) It is false. I love you. The Life Force enchants me. I have the whole world in my arms when I clasp you. But I am fighting for my freedom, for my honor, for my self, one and indivisible.⁹³

As the plot of the play stands, Shaw's intentions are not particularly clear, and the comedy that ensues from the Tanner-Anna power-struggle as well as the tone of the conclusion (the universe laughing at Tanner – 'Universal Laughter')⁹⁴, might make one wonder whether this is meant as a parody of Nietzschean egoism or not. The last scene famously ends with Shaw's superman accepting defeat, and a triumphant Anna imploring him to carry on with his rebel talk, with his own and the universe's laughter in the background.

⁹¹ *Man and Superman*, p. 18.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

Man and Superman a 'comedy and a philosophy', is, admittedly, one of Shaw's most elaborate and complex plays. It was conceived by 1901, written by 1902, and published a year after. The play consists of four acts. It is important to bear in mind that *Man and Superman* has been traditionally treated as two distinct plays, a comedy of manners consisting of Acts I, II and IV, and Act III titled 'Don Juan in Hell', a kind of philosophical contest between the Devil and the notorious Don Juan. As an advertisement from *The New Age* from May 1907 announced, daily evening performances of *Man and Superman* were taking place during the month of June at Court Theatre, London, *Don Juan in Hell* in tandem with *The Man of Destiny*, staged as a separate show at the Matinée.⁹⁵

A theatre review from Haden L. Guest, the regular drama critic for *The New Age*, may give a sense of how *Don Juan* was received by the theatre-goers of London at the time. This is his account of the play: 'the play lasts two hours, the discussion is abstract, the views expressed there are often violently anticonventional, and yet everyone stays on.'⁹⁶ In his review, Guest spends most time complaining about the length of Don Juan's philosophical speeches, about how 'one is obliged to follow very closely', as well as about the unconventional lighting: 'it is only distracting to sit in the light looking into darkness', he says at some point. Yet while at first he finds much about the play offputting, on the whole he has to admit to the charm of the dark, somewhat decadent, languid interior: the stage 'in darkness [...] draped with heavy curtains', 'Dona Ana in exquisite dress in the middle, Don Juan on one side, and the Statue and the Devil on the other'), and the review concludes with the remark that he must see the show again.

Don Juan in Hell, that is, Act III of *Man and Superman*, can be termed as a play within a play, and consists of the unconscious Tanner's dream of himself as Don

⁹⁵ 'Ads section', *The New Age*, 30 May 1907, p. 72.

⁹⁶ Haden L. Guest, 'Man and Superman', *The New Age*, 13 June, 1907, p. 108.

Juan in his own version of afterlife. Arguably, the dream device is used not only to reveal the truth in the outer story (the truth behind Ann's pursuit of Tanner – and the reason he finally surrenders to her) but, perhaps most importantly, as a lesson in Shavian philosophy, presented in the form of a long debate between Don Juan, a proponent of the Life Force – and the Devil, a pessimist of the old school and a confirmed hedonist. In the Hell Scene we abandon realism and enter the land of fantasy and philosophic speculation. The formal debate starts with a contest in persuasion over the purpose and nature of existence – ending with Don Juan's ascendancy to Heaven, another great loss for the Devil's populist Party. 'THE DEVIL (*gloomily*) His going is a political defeat. I cannot keep these Life Worshipers: they all go.'⁹⁷ Shaw, in a note he wrote in June 1907, describes the scene as follows:

'The scene', an abysmal void, represents Hell, and the persons of the drama speak of hell, heaven and earth as if they were separate localities [...]. It must be remembered that such localizations are purely figurative [...]. Modern theology conceives heaven and hell, not as places, but as states of the soul.⁹⁸

Interestingly enough, in the Shavian otherworld, Christian notions of eternal punishment and damnation are denuded of their traditional connotations; the otherworld is a 'city much like Seville',⁹⁹ as Don Juan jokingly tells Don Ana, and newcomers are advised to renounce all hope. Above the gates Dante's classic warning urges, 'leave every hope behind, ye who enter.'¹⁰⁰ This state of consciousness is immutable – timelessness and eternity run supreme. Shaw's 'higher theology' declares Heaven and Hell not as fixed metaphysical localities in a reality far beyond but as states of individual consciousness – and the quarrel of Don-Juan

⁹⁷George Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman*, ed., by Dan. H. Lawrence (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), p. 171.

⁹⁸ G. B. Shaw Collection. British Library. 65156 S. Vol. I S (ff. 86). Shaw's handwritten draft for a program intended for the performance of the play, titled 'Don Juan in Hell' and dated [June 1907?]. It begins: '[A]s the scene may prove puzzling at a first hearing to those who are not to some extent skilled in modern theology, the Management have asked the Author to offer the Court audience the same assistance that concert goers are accustomed to receive in the form of an analytical programme.'

⁹⁹ *Man and Superman*, p. 127.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

and the Devil is actually a philosophical enquiry into the notion of being and becoming, self-creation and evolution.

Shaw's preoccupation with such ideas can be traced in one of his letters to Archer. As he puts it, *Man and Superman* is framed within a 'theory of circles', a philosophic notion which has been 'one of the staples of Pessimism ever since Pessimism existed.'¹⁰¹ The philosophical idea of circles, a philosophical idea that goes back to Heraclitus and underpins both Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's versions of pessimism¹⁰², is embodied in the character of Anna, Shaw's quintessential symbol of the Life Force. This notwithstanding, it is mainly in *Don Juan in Hell* that we truly get a sense of the philosophic implications of such an obscure term – where we have Don Juan, 'a confirmed Life Force Worshipper', (like Nietzsche)¹⁰³, defending the notion against the stoic nihilism of the Devil. In order to appreciate Shaw's references to Nietzsche in the play, particularly where the notion of Life Force is concerned, I will once more resort to Brandes who in his essay sums up the difference between Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's pessimism. As Brandes notes, there are different kinds of pessimism, and Schopenhauer represents what Nietzsche would later come to think of as nihilistic pessimism. In response to Schopenhauer's pessimism of renunciation Nietzsche proposes a pessimism of 'healthiness', a pessimism 'derived from strength, from exuberant power', substituting Schopenhauer's notion of the will-to-live for a new one: will-to-power.¹⁰⁴ Nietzsche's engagement with Schopenhauer's pessimism is, in essence, an attempt to deal with the sickness of the modern age, the 'degenerate and enfeebled instincts of

¹⁰¹ *Collected Letters*, II, p. 359.

¹⁰² Thatcher detects a preoccupation with pessimism in Shaw's formulation of the Life Force: Shaw 'convert[s] Schopenhauer's malevolent *Wille* into a benevolent Life Force [...]. *Man and Superman* is an illustration of this line of thought.' p. .

¹⁰³ *Man and Superman*, p. 172. While watching Don Juan depart for Heaven, the Devil laments how Nietzsche 'also came here [i.e to Hell] first, before he recovered his wits. I had some hopes of him; but he was a confirmed Life Force worshipper', p. 172.

¹⁰⁴ Brandes, p. 21.

decadence'.¹⁰⁵ This sickness manifests itself in a variety of ways, primarily through aesthetic idealism and historical optimism. Brandes goes on to elaborate: 'only he who has learnt to know life and is equipped for action has use for history and is capable of applying it'.¹⁰⁶

My interpretation is that the Devil is the decadent, nihilistic pessimist of the play. Fully conscious of the irrationality of human life, the 'blundering of the life force', that is, the impersonal, blind force of nature, he constantly dwells on the futility and crudeness of human life. Being the Devil, he argues that no explanation can be given for why things are the way they are, and there is no getting out of it. The inescapable knowledge of life's eternal recurrence, of the never-ceasing purposeless oscillation with every moment 'repeated [...] a thousand times,'¹⁰⁷ is profoundly wearing: 'when you are as old as I am', he tells Don-Juan, 'when you have a thousand times wearied of heaven [...] and a thousand times wearied of hell [...] you will discover the profound truth [...] Vanitas vanitatum.'¹⁰⁸ And he concludes his theory of nihilism by saying: 'You will discover the profound truth of the saying of my friend Koheleth, that there is nothing new under the sun.'¹⁰⁹

Although the disease of life is undoubtedly great and without a remedy – salvation is not only possible, but certain, for all those who trust in Devil, we soon find out. In Shavian Hell, the realm of romantic art, of beautiful lies, of ideals, of transcendence, and illusion, life as play-acting carries on but without its physical burden. In a beautiful semblance of life which goes on as 'perpetual romance, a universal melodrama', 'appearance' becomes 'beauty', 'emotions love', 'sentiments heroism', and 'aspirations virtue'.¹¹⁰ Shaw's Devil, a true aesthete decadent, invents

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁰⁷ *Man and Superman*, p. 168.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 168.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 168.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 140.

his own satanic heaven to compensate for the will of life to 'death' and 'ugliness': 'I could give you a thousand instances' he tells to Don Juan, 'but they all come to the same thing: the power that nerved Life to the effort of organizing itself into the human being is not the need for higher life but for a more efficient engine of destruction.'¹¹¹ Neither life, an 'infinite comedy of illusion'¹¹² has intrinsic value, nor nature possesses a 'brain', a higher intellect to direct it upwards. Consequently any effort towards progress is unavailing – and a philosophy that tells one differently vulgarly 'unbecoming'. The Devil to Don Juan:

THE DEVIL Well, well, go your way, Senor Don Juan. I prefer to be my own master and not the tool of any blundering universal force. I know that beauty is good to look at; that music is good to hear; that love is good to feel [...]. It is universally admitted in good society that the Prince of Darkness is a gentleman; and that is enough for me. As to your Life Force, which you think irresistible, it is the most resistible thing in the world for a person of any character [...] [invented by the] naturally vulgar and credulous, as all reformers are [...].¹¹³

As I have already pointed out in the previous chapter, Shaw's early art theory expresses the need for a new vitalistic social aesthetic with a therapeutic, regenerative and educational end. Fearing nihilism and degeneration, Shaw in *The Sanity of Art* argued that, unless humanity wants to drown itself in Schopenhauer's gloom, 'we will have to drop the Nirvana nonsense, the pessimism, the rationalism, the supernatural theology, and all the other subterfuges to which we cling' out of the fear for the irrational, the fear to look 'life straight in the face.'¹¹⁴ This modern sickness becomes all the more obvious in the aesthetic decadentism that he sees contaminating the culture of his contemporaries. In the introductory note to *The Devil's Disciple*, Shaw reiterated his case for the need to resuscitate culture via an art of vitality and will:

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 144.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 168.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 170.

¹¹⁴ *The Sanity of Art*, p. 59.

I suspect Vienna of being romantic and artistic: two things which are for me the abomination of desolation. Happiness and beauty are said to be almost as highly esteemed in Vienna as they are in London. I am not particularly fond of either [...]. One thing at least I can promise to the Viennese playgoer. He will not be pestered in my plays with beauty, happiness, goodness, badness, romance, or any such nonsense. My work has only one subject: *Life*; and only one quality: the interest of life.¹¹⁵

As Jackson noted in his *Shaw* book, Shaw the playwright cannot be divorced from Shaw the Fabian: his aesthetic philosophy is directly tied to his broader social concerns – ‘his plays are critical and dramatic statement[s] of social disease’.¹¹⁶ As the critic argues, the Shavian aesthetic is first and foremost an attempt to deal with ‘the current state of affairs’, with the malaise of modernity which manifests itself in many ways. Jackson writes: ‘there are no illusions left with regard to social and cultural progress’; the theory of ‘finality in politics, religion, or art, is an illusion.’¹¹⁷ Modern culture can only be regenerated through ‘the constant challenging of current conditions’, through a constant overcoming of ‘what is accepted and fixed.’¹¹⁸ *Man and Superman*, according to Jackson, articulates this problem philosophically. There Shaw, the ‘Dionysian philosopher’, relegates ‘base sociology [...] to the preface or appendix, where it takes the form of commentation upon the philosophic content which now holds his stage.’¹¹⁹

This Dionysian ‘way’, and how it relates to the notion of the artist-philosopher, is most clearly and explicitly outlined in the ‘Epistle Dedicatory’. There, Shaw draws a distinction between romantic art and the art of the artist-philosophers, the latter being ‘the only artists I [Shaw] take quite seriously[:] [...] Even since, as a boy, I first breathed the air of the transcendental regions at a performance of Mozart’s *Zauberflöte*, I have been proof against its garish splendours and alcoholic

¹¹⁵ ‘A Devil of a Fellow: Self-Criticism’, p. 252.

¹¹⁶ *Shaw*, p. 158.

¹¹⁷ *Man and Superman*, p. 173.

¹¹⁸ *Shaw*, p. 158.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

excitements.¹²⁰ For Shaw, the artist-philosopher suggests an aesthetic counter-model. Against the ‘Tappertitian’, ‘sane’ ‘sentimentalism’ of Dickens’, the ‘transcendentalism’ of Mozart, and even the irreligious ‘will-less pessimism’ that typifies Shakespeare’s Hamlet¹²¹ – Shaw juxtaposes the art of the artist-philosophers: ‘Bunyan, Blake [...] Goethe, Shelley, Schopenhauer, Wagner, Ibsen, Morris, Tolstoy, and Nietzsche’. These are some of the writers for whom he feels the closest kinship, ‘whose peculiar sense of the world [he] recognise[s] as more or less akin to[his] own.’¹²² In an age divested of faith and vision, art’s and philosophy’s crucial function is to uplift the will of the modern individual, so that when he looks back ‘from the brink of the river of death, over the strife and labour of his pilgrimage’, will still say: ‘yet do I not repent me.’¹²³

Nietzsche’s diagnosis of modernity from the lens of art as formulated in *The Will to Power* may help clarify some of the points raised above. In ‘Book Three: Principles of a New Evaluation’ Nietzsche distinguishes between two types of art: ‘a false romantic art’, a style of art which is meant to arouse ‘beautiful feelings’; and the presumably truer art of the ‘grand style’, characterised by a certain Dionysian pessimism of the strong. The first is a symptom of spiritual decline, of the unhealthy state that modernity finds itself in, of a ‘forward-downward’ spiral in which all ‘instinct for life destroys itself’ in a conflagration of ‘Christianity’, ‘nihilism’, and ‘physiological decadence’.¹²⁴ Against this kind of ‘religio-moral pessimism’ which

¹²⁰ *Man and Superman*, p. 29.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29. He tells us about them: ‘In all their fictions there is no leading thought or inspiration for which any man could conceivably risk the spoiling of his hat in a shower, much less his life’, p. 29.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 32. Recognizing the unique role of art in the progress of society Brandes also argues how ‘salvation lies in a real aristocracy’, the aristocracy of highly gifted individual geniuses who act as ‘educators’, as interpreters of the particular age – mentioning Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Nietzsche, among others, as unique cases of individuals through whom ‘culture is revived’, p. 13. Interestingly Brandes, also, like Shaw in the Epistle, identifies in the philosophy of such artists-individuals a certain type of ‘will’ lacking in contemporary culture.

¹²⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 449.

takes refuge in the form of beauty, Nietzsche puts forth the ‘tragic artist’, the bearer of a profound ‘aesthetic Yes’ to ‘the terrifying, the evil; and the questionable in life’.¹²⁵ Summing up the conception of art as laid out in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche notes: ‘metaphysics, morality, religion, science – in this book these things merit consideration only as various forms of lies. [...] Man, the artist-man as well, must once again become ‘master of “material” – master of truth!’¹²⁶ The ‘tragic-Dionysian state’ seems to describe a consciousness fully aware of this inescapably ‘material’ truth, yet one which ‘commands’ and ‘wills’, which desires to become, grow, and shape, i.e. to affirm and *create*, ‘to become master of the chaos one is’.¹²⁷

In *Don Juan in Hell*, all these ideas are invoked once more, this time through the philosopher-protagonist, Don Juan. In the course of the Hell scene, the confrontation between the Devil and Don Juan unfurls into a complex philosophical argument over the relationship between life and action, theory and practice, art and philosophy, will and power: Don Juan becomes the Devil’s arch-nemesis – his *amor fati* life philosophy being his armour against the all-consuming existential angst of hell. As Shaw tells, us in the ‘Epistle Dedicatory’ his new philosophically minded Don Juan reads ‘Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, studies Westermarck, and is concerned with the future of the race’. Having ultimately ‘discovered a moral in his

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 451. In Joshua Foa Die’s ‘Tragedy, Pessimism, Nietzsche’ there is an extensive analysis of Nietzsche’s relation to Schopenhauerian aesthetics and tragedy. In particular, his analysis focuses on what he calls ‘the Dionysian spirit of Pessimism’ as the essential core of the Nietzschean aesthetics in drama, arguing for the ‘political productivity of a Nietzschean pessimistic ethic’. As he maintains, Nietzsche’s ‘creative pathos’ lies in that, ‘while other pessimisms (such as Schopenhauer’s) also conclude that the universe has no order and human history no progress, Dionysian pessimism is the one that can find something to like about this situation’ (p. 112). What lies in the heart of Nietzsche’s aesthetics of drama is his attempt to overcome the Schopenhauerian aesthetic pessimism. Notwithstanding Nietzsche’s admission of Schopenhauer’s truth, his philosophy is aimed to fight the negativism and nihilistic spirit this realization has led to, by counterpoising a ‘Dionysian spirit of Pessimism’ as an alternative aesthetic. Nietzsche, by consciously employing a version of ‘courageous pessimism’ he yearns to move away from Schopenhauer’s resignation (p. 107). Joshua Foa Die, ‘Tragedy, Pessimism, Nietzsche’, in *Rethinking Tragedy*, ed. by Rita Felski (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp. 104-126.

¹²⁶ *The Will to Power*, pp. 45-452.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 444.

immorality', he cannot afford to be a sceptic and thus adopts an *affirmative* position so that he can 'save himself from cipherdom.'¹²⁸ Nietzsche in *The Will to Power*, 'Book Four: Discipline and Breeding', prays for the artist reformer of the 'first rank' of 'will' who will one day 'make the creative will prevail'.¹²⁹ This kind of desire is, one might argue, implicit in Don Juan's contemplation of the Life Force and may be sought in his very definition of a 'philosophy of life',¹³⁰ as he calls it. The belief, namely, in a man-centered universe – a profound confidence in Man's ultimate ability to construct his own path to meaning through experience: 'where there is a will there is a way, [...] whatever Man really wishes to do he will finally discover a means of doing.'¹³¹ As such in the end he decides against the Devil's entreaties to a diabolical kind of innocence (the plea to inaction, to acceptance, to simply 'being') and laughs at his warnings. The all-too-conformable life beyond the real, promising 'romantic delights' at the price of merely 'being' runs contrary to the philosophic affirmation he espouses. Being cast as Shaw's model 'master of reality',¹³² Juan assails the idealistic aestheticism espoused by the Devil and the 'romantic man' – warning that a worship of ideals separated from life is chimerical and reveals a degenerating life: 'DON JUAN I thanked him [the romantic artist] for teaching me to use my eyes and ears; but I told him that his beauty worshipping and happiness hunting and woman idealizing was not worth a dump as a *philosophy of life*.'¹³³ Contrary to the romantic man who worships 'woman' always from a

¹²⁸ 'Epistle Dedicatory', in *Man and Superman*, p. 14. My emphasis.

¹²⁹ *The Will to Power*, p. 501.

¹³⁰ *Man and Superman*, p. 154.

¹³¹ In relation to this the 'Epistle Dedicatory' alarmingly notes that there can be no hope for any sort of social betterment, any chance for 'progress' or substantial 'education' without the cultivation of a social type of 'will'. Shaw says: 'Any pamphleteer can show the way to better things; but when there is no will there is no way'. Further down he makes a point about the inadequacy of current educational and religious institutions to 'raise the mass above its own level' as well as talks about the urgency of 'breeding political capacity', without which any notion of Democracy cannot function adequately, p. 24 .

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 154. My emphasis.

distance, Don Juan boasts about how he takes life (that is, 'Woman') 'without chloroform', without soporifics: 'DON JUAN [...] I was not duped. I took her without chloroform.'¹³⁴ As Nietzsche tells us in *The Will to Power*, 'there is only *one* world, and this [world] is false, cruel, contradictory, seductive, without meaning – a world thus constituted is the real world.'¹³⁵ Shaw's Don Juan, having been schooled in the Nietzschean and Schopenhauerian tradition, is conscious of this seemingly hopeless and chaotic reality, the blundering of the Life Force. He also has knowledge of Hell and its devilish ways (namely, salvation through indifference, resignation and perpetual 'being'), and knows what the punishment is for those who disobey the Devil's will: 'the end will be despair and decrepitude, broken nerve and shattered hopes [...] the punishment of the fool who pursues the better before he has secured the good.'¹³⁶ Faithful to his *amor fati* type of philosophy he says in return: 'DON JUAN But at least I shall not be bored. The Service of the Life Force has that advantage, at all events. So fare you well Señor Satan.'¹³⁷ The play ends with Don Juan's speech in Shavian Nietzscheanism, and a quite positive, pregnant tone: 'ANA I believe in the Life to Come (*Crying to the Universe*). A Father! A Father for the Superman!'¹³⁸

To conclude: the three Shavian plays under discussion here, *The Philanderer* (1893), *The Devil's Disciple* (1897), and *Man and Superman* (1903), are all to some extent in dialogue with Nietzschean contemporary radical ideas and themes – charting a progression in Shaw's engagement with the idea of the superman. In the first part I discussed the presence of contemporary individualistic ideas behind *The Philanderer*. As I argued, on one level *The Philanderer* playfully critiques a turn-of-the-century 'trendy' type of Nietzscheanism, offering an amusing portrait of the

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹³⁵ *The Will to Power*, p. 451.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

tensions that traverse such communities of advanced individualists. At the same time, the story's closeness to real life-characters as Florence Farr may perhaps suggest the play as a kind of personal satire. Just as Charteris, the philander-philosopher, appears to be lightly mocking the others in the play, so does Shaw, poking fun at the impracticalities of such advanced views, and the often barren-like egoism they end up creating. Interestingly in such early portraits of egoists, who see love as the end of individuality, one gets a taste of such later fictional Nietzscheans as James Duffy of *Dubliners*, also famous for his theorizing on 'the painful case' of human bonds.

As I have tried to show, the second play examined here, *The Devil's Disciple* contains a different engagement with notions of the radical egoism and the *Übermensch*. This play constitutes a departure from the Nietzschean comedy of *The Philanderer*, suggesting an enhanced and more serious engagement with Nietzschean individualism and morality. Through the character of Dudgeon, a devil proven saint, the play aims to subvert mainstream conceptions about good and evil, egoism and altruism, morality and immorality – challenging the seemingly divine character of our moral standards. To some degree, through this figure Shaw welcomes his readers to reflect on traditional ideals of heroism, virtue, altruism, and Christian love – reconceptualising morality not as the will of a higher (divine) authority, but rather as an intrinsic necessity of the human self.

Man and Superman is a more complete and sophisticated engagement with the idea of the Superman and Nietzschean philosophy, bringing together Shaw's aesthetic and cultural aspirations regarding regeneration and advancement. In this particular play, Shaw uses Nietzschean ideas as a kind of springboard for developing his own philosophical notions of the artist-philosopher and the Life Force. Don Juan in the play is the culmination of Shaw's engagement with the notion of the superman,

presenting him as a kind of the artist-philosopher, the life affirmer who is going to shape, affirm the 'will' of the race upward, securing its progress.

Chapter Three

Nietzschean Individualism and the Ethic of Self-creation in *The Freewoman*

3.1 Introduction: Dora Marsden and Radical Egoism

This chapter discusses *The Freewoman* in the context of what I have termed 'radical Nietzscheanism'. As demonstrated in Chapter One, connections between an early tradition of radical egoism and Nietzschean philosophy can be traced to such coteries as *The Eagle and the Serpent*. I argue that, in this context, Nietzsche can be understood in terms of an early tradition of philosophic egoism advocating intellectual rebellion, self-education, and re-evaluation. As this part of the thesis will demonstrate, certain aspects of this early Nietzschean tradition are still relevant and can be detected in the style and spirit of *The Freewoman*. Some ten years later, after *The Eagle and the Serpent* ceased publication, a new periodical dedicated to expounding the doctrine of philosophic individualism appeared, this time with a commitment, as its editors proclaimed, to 'lay bare the individualistic basis of all that is most significant in modern movements including feminism'.¹

¹ This is from 'The Sheet of the One Thousand Club Membership: Establishment Fund', publicizing *The Freewoman's* resuscitation under a new title (*The New Freewoman*). [Originally published in Oakley House, Bloomsbury Street, London]. Besides informing the incorporation of new contributors as well as the addition of Rebecca West as assistant editor, it puts emphasis on the fact that the new periodical wishes to continue the philosophical program started by *The Freewoman*: 'In these circumstances it appears unnecessary to attempt a lengthy explanation of the policy and the character of the new paper. It will be sufficient to say that *The New Freewoman* will be the only journal of recognized standing expounding the doctrine of philosophic individualism either in England or America. Editorially, it will endeavour to lay bare the individualistic basis of all that is most significant in modern movements including feminism. It will continue *The Freewoman's* policy of ignoring in its discussions all existing taboos in the realms of morality and religion. It will regard itself free to lay open any question to debate, and will

Traditionally *The Freewoman* has been understood primarily in terms of its connections to Edwardian feminism – a dissident feminist voice in the record of the British Suffragist movement. More recently, however, there has been some discussion about whether there is a connection between the early feminist radical politics and the increasingly literary orientation of the periodical. The recent and well-informed thesis of Cary Franklin, ‘Dora Marsden and the Politics of Feminist Modernism’,² reassesses *The Freewoman*’s place in the context of literary modernism, placing it well within the modernist literary nexus, as being of principal interest in the unfolding of this later tradition. According to her, Marsden’s individualistic brand of radical politics (what she argues to be an alloy of Nietzschean and Stirnerian elements),³ were a ‘natural corollary of her belief in the need for new modes of writing that were more candid, intuitive, and psychologically dense than realist poetry and prose.’⁴ In essence, *The Freewoman* itself constituted an avant-garde manifesto for what Marsden called “‘the new temper”, a leftist, proto-modernist politics and aesthetics that blended her commitment to women’s and worker’s emancipation with her interest in eccentric, psychologically introspective, anti-realist writing.’⁵ For Franklin, *The Freewoman*’s individualistic, anti-traditionalist, and anti-realist agenda, its concern with psychology and aesthetics,⁶ accurately captures the turn towards a more sexually frank, reflexive and vitalized

in its open platform give us a ready a welcome to capable adverse criticism as to support of expressed opinions, editorial or other. *The New Freewoman* undertaking is entered upon in the full knowledge that the philosophy of which *The Freewoman* was the vehicle has roused a vital interest among a steadily-widening circle of thinking people, and it is particularly on account of the further knowledge that this circle has widened even since *The Freewoman* ceased to appear, that we are prepared to assume gladly the responsibility.’ London, British Library, Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers. 57355-57357.

² Cary Franklin, ‘Dora Marsden and the Politics of Feminist Modernism’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2002).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶ Franklin accurately points out *The Freewoman*’s symbiotic relationship with psychology, drawing connections between London’s burgeoning psychoanalytic community and Marsden’s feminist avant-garde in the years before World War One.

writing – an aesthetic agenda traditionally understood mainly in connection to the more distinctly literary form of *The New Freewoman* and *The Egoist*.

A similar argument for continuity is encountered in Bruce Clarke's *Dora Marsden and Early Modernism: Gender, Individualism, Science*. Clarke detects an explicit 'egoistic' literary current running consistently from the early days and continuing undisturbed in *The New Freewoman*. As he points out: 'The transition of Marsden's interests from political feminism to philosophical and creative individualism was also operative in *The Freewoman* [...] no manipulations on Pound's part were needed to bring about its growing literary orientation.'⁷ Overall, Clarke's study stresses the need to reassess the interconnections between Marsden's evolving egoism and the individualistic cultural politics of early modernism. Extending the classical assertion of Michael Levenson and Floyd Dell about the overriding influence of Max Stirner on Marsden's thought, he highlights the importance of considering Marsden's course of development alongside the broader cultural nexus of philosophical and aesthetic individualism.⁸ Drawing attention to such texts as *Egoists: A Book of Supermen*, a collection of literary essays by James Huneker originally published in the avant-garde little coterie *Mademoiselle New York*, as well as *The Eagle and the Serpent* in London,⁹ Clarke classes Marsden's egoism alongside the ideological concerns of early twentieth-century literary and political culture, and argues for the familiarity of Marsden with this particular radical milieu.¹⁰

⁷ Clarke, p. 98.

⁸ 'Levenson's assertion in *A Genealogy of Modernism* that '*The New Freewoman*'s principal and overriding concern was to "trumpet Stirnerian egoism, and the rhetoric was deafening (66)" [...] is overstated', Clarke points out, *ibid.*, p. 222.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 222. It has to be noted that while Clarke situates Marsden's egoism within this tradition and cites the particular example of *The Eagle and the Serpent* as an instance of it – this is not followed further.

Clarke's suggestion, that in order to understand Marsden's egoism we need to examine the legacy of radical egoism (philosophic and aesthetic) more closely, is particularly relevant. Consequently, in this chapter I look specifically at *The Freewoman's* initial emphasis on anti-idealism, anti-moralism, individual selfhood and agency, to determine the kind of relationship which might exist between the concurrent discourses of egoism and Marsden's periodical.

As will be shown, in *The Freewoman*, Nietzschean individualism becomes the centerpiece of a discussion of sex ethics and self-realization. *The Freewoman* provides evidence both of the impact of such radical discourses upon Marsden and of her propensity to expand them in the service of her own interests. There is an attempt on the part of Marsden and other contributors to revise, or re-value, the conception of the selfhood through a Nietzschean discourse of feminist individualism. All *The Freewoman* articles under discussion here provide an alternative discourse of individuality and empowerment, one radically opposed to the gender-based logic of Edwardian discourses of emancipation.

In particular the first part of this chapter explores the extent to which Marsden's radical conception of egoism serves as a counter-narrative that aims to overcome the dualism of contemporary conceptions of selfhood and gender. More specifically, in her 'New Morality' articles Marsden investigates the values and the assumptions that lie embedded in the construction of male and female identity, radically revising the gender-determined, power-oriented rhetoric of Edwardian feminism. As it will be shown, Marsden's genealogical formula in these articles results in the devising of a new morality and psychology of the self, a theory of selfhood that reveals quite interesting analogies with the later gender-free models of individualism encountered in *The New Freewoman*.

3.2 Edwardian Conceptions of Super-womanhood and Sex-dualism: G. L. Harding 'Spinsters in the Making', Samuel George's *Is Woman Super-man?*

A quick look into *The Freewoman's* early issues suggests a lively interest in Nietzsche, mostly in articles dealing with feminine psychology, sexuality and morality. There were more than a few those who expressed their frustration with the increasingly Nietzschean-spirited tone of the periodical, particularly in relation to the periodical's advocacy of a 'new morality'. An instance of this can be seen in such columns as 'Asceticism and Passion'. A letter from a female subscriber objects to the periodical's 'new morality', a morality which as she notes, is inspired by Nietzsche:

I see no advancement for women along the lines of a laxity in sex matters equal to that which characterizes men [...]. 'Genius' says Emerson, 'is always ascetic, and piety and love. Appetite shows to finer souls as a disease, and they find beauty in rites and bounds that resist it.' And to quote a more modern authority, Bernard Shaw argues that the production of his best work necessitates a partial asceticism [...]. In advanced circles nowadays to speak of anything sexual as 'immoral' is to proclaim oneself a back number [...]. Alles ist erlaubt' [All is permitted] we must cry with Nietzsche if we would be truly modern.¹¹

Especially neologisms like the 'superwoman' provide the material for debates between feminist and antifeminist camps. An interesting piece of anti-feminist literature can be seen in the December issue. G. L. Harding's 'Spinsters in the Making'¹² draws attention to a new type of womanhood, the newly emerging college woman, and is particularly remarkable for the Nietzschean terminology it uses. Drawing on the notion of the 'super-woman', the article claims to provide insight into the psychology of this new category of womanhood. As Harding argues, college women seem to have gone too far in abandoning their femininity for the exchange of

¹¹ E. M. Watson, 'Letter to the Editors', *The Freewoman*, 8 February 1912, p. 231.

¹² G. L. Harding, 'Spinsters in the Making', *The Freewoman*, 14 December 1911, pp. 66-68.

education and independence. These attitudes are mostly evident in such categories of women as the modern college woman, his new 'superwoman of the intellect' as he labels her. This is the picture Harding paints of her:

The college woman, in her youth at least, is inclined to be rather superior, to be intolerant of views other than her own, and disposed to lay down the law [...]. The right to the cultivation of her individuality, which she justly claims, results frequently in egotism and self-absorption [...].¹³

Harding openly objects to the 'unnaturalness' that such education/career oriented models of individuality display. In general, his article warns against the degenerating physiological and psychological effects such attitudes might produce, based on the premise that intellect in women (in male doses) is unfit for the female constitution, and proves fully inefficient in cultivating a healthy sense of selfhood. His reasoning is quite simple. Based on the supposition that women are by nature different from men (women are by nature intuitive and maternal while male nature typifies intellect and reason), he contends that, by seeking to approximate men, women end up slipping into a role for which they are not naturally fit. His emphasis on the different but complementary nature of men and women leads him to argue that modern women who try to possess too much of the 'male' intellect not only transgress their natural and social role (their nurturing role) but also fail as individuals. This is what he thinks about the category of the intellectual superwoman, his modern 'spinster in the making':

Again, work and the multiple interests of College life will have absorbed all her thoughts and energies, and, moreover, have seriously sapped her vitality. She knows, feverishly and earnestly, that she is a Worker, and remembers only feebly, occasionally, and rather resentfully, that she is a woman too. In this attitude of mind, intellectually well equipped, emotionally starved, and therefore sentimentally or neurotically inclined, she enters upon a new phase of life, as an independent and responsible individual.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 67.

By trying to approximate the life of a man she is inevitably driven to a restless and dissatisfied life, because ‘only half of her nature is allowed development’. As long as this new type of superwoman, the ‘educated, intellectually well-trained superwoman of high morals and character’, expends her ‘will’ in order to advance her intellect than the qualities truest to her nature, she runs the risk of degenerating into another type, that of the ‘defeminised spinster’:

Type 1. – THE COLLEGE WOMAN [...]. Intellectually well trained, morally above suspicion, with a high sense of duty and responsibility, she would seem to be, *par excellence*, man’s ideal companion and help-meet. Celibacy, nevertheless, is her usual lot in life.¹⁵

Although ‘first-rate men’ need ‘first-rate women’, and vice versa, this kind of false model of selfhood leads woman to compulsory celibacy.¹⁶ Harding’s employment of the concept of ‘superwoman’ proves to be interesting for several reasons. The article is more than an example of Edwardian misogyny, which aims to counter new models of individuality and self-actualization as proposed by feminists. It is also interesting for the kind of sexual theory it invokes. In trying to show the weaknesses of such false models of womanhood, he draws on a theory of gender difference not uncommon at the time. Based on a model of human behavior that accepts the natural opposition of the sexes, he argues not against women elevating their nature (after all the morally advanced man, the ‘superman’ needs a ‘superwoman’)¹⁷, but rather against their emulating the nature of men. Selfhood, for him, is determined by biology, and by woman’s most immediate and true destiny lies in her role with her powers of fertility. As such, the kind of superwoman who, through higher education, tries to transcend her nature (and her position) through higher education, degenerates into a ‘type described so often as an inferior imitation of man’, a second-rate

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 67. ‘[F]irst-rate women must have first-rate men. Again I admit the truth of this [...]. After all, the possession of a degree, even a good one, is not in itself a proof of all-round excellence. Complex human beings are not merely intellectual machines [...]. Supermen want superwomen and it would be just as well perhaps for both sexes to realise that’, (p. 67).

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 67.

individual in whom the female nature of womanhood is somewhat denied.¹⁸ As Harding warns, modern superwomen run the danger of becoming de-humanized and de-sensualized through ‘abstract knowledge and book-learning’: ‘life as it is lived by the great mass of humanity scarcely touches her at all, she is absorbed in various causes and missions, and, seeking self-realisation, she finds self-limitation.’¹⁹ He concludes:

such epithets as ‘learned pig’, ‘defeminised spinster’, ‘unsexed woman’ are frequently bestowed upon highly educated women, and though these are certainly rude, and possibly exaggerated, there is no smoke without fire.²⁰

Lucy Delap has argued in ‘The Superwoman: Theories of Gender and Genius in Edwardian Britain’, that the development of the idea of the ‘superwoman’ indicates the impact of Nietzschean and egoist ideas upon the women’s movement.²¹ As she argues, such ideals capture some important features of Edwardian feminist thought, animating a certain rhetoric of feminism – and, in particular, that of egoism and emancipation. Nonetheless, she argues, this is not to suggest that ‘superwoman’ was an unproblematic or a consistent idea, and concludes that overall it provides an ‘enigmatic and confining intellectual framework through which to conceive of women’s emancipation’.²² As she argues, while it was meant as a vehicle for broader feminist aspirations, it drew on the older discourse of ‘genius’ and sexual polarity. It may be useful to briefly consider the likely links between Harding’s imagery with the older portraits of superwomen envisioned by Shaw and Orage. Notwithstanding its apparent misogyny, this model of womanhood is, I believe, not distinct from the kind of ideal superwomanhood envisioned earlier on by Shaw or even Orage who notes that for Nietzsche ‘Man’, is ‘the warrior and the type of the will-to-power’ and

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 67.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 67.

²¹ Lucy Delap, ‘The Superwoman: Theories of Gender and Genius in Edwardian Britain’, *The Historical Journal*, 47 (2004), 101-126.

²² Ibid., p. 126.

‘Woman’, is the principle of the conservation and the will to live’: ‘it is in man that woman finds her own meaning and purpose, – a meaning and purpose that she could not discover without him. For while man is a means to the world, woman is a means to man.’²³ In fact, it might be argued that this gendered logic reverberates the kind of vitalism proposed in *Man and Superman* – the union of ‘intellect’ and ‘Life Force’, Tucker and Anna, and Shaw’s view of woman as ‘mother’ in the perfection of the human race. It seems to me that overall, Harding’s argument is intended not as an attack on the ideal of the superwoman per se but rather on this particular type of superwoman – the superwoman who craves intellect *over* life – which, for him, represents a false paradigm of progress. All these examples capture, at least to some extent, the gendered logic underneath these Nietzschean ideals and concepts as disseminated within the intellectual and progressive milieu. Harding’s article in particular suggests that, by that time, this Nietzschean idiom had come to describe a certain new ideal of womanhood representing individuality and brains. The article draws on the medical discourse of degeneration; it also sheds light on the mainstream understanding of gender and, by extension, selfhood in Edwardian Britain, as based on difference and polarity.

A more ‘mainstream portrait of the ‘superwoman’, one catering for a more conventional educated taste can be found in such feminist booklets as for instance in *Is Woman Super-man?*²⁴ – a sort of self-help, self-empowering manual of comportment for advanced women. This is an advertisement for the book which appeared in *Votes for Women*:

This little brochure will be heartily welcomed by all lovers of absolute Truth, particularly those who are interested in the emancipation and upliftment of woman to the side of man. Everyone who wishes to help forward the emancipation of women should read and circulate this

²³ Alfred R. Orage, *Nietzsche: In Outline and Aphorism* (London: T. N. Foulis, 1911), p. 49. See ‘Man and Woman’ chapter, pp. 41-51.

²⁴ Samuel George, *Is Woman Super-Man?* (London: The Power Book, 1915).

booklet as far as possible, as it gives indisputable Truth which has never before appeared, and which is, therefore, likely to be of immense service, because it shows conclusively that woman *is* the 'super-man' which the world is looking for to-day [...].²⁵

As its writer argues, 'the reason why, after so much has been written by thousands of able people, no progress has been made toward amelioration of the conditions under which women suffer, is because they have never grasped the fundamental Truth of the equality and complementary nature of the sexes.'²⁶ The writer argues for a re-evaluation of the mainstream patriarchal stereotypes that look upon women as simply 'household-equipment'. The natural differences between men and women do not suggest that man is to be regarded as superior and woman as inferior. His main argument is that, in spite of their inherent contradictions, man and woman complement each other, and they should learn how to use their differences to their own advantage. Continuing to insist on the complementarity of genders and the standard polarity of woman/body man/mind, the book advertises itself as the modern guide to woman's call for equality, a kind of manual that will help her grasp the ultimate 'Truth' and establish herself as man's equal. As in the case of Harding, the kind of framework that informs his logic also indicates the frequent inability or unwillingness of the Edwardians to conceive selfhood outside the limits of sex differences and mainstream norms. Despite its seemingly egalitarian flair, it echoes the same rigidly polarized sexuality that enables Harding's misogynistic logic:

Man can never rise to become woman, woman can never descend to become man. Those who, as some are doing, try to change their natures will be bitterly disappointed, for such a thing is absolutely impossible. Women will never be able to do entirely what men have done, neither will men be able to do what women have done. It seems, therefore, to be necessary that we get a perfect understanding of our original endowments and the powers that have arisen from their use. As soon as we understand our inherent natures we shall be in a position to do our parts in life without friction on account of our sex. When we do away with our present ideas of superiority, inferiority, and inequalities of rights on

²⁵ 'Ads Section', *Votes for Women*, 19 November 1915, p. 62.

²⁶ George, p. 4.

account of sex we shall see ourselves and our opposites in a new and true light.²⁷

Not surprisingly, in this context, the superwoman ideal is construed as a more mainstream figure – a modern alternative to the old ‘angel in the house’. This modern woman has now to educate herself appropriately to fulfill her role as a perfect companion, bringing spiritual balance (not tension) to the marital union. A curious mixture of dietary advice, psychological and mystico-religious jargon, it promises to help the modern superwoman achieve the right equilibrium – an intellectually and physically fulfilling union – through perseverance and will-power:

Of recent years we have heard much from various sources about ‘super-man’ [...]. The true idea behind ‘super-man’ being ‘over man’ arises with such thoughts as are in this article, whether ‘super-man’ will not be woman in activity in the spiritual place in the spiritual age [...]. In fact, woman is inherently the super-man which has been conceived by some minds of the present day. Just as man was found to be complete on the material side as the result of the process of evolution, so at the present time in mind, he has by woman’s help become complete, but can go no further forward in fact, the tendency of his mind has lately been toward devolution and destruction. This can be seen everywhere to-day, and the reason is: because he has set her help aside. But the scene is changing, and to-day we find woman bidding fair to show herself to be the superior or ‘super-man’ because of her superior super-mental and spiritual powers [...]. These are the women who are alive to their real nature, whose minds have been illuminated from above [...].²⁸

Intended more as a kind of marriage manual than a pamphlet for the female cause, it is an interesting piece of literature which professes to defend the new womanhood against patriarchy, while perpetuating masculinist assumptions under a new name. The dualistic point of view is masked, when the author writes as if trying to restore the natural order, apparently in support of the call for women’s parity with men. Recasting the notion of the *Übermensch* in a discourse of sexual dualism allows the same old gender dynamics to be remolded into a new rhetoric of empowerment and emancipation.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

3.3 Dora Marsden's 'Master Morality' and Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*

In the examples discussed above, the debate about woman's individuality and emancipation – its Nietzschean rhetoric of the superwoman – seems to rest upon a certain discourse of gender difference. As Bruce Clarke informs us, the ideology of sexual difference was heavily ingrained in Victorian and Edwardian understandings of selfhood and underpinned much of the psychological and sexological theories of the period.²⁹ For Clarke, the development of Marsden's individualism, from the kind of 'Nietzschean conception of feminism' in *The Freewoman* to the genderless egoism of the *New Freewoman*, offers a challenge to this kind of dualism.³⁰ This part considers the early type of Nietzschean feminism that Clarke and others have detected in Marsden in relation to this Edwardian discourse of sex dualism, and indicate the difference in point of view which separates Marsden's Nietzscheanism from more mainstream discourses of super-womanhood and selfhood like George's and Harding's. My discussion of 'Bondwomen',³¹ 'Commentary of Bondwomen',³² and 'The New Morality' series,³³ considers Marsden's feminist individualism in light of Nietzsche's theory. In particular, I will show how Marsden's version of master morality moves away from the biological polarized gender reasoning of such discourses. Through revising the notion of the genius-individual Marsden proposes a re-evaluation of sex standards and normative ideas about identity. One of the points

²⁹ Clarke, p. 61.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 61.

³¹ Dora Marsden, 'Bondwomen', *The Freewoman*, 23 November 1911, pp. 1-2.

³² Dora Marsden, 'Commentary on Bondwomen', *The Freewoman*, 30 November 1911, pp. 21-22.

³³ Dora Marsden, 'The New Morality I', *The Freewoman*, 14 December 1911, pp. 61-62; 'The New Morality II', *The Freewoman*, 28 December 1911, pp. 101-102; 'The New Morality III', *The Freewoman*, 4 January 1912, pp. 121-122; 'The New Morality IV', *The Freewoman*, 11 January 1912, pp. 141-142; 'The New Morality V', *The Freewoman*, 11 January 1912, pp. 141-142.

she aims especially to make is that it is our moral prejudices rather than our biology that predetermines our 'nature' and 'constitution. In Marsden's 'New Morality' series as well as in 'Bondwomen' and 'Commentary to Bondwomen', I detect interesting correspondences between Marsden's new psychology of womanhood/selfhood and Nietzsche's genealogical method. As I will try to demonstrate, Marsden's new individualistic ethic utilizes Nietzsche's master-slave dialectic to problematise dualistic ideals of femininity, ideals that are deep-seated and take various forms.

This part of the chapter offers a close analysis of some of Marsden's *Freewoman* leader articles, in particular 'Bondwomen', 'Commentary on Bondwomen', and her 'New Morality' series. In all these articles, I will try to demonstrate that we see clear evidence of Marsden's early affiliations with a discourse of individualism. She understands a model of selfhood as incorporating Nietzsche's conception of master-slave morals in order to question normative understandings of gender. Through that she aims towards introducing a new method of moral psychology that envisions a redefinition of the self. Initially, Marsden addresses the question of free will and agency, and their importance in the shaping of the 'creative' free individual, whom she calls interchangeably 'artist', 'genius', and 'freewoman'. In 'Bondwomen' and 'Commentary to Bondwomen', she is concerned with different types of psychology, a master one ('free' conscience) and a slave one ('bonded' conscience), and focuses on two polar categories of womanhood, 'bondwomen' and 'freewomen'. In 'The New Morality' articles she addresses the question of how the free and bonded consciousnesses first arose, before addressing the question of how the latter consciousness (the slave one) became bound up with the Christian ethic of 'self-renunciation'. In 'The New Morality II' she focuses on the doctrine of 'self-renunciation' and discusses the relationship between

‘asceticism’ and ‘passion’ in a manner that, as I will attempt to demonstrate, suggests interesting connections with Nietzsche’s respective discussion of ascetic morals in Essays II and III of the *Genealogy*. Two key concerns of ‘The New Morality’ series are the question of how ‘asceticism’ is related to ‘creativity’ and ‘genius’, and the potential for a fruitful and reciprocal relationship between introspection and experience in the development of one’s individuality.

A preliminary discussion of Nietzsche’s master and slave morality is necessary before I begin my analysis. In *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche advances and deepens the original hypothesis of the master-slave types of morality first encountered in *Beyond Good and Evil*. As he would say in another instance, the three essays in the *Genealogy* offered the ‘psychology of the antithetical concepts of a *noble* morality and a *ressentiment* morality, the latter deriving from a *denial* of the former.’³⁴ Again, in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche describes the essays in *On the Genealogy* as ‘three decisive preliminary studies of a psychologist for a revaluation of all values.’³⁵ Broadly speaking, the aim of Nietzsche in that work is to examine the value of values, their source, and original purpose through a kind of genealogical narrative that hopes to get to the root of our moral psychology and ethical reasoning.

In the first essay, “‘Good and Evil”, “Good and Bad””, Nietzsche embarks on an examination of the origins of ‘good’ and ‘evil’. Contrary to what was at the time argued by moral philosophy, ‘good’ does not originate amongst those to whom goodness was shown. Nietzsche is highly skeptical about the belief that the moral value of ‘good’ is built on the ethics of compassion or ‘selflessness’ (Christian values). “‘Originally” – they decree – “unegoistic acts were praised and called good

³⁴ Nietzsche tells us this in *The Anti-Christ*, Section 24, p. 146.

³⁵ *Ecce Homo*, ‘The Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic’, p. 85.

by their recipients, in other words, by the people to whom they were *useful*”³⁶ Challenging this assumption he contends that we are looking in the wrong place for the origins of the concept ‘good’: in reality the judgment ‘good’ does not derive from those to whom ‘goodness’ is shown. As he tells us:

Now for me, it is obvious that the real breeding ground for the concept ‘good’ has been sought and located in the wrong place by this theory: the judgment ‘good’ does *not* emanate from those to whom goodness is shown! Instead it has been ‘the good’ themselves, meaning the noble, the mighty, the high-placed and the high-minded, who saw and judged themselves and their actions as good, I mean first-rate.³⁷

In other words, according to him ‘good’ as a value originates in the morality of the aristocracy, the noble type of man.³⁸ For Nietzsche, perhaps not surprisingly, this type of nobility can be sought in the Classical tradition. A morality of ‘self-glorification’ takes pride in the ‘abundance of power’: ‘the noble type of man feels *himself* to be the determiner of values [...] he creates values through his faith in the self, his pride in self’, through his ‘basic animosity and irony towards “selfishness”’; all these are typical features of the noble constitution, according to Nietzsche.³⁹ For Nietzsche, the genesis of the value ‘good’ is not a derivative of an unegoistic morality; rather, it is there to designate power, creation, and strength – a joyous and free constitution that springs from a ‘triumphant affirmation of itself [...] the noble method of valuation: this acts and grows spontaneously, seeking out its opposite only so that it can say “yes” to itself even more thankfully and exultantly’.⁴⁰ In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche is using the actual historical example of the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian tradition as examples of master and slave types. One represents the

³⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘Essay I: “Good and Evil”, “Good and Bad”’, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. by Keith Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 11.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁸ Nietzsche discusses the noble type of man as the determiner of egoistic values in more detail in *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 260. The Cambridge edition of *On the Genealogy of Morals* includes all the relevant material in a separate section under the title, ‘Supplementary Material’ with related extracts from *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 155.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 155-156.

⁴⁰ Nietzsche, ‘Essay I’, Section 10, p. 20.

life-affirming; the other, the life-denying, ascetic ethic of Judaism and Christianity. However, the terms ‘master’ and ‘slave’ are not used only to designate historically specific sets of values. He uses them to denote different modalities/attitudes of individual existence and to designate different manifestations of the will-to-power. A master morality is essentially a morality where the will-to-power operates without meeting serious obstacles. Finding no particular resistance, by virtue of belonging to the powerful, it creates its values through itself and for itself – from whatever the will wishes to affirm. The will of the masters is active in the sense that it possesses sufficient strength to enable free self-expression and free-determination of own values and desires. By contrast, the slave type of morality is a morality which is reactive – its power stems from defining itself in through opposition to the masters. For Nietzsche the term ‘slave morality’ is not there to indicate mere subservience. In fact, Nietzsche argues that the ‘slave revolt in morality’,⁴¹ which began with the advent of Christianity, and is still ongoing, is evidence of the slave morality’s enduring power. The successful value-reversal of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ is the ultimate victory of the slave’s morality over that of his master’s. In slave morality the tables of law are no longer the same but are reversed, with the values of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ now coming to serve the interests of the slaves. As a result, the formerly ‘good’ traits of the nobles, such as courage, strength, egoism, as the self-regarding virtues of autonomy and responsibility, are not only undermined but demonized and labeled evil. This constitutes the origins of an age-long moral system of ‘usefulness’⁴² – a slave ethic of utility aimed at self-preservation. This utility ethic, and the values associated with it – self-sacrifice, self-renunciation, altruism, and meekness are in

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 20. For Nietzsche’s discussion of the Christian revolt in morals, see the whole of Section 10.

⁴² *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 260, p. 156, in ‘Supplementary Material to *On the Genealogy of Morals*’. Nietzsche there notes that ‘Slave morality is essentially a morality of usefulness. Here is the source from which that famous antithesis, “good” and “evil” emerged’, p. 156.

turned deemed ‘good’, for they are based on different valuations, reflecting the powerless situation of the slave.⁴³ What is, however, most distinctive about the two opposing moralities is that while the former is founded on strength, and the latter on weakness, both are animated by very similar drives (namely, the will-to-power) and are equally capable of exerting this power – except that the latter obtains what it wants in a different way from the former. This situation, for Nietzsche, is best illustrated by the Judeo-Christian tradition which has traditionally asserted its power and authority through ideals of weakness, humility and chastisement. Although this is a morality originating in feelings of powerlessness, however, it is by no means less powerful than the morality of the masters. While in the master morality the will-to-power is exercised without encountering obstacles, as ‘natural force’, that is – in the morality of the oppressed the will-to-power (its instinct for freedom) is forced back, becomes incarcerated within itself and discharges itself only indirectly: as spiritual force. This repressed instinct of power is what Nietzsche ultimately terms as ‘bad conscience’ where ‘goodness [becomes] woven together with the concept of God’.⁴⁴

After having delineated the origins and principal features of ‘master’ and ‘slave’ types of morality/consciousness, the second essay “‘Guilt’, “Bad Conscience” and Related Matters’, turns its attention to the notion of ‘bad conscience’. ‘Bad conscience’ arises out of the suppression of the active instincts in the individual; it is a restricted instinct which finding no other outlet, turns against itself in self-denial:

this instinct of freedom forcibly made latent [...] forced back, repressed, incarcerated within itself and finally able to discharge and unleash itself

⁴³ As Lawrence J. Hatab notes in *Nietzsche's Life Sentence: Coming to Terms with Eternal Recurrence* (New York: Routledge, 2005), '[t]he immediate condition of the slave is one of powerlessness and subservience; the master is a threat to the very existence and well-being of the slave; in effect the slave lacks agency and so the initial evaluation is a negative one: the "evil" of the master is in the foreground, while what is "good", the features of the slave's submission, is a reactive, secondary judgment', p. 40.

⁴⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Essay II: "Guilt", "Bad Conscience" and Related Matters', in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Section 21, p. 62.

only against itself: that, and that alone, is 'bad conscience' in its beginnings.⁴⁵

Nietzsche distinguishes two different manifestations of 'bad conscience'. In its early form it is indissoluble part of the slave's conscience, and forms itself in opposition and reaction to the value-systems originally set by the master's code. It is intrinsically tied with what Nietzsche calls the 'ascetic ideal', and in its reactive, sick form it becomes *ressentiment*, 'an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental prerequisites of life'.⁴⁶ In Nietzsche's argument, the creation of values and the notion of 'bad conscience' are inextricably intertwined. In such reactive state, the ascetic type of consciousness can lead to the 'will to nothingness',⁴⁷ which is fundamentally ascetic and self-denying, translating its negation into forms of faith (religious, artistic, political, etc) which deny the individual his natural self, in exchange for spiritual, 'divine', or metaphysical comfort. Philosophic nihilism, aesthetic idealism and the Christian belief in the after-life is, are according to Nietzsche are all manifestations of the reactive resentful phenomenon of slave morality, and stand in stark contrast, to the active forms of 'bad conscience' that Nietzsche envisions in his conception of the free sovereign ego.⁴⁸

To return to *The Freewoman*: in 'Bondwomen', Marsden begins her narrative of master and slave moralities by distinguishing between two different types of individuals, 'Bondwomen' and 'Freewomen'. She writes: 'Bondwomen are distinguished from Freewomen by a spiritual distinction. Bondwomen are the women

⁴⁵ Ibid., Section 18, p. 59.

⁴⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Essay III: What do Ascetic Ideals Mean?', in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Section 28, p. 120.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 120.

⁴⁸ It is important to note that Nietzsche does not see 'bad conscience' as merely a reactive phenomenon. As he argues further in the second essay, bad conscience is a 'sickness', but a 'sickness' as 'pregnancy is a sickness' ('Essay II', Section 19, p. 60). This 'sickness' is of key significance to his understanding of life as a kind of continuous *askesis* towards self-becoming. See Tyler T. Roberts, *Contesting Spirit: Nietzsche, Affirmation, Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) and Simon May, *Nietzsche's Ethics and his War on Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

who are not separate spiritual entities – who are not *individuals*.⁴⁹ As she informs us in the following article that appeared on the next issue, ‘Commentary on Bondwomen’, the ‘free’ and ‘bond’ types differ from each other in one main point: the former has the ‘essential attribute of genius’, whereas the latter is by nature – and most importantly by choice – of a slavish constitution, in the sense that it lacks a personal ‘vision’.⁵⁰ In the ‘Commentary on Bondwomen’ that appeared in the next issue Marsden attempts to provide clearer definitions for such terms. For her, ‘genius’ denotes:

[...] an individual revelation of life-manifestation made realizable to others in some outward form. So we hold that anyone who has an individual and personal vision of life in any sphere has the essential attribute of genius, and those who have not this individual realization are without genius. They are therefore followers – servants, if so preferred. We called them Bondwomen.⁵¹

Of course, Marsden goes on to add, it cannot be expected of all women to learn how to become Freewomen – in the same way that it cannot be expected of all men to become Freemen: ‘Not for one moment do we wish to support the view that all women will be free, any more than all men are free.’⁵² Even if circumstances permitted it, not all individuals are endowed with the same creative ‘force’,⁵³ the same degree of ‘creative power’ that would ‘enable them to make their individual revelation communicable.’⁵⁴ For this reason not all individuals get ‘their chance to become artists’ and masters of themselves.⁵⁵ Yet, while it is possible for both men and women to become ‘masters’ of sorts, women have the great disadvantage of

⁴⁹ Marsden, ‘Bondwomen’, p. 1. My emphasis.

⁵⁰ Marsden, ‘Commentary on Bondwomen’, pp. 21-22.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

always having been ‘slaves’ – they are always conscious of their task as ‘followers’, as ‘believers’, as ‘the law abiding’, ‘the moral’, etc.⁵⁶

For note, though some men must be servants, all women are servants, and all the masters are men. That is the difference and the distinction. The servile condition is common to all women. It is because woman is so useful to man – his comforter.⁵⁷

The biological function of woman as a mother, comforter, nurturer, and helper – and the canonization of it (by both men and women), forms a key part of how she is perceived by herself and others. She has come to believe that she is not an individual, a free agent, but rather a compliment. ‘How women have fallen into this position is a moot point’, Marsden further notes:

Probably in her desire for love continued, for protection, for keeping the man near her, she slipped into the role of making herself useful to him, serving *him*, giving him always more love and more, more service, until, on the one hand, she acquired the complete ‘servant’ mind, and he, on the other, gained the realization that her ‘usefulness’ was of greater moment to him than the fret of the tie which retained him.⁵⁸

According to Marsden, what seems to have most likely happened is that women have allowed their individuality to be compromised. In their efforts to secure protection, women, wittingly or unwittingly, allowed themselves to be molded into the image of the ‘Comforter’. First by necessity, then by choice, Woman diligently set about the task of creating herself in the image and likeness of a ‘higher law’, be that man, religion, morality or whatever. As such, the psychology of the ‘follower’, ‘the law-abiding’, ‘the believer’ is impressed upon her – she has obtained, unconsciously or deliberately, the psychology of the servant, the one who accepts rather than the one who creates values.⁵⁹ ‘Bondwomen’ according to Marsden are those women who are ‘not

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 21. In ‘Bondwomen’ Marsden tells us that woman has been informed that she is a ‘follower’, a ‘believer’, ‘the law abiding’, ‘the moral’, ‘the conventionally admiring.’ Through ‘Religions, philosophies, legal codes, standards of morals’ women are reminded of their role and value as ‘servants’, ‘living by borrowed precept, receiving orders, doing hodmen’s work’, (p. 1).

⁵⁷ Marsden, ‘Bondwomen’, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

individuals. They are complements merely. By habit of thought, by form of activity, and largely by preference, they round off the personality of some other individual, rather than create or cultivate their own.' Then she adds: 'Most women, as far back as we have any record, have fitted into this conception, and it has borne itself out in instinctive working practice.'⁶⁰ As in Nietzsche's slave-type of morality, those women have embraced a morality of utility (a slave morality that is), wherein they are called 'good' because they are 'good' for something, they are useful, meek and submissive; they practice obedience towards a law and tradition established from old; because they do what is customary as if by nature:

For this protected position women give up all first-hand power [...]. All the power they achieve is simply derivative [...]. A morality begotten in a community where one-half are born servants may glibly say that it is woman's highest role to be a comforter of men and children; but is it the truth, and men and women both must learn it, that while to be a human poultice is to have *great utility*, it does not offer the conditions under which vivid new life-manifestations are likely to show themselves, either in the 'Comforter' or the 'Comforted'.⁶¹

Throughout her commentary, the master-slave model is employed for several purposes. Here, in particular, Marsden's account of the origins of moral valuations deals with traditional morality as a social phenomenon, arising out of an ethic of mutual utility. Marsden assumes that relations between women and men have been grounded upon such an ethic of usefulness. Women give up their freedom for comfort, and, men, in their turn trade their own for conveniences brought by women's servitude. For Nietzsche, as we saw, the Christian values of 'love', 'compassion' (Christian love and compassion are different from their pagan equivalents, as Nietzsche argues) are value-judgments stemming originally from a feeling of powerlessness and fear. For Nietzsche, as for Marsden as well, the notion of 'slave morality' denotes a morality of the 'herd', which emphasizes the instinct of

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 1.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 2. My emphasis.

self-preservation and interprets as 'good' only that which can best enable stability and equilibrium. For Nietzsche, 'herd' morality or rather the 'morality of custom',⁶² as he refers to it in the *Genealogy*, is essentially ancillary. And, in contrast to the master ethic, which creates value-judgments based on individual will, this kind of morality has a utilitarian basis at its foundation, providing the ethical grounds for raising the good of the many above the good of the individual.

Similar to what Nietzsche argues, in 'Bondwomen' as well as in her *Morality* series, Marsden draws attention to the related valuations of 'good' and 'weak' with regard to traditional feminine models of femininity, and the ethic of utility/usefulness which underpins them. She notices the function of such valuations in relation to the preservation of the master-slave hierarchy. In 'Bondwomen', she discusses how critics of women, the 'opponents' of women, as she calls them, have argued that women 'have allowed themselves to be used' and that, 'as the whole have shown 'nothing save servant attributes'.⁶³ 'He [the man who sees himself as master] would have sacrificed himself to nothing, save his own ideas.' 'She [the woman who sees herself as a servant], has always "revelled" somberly in sacrificing herself':⁶⁴ 'out of his own experience of her, he knows her to be a follower [...].this in itself is implying [her] lack of wants, and this in turn implying lack of ideals.'⁶⁵ Marsden observes that this view, which underlies this common criticism of women by men, is also often employed as evidence of woman's moral 'goodness': she is (so they claim) by nature 'law-abiding', 'moral, 'pure', chaste, compassionate, unegoistic etc. Woman's defenders (men as well as women) associate this ethic of weakness with the feminine ideal. Woman's so-called 'goodness' is proven in her virtuous self-denial, in her ability to sacrifice herself for 'duty, for peace, husband, parents,

⁶² Nietzsche, 'Essay II', Section 2, p. 36.

⁶³ Marsden, 'Bondwomen', p. 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

children'.⁶⁶ As Marsden points out in 'The New Morality' series, whether in the form of criticism or in the form of praise, this evaluation of woman's inherent 'goodness' perpetuates an ideal of femininity fundamentally inimical to the development of woman's genuine self, her individuality. In such ideals as 'the mother figure' for instance, and in the cult of sentimentality that surrounds this image, we can trace, according to Marsden, 'the responsibility for most of the social ills from which we suffer'.⁶⁷ Fundamentally, what in her view underlies such valuations is a deep-seated gender dualism, which is expressed in various forms. It can be seen in full power in the psychology of the modern suffrage movement and the ethics it brings about and, in some way, lends inspiration to the women's modern movement of revolt. In the 'Commentary on Bondwomen', Marsden draws attention to the suffragists' claims for equality as an important illustration of this phenomenon, and distinguishes the cult of the Freewomen from that of the Suffragists.

The cult of the Suffragist takes its stand upon the weakness and dejectedness of the condition of women. The cult of the Suffragist would say, 'Are women not weak? Are women not crushed down? Are women not in need of protection? Therefore give them the means wherewith they may be protected. Therefore, give them the means wherewith they may be protected.' Those of the cult of the Freewoman, however, while granting this in part, would go on to say, 'In spite of our position, we feel within us the stirrings of new powers and of growing strength [...]. [Freewomen] do not require protection; they need liberty. They do not require ease; they need strenuous effort. They themselves are prepared to shoulder their own [...]. They accept them willingly, because of their added opportunity and power.'⁶⁸

It appears that for Marsden, the modern movement of suffragism seeks to derive its power from the same value-judgments that caused woman's 'fall' in the first place. In such a discourse lurks the logic of the old morality – the one responsible for most of the social ills. As she tells us in 'The New Morality I', 'we therefore seek to formulate no morality for superwomen.' Instead, 'we are seeking a morality which

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

⁶⁷ Marsden, 'The New Morality IV', p. 141.

⁶⁸ Marsden, 'Commentary on Bondwomen', p. 22.

shall be able to point the way out of the social trap we find we are in'.⁶⁹ And she continues, 'this duality [...] will cease to exist only when women sink back into the position of females with nothing beyond, or when they stand recognized as "masters" among other "masters", considering their sex just as incidental concern as men consider theirs'.⁷⁰

In 'The New Morality I' and 'The New Morality II', Marsden's 'master' and 'servant' types of morality are centre stage. There, Marsden is concerned with men's and women's moral and social values and with the likely origins of our present-day attitudes. In these two articles, she argues that there seems to be a distinction within the moral reasoning that governs men and women respectively. The moral code which men have always followed is one based on an ideal of 'self-realisation', Marsden argues in the first essay. This ethic of self-realization allows them to lead their life as agents, as masters whose duty is the satisfaction of their own natural law, which is the 'desire' and 'ideal' to 'satisfy the wants which the consciousness of his several senses gives rise to.'⁷¹ Men's moral code relies on one being master of one's will, a free agent, and for such individuals this 'vision for attainment' is, basically a 'sensuous' 'pagan'.⁷²

However, when it comes to women, Marsden says, 'moral matters have been wholly different'. 'Women', by contrast, 'are wholly Christian, and have assimilated the whole genius of Christianity.'⁷³ A woman's 'inner self', her values and virtues, are circumscribed by laws which she did not make and which (at least initially) she had not the power to unmake. In fact, her understanding of herself is bound up by a faith inculcated, since time immemorial, through the encouragement and sanctions of

⁶⁹ Marsden, 'The New Morality I', p. 62.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 62.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 62.

⁷² Ibid., p. 62.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 62.

moral and religious tradition. While man is driven directly by the power of the senses, woman is driven by the less tangible power of the intuitive faith, at the expense of her senses. Men, in Marsden's view, have created their values in accordance to their 'inner desire', their ideal of virtue being primarily self-regulated, but women have traditionally defined themselves and their virtue in terms of 'Christian' ideals.⁷⁴ It is my view that Marsden's narrative here touches upon some of the issues discussed by Nietzsche in Essay II and III of the *Genealogy*. I believe, it is important to pay close attention to her discussion of the female 'faith', especially with reference to the notions of self-renunciation and asceticism, as they pre-empt her later discussion concerning 'passion', the senses and creativity. These notions are crucial in understanding her broader project of a new master morality and the image of selfhood it imagines.

Before I carry on my discussion of Marsden, I would like to briefly examine the related concepts of 'bad conscience' and 'ascetic ideal' in Nietzsche. In the second essay Nietzsche talks about the genesis of moral and social consciousness. The individual's 'consciousness' is conceived as a process of 'internalization', namely a process of forced socialization through which the individual's primary 'instinct of freedom' is 'forcibly made latent' by the system of law and punishment, in order to secure the benefit of the community.⁷⁵ 'This *instinct* of freedom',⁷⁶ when it finds itself involuntarily forced back by society's norms is given a new form: what Nietzsche calls 'bad conscience'. As Simon May argues in *Nietzsche's Ethics and his War on Morality*, Nietzsche's concept of 'bad conscience' in its general form denotes the pain resulting from one's unsublimated 'masterly' passions. It is 'bad' not

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 62.

⁷⁵ 'Essay II', Section 17, p. 59.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 59.

because it is ethically bad, but because the agent experiences it as unpleasant.⁷⁷ Specifically, this concept refers to the ‘inner life’ formed through this long process of socialization.⁷⁸ For Nietzsche, it is what gives rise to our inner experience of ourselves, a chamber of self-torture and the womb of imaginative self-creation all at once, and despite its ‘natural’ origins, it finally leads to the ideas which are contained in the notion of the soul, which is traditionally seen as the divine element within us: ‘all instincts which are not discharged outwardly *turn inwards* – this is what I call the *internalization* of man: with it there now evolves in man what will later be called his “soul”’.⁷⁹

In Essay III of the *Genealogy*, ‘What do Ascetic Ideals Mean’, we learn that the state of ‘bad-conscience’, this condition of psychological self-alienation’,⁸⁰ is tied to what Nietzsche refers to as the ‘ascetic ideal.’ In the beginning of the essay Nietzsche poses the question ‘what is the meaning of the ascetic ideal’. He does not proceed to give us a clear definition; instead, he defines this ‘meaning’ in terms of the concept’s various functions and utilities.⁸¹ For Nietzsche there are various psychological (and physiological) reasons for endorsing the ascetic ideal.⁸² One very important reason is that it provides ‘bad-conscience’ with a place where it can vent its cruelty freely; it brings the will-to-power to the surface (in the form of ascetic passion, artistic passion, and so forth) and in so doing it preserves it. In the form of

⁷⁷ May, pp. 60-61.

⁷⁸ ‘Essay II’, Section 22, p. 63.

⁷⁹ Nietzsche, ‘Essay II’, Section 16, p. 57.

⁸⁰ Roberts, *Contesting Spirit*, p. 56.

⁸¹ There are many uses for it and Nietzsche’s analysis is quick to indicate that it can be employed respectively by various types of individuals both as life-enhancing and life-denying force. (in his analysis Nietzsche discusses the types of the ‘ascetic-priest’, the ‘artist/philosopher’, and the ‘slave’ respectively).

⁸² For the purposes of my analysis here, I will only concentrate to the life-enhancing meaning of the ascetic ideal. However, for Nietzsche the ascetic ideal is a highly complicated philosophical and aesthetic question. I will return to this concept in my last chapter where I discuss it in relation to the ‘aesthetic asceticism’ of Stephen Dedalus in Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. A very good synopsis of the meaning of the ascetic ideal is offered in David Owen’s *Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morals*, (Montreal and Kingston: Mc Gill-Queen’s University Press, 2007).

the ascetic ideal, thus, 'the will' is ultimately 'saved'.⁸³ The ascetic ideal's capacity for creativity, 'of strongly life-enhancing expressions', may be seen, according to May, in Nietzsche's 'enormous emphasis on discipline, and in general, in his conception of the 'healthy soul'.⁸⁴ Nietzsche draws an explicit analogy between ascetic 'self-discipline' and concepts such as 'sublimation', 'culture', 'autonomy', 'freedom', 'self-overcoming', and 'soul'. As May tells us, for Nietzsche 'no achievement is possible [...] without eliminating distractions to one's primary ends [...] any creative passion presupposes great emotional order in the self', the elimination of inferior emotions and senses.⁸⁵

Interestingly, there are various references to asceticism and the ideals of self-renunciation in Marsden's essays, which are tied to her conception of the old as well as the new morality. The topic is first discussed with regard to woman's moral and social makeup, which, as we have already seen, for Marsden is nothing less than a manifestation of the slave-cum-master morality of Christianity. Such ideals are, without a doubt, implicated in the kind of virtues that have cast women into the current position of servitude. In relation to Christian virtue and chastity, Marsden sees the ascetic virtue as the most potent embodiment of woman's 'weakness', manifesting itself in a mistrust of life and the senses. But for Marsden the ascetic ideal is definitely not just that. When taken out of the old moral sphere, it comes to signify something else. There are interesting references to asceticism in relation to Marsden's concept of 'inner permanent life-reality', or 'living spirit',⁸⁶ two terms used interchangeably to refer to the inner forces within the self (Marsden's own take on the will-to-power). As I will try to show below, Marsden diagnoses the ascetic self as a symptom of the masterly powers within the self, a creative illness of a

⁸³ Nietzsche, 'Essay III: What do Ascetic Ideals Mean', Section 28, p. 120.

⁸⁴ May, p. 83.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 84.

⁸⁶ Marsden, 'The New Morality V', p. 162.

tormented inner 'will'. Marsden, in a similar way to Nietzsche, understands the ascetic conscience as the site of various conflicting forces within the individual, which hint at an inner voice which struggles to express itself somehow.

The theme of asceticism within the frame of moral psychology is touched upon in Essay I of 'The New Morality' series, where Marsden discusses the process of internalization of morality in women. As she puts it:

Resting for support upon a religion, *their* moral code has received its sanction and force from within. It has thus laid hold upon consciousness with a far more tenacious grip. Their code has been subjective, transgression has meant a darkening of the spirit, a sully of the soul. Thus the doctrine of self-renunciation, which is the outstanding feature of Christian ethics, has had the most favorable circumstances to ensure its realization, and with women it has won completely – so completely that it now exerts its influence unconsciously. Seeking the realization of the will of others, and not their own, women have almost lost the instinct for self-realization, the instinct in achievement in their own persons.⁸⁷

In the passage above Marsden is concerned with the psychology of woman's moral code, discussing it as a kind of expression of 'bad conscience', as woman's 'bad faith' so to speak. Marsden here is not quite clear as to what truly happened or how the Christian ethics of self-renunciation came to acquire such a moral authority, or how they became so appealing to women. She informs us that the ideal of conduct underlying the moral psychology of women is driven by the power of her 'faith' in the Christian ideal, by her attempt to become 'good' and 'pure'. As she tells us in 'The New Morality II': 'man's view of life is sensuous [...] woman's is ascetic [...] [they] are the "social ascetics" par excellence'.⁸⁸ What seems of particular significance to Marsden is the zeal with which woman endorsed such a code: 'the doctrine of self-renunciation [...] has won completely' – so completely in fact that morality has ceased to be something imposed from the outside. According to her, a psychological shift has taken place. The previously external religious code has

⁸⁷ Marsden, 'The New Morality I', p. 62.

⁸⁸ Marsden, 'The New Morality II', p. 101.

become, interestingly enough, 'subjective', as Marsden points out. In other words, what she seems to suggest is that over the course of time morality became internalized – was 'burned' into woman's consciousness (to borrow a Nietzschean metaphor), ultimately reinscribing itself as ascetic ideal.

Women, as we have said, are the social ascetics. They have become ascetic through their long exercising of restraint. They have restrained themselves in order to remain 'pure'. They have remained pure because men like them 'pure', and men's likings in this manner are backed up by women's religion, which, while being women's, is man-founded, man-expounded, and man-administered.⁸⁹

As suggested already, the interrelated concepts of 'bad-conscience' and the ascetic ideal are explored in Essay II and III of the *Genealogy*. The ascetic ideal holds a very important psychological function, as through it several kinds of instincts (bad-conscience) are allowed discharge. Interestingly, for Nietzsche these instincts are 'masterly' because they are, in essence, the instincts of an unconscious will-to-power. Therefore the 'ascetic' as a type of consciousness does not denote 'weakness', nor is it part of an organism in which force or passion is absent. Rather, the ascetic conscience is a surface symptom of the deeper working of uncanny, controlling, underlying forces which 'dress' themselves up in a spiritual costume. For Nietzsche, in other words, 'bad-conscience' as 'ascetic ideal' is essentially the will exercising its power as idea, as law over the body and the animal instincts in man; it seeks its freedom through the sublimation of instinct and desire; it imposes form; it demands hardness, discipline and struggles to posit, through brutal self-denial, an existence it considers to be of a superior, purer, higher kind, to the present one. What is more, it cultivates the capacities for self-reflection and accounts for the 'internalization' of the individual. Nietzsche warns us: 'We must be wary of thinking disparagingly about this phenomenon, by reason of its initial painful ugliness. At bottom it is the same active force which is at work on a more grandiose scale in those

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 101.

potent artists and organisers [...] the true womb of ideal and imaginative events, finally brought to life.’⁹⁰

Broadly speaking, Nietzsche’s ascetic ideal, whether in its life-denying or life-affirming form, indicates a simultaneous movement of the ‘will’ *away from* what it finds wanting in life and *towards* a higher value, a new valuation of life and of ‘this world’ as such.⁹¹ Through the ascetic ideal (Nietzsche considers the term broadly and includes artistic and philosophic asceticism in his discussion) a certain redirection and refinement of instinctual senses into higher forms of creation or ideas may be accomplished. Although this process is initially forced by an external entity (the society), it may become responsible for life-formation and value re-evaluation, but only in its affirmative state.⁹²

For Marsden, as we have already seen, women have always been the ‘social ascetics’, seeking support and power in the doctrine of ‘self-renunciation’. In ‘The New Morality’ series she spends a great deal of time explaining the life-denying qualities that a virtuous life of moral chastity entails. And yet, she seems to suggest, asceticism in its pure, unalloyed, non-moralistic sense possesses some unique advantages. Divorced from a moralistic frame, it can be seen in a new light. For a start, she argues, the ascetic ideal and its related doctrine of self-renunciation, is inexorably linked with ‘power’ and the possibility of its ‘realization’.⁹³ In the power of restraint, as Marsden tells us, one can detect an underlying force, which is only now starting to become conscious of its potential. As she tells us:

⁹⁰ Nietzsche, ‘Essay II’, Section 18, pp. 59-60.

⁹¹ As May points out: ‘Anything structured by the ascetic form – whether it is life-enhancing or life-denying – is, therefore, stretched across an inflexible gradient of value, one end of which the agent necessarily devalues and the other end of which he necessarily “strives” towards (by comprehending, becoming, expressing it)’, p. 83.

⁹² For a further discussion on the affirmative status of the ascetic will see May. Deleuze’s discussion of the active and reactive form of forces in Nietzsche’s philosophy is also important to understand the potentially active direction of the Nietzschean will-to-power. See Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson (London: Athlone Press, 1983).

⁹³ Marsden, ‘The New Morality II’, p. 101.

Men have insisted upon this caste of 'pure women' because they themselves were afraid of the senses. For men had given rein to the senses, and, having tried them, men knew their dangers. Hence they kept the women from them, incidentally inculcating in women the power of restraint, for which women should be duly grateful, as they will be when they realize the power which accrues therefrom. [...] [M]any women are coming to realize [this].⁹⁴

Through this doctrine of self-restraint, this cruel self-discipline, they may have lost much but also they 'have gained something', 'different in kind, and doubtless *higher* in quality than what they have lost.'⁹⁵ Understood as a kind of *askesis* of the self, as a certain kind of practice which intensifies the abilities of concentration and the arrestation of the immediate senses, asceticism is directly linked with the faculty of intuition, Marsden argues. Through the ascetic ideal, woman has developed a new faculty: 'We refer to the development of woman's intuitive faculty [...]. Woman's restraint, with its resultant sensitiveness, has brought a faculty whereby we shall one day piece the veil which separates us from the mystery of creation.'⁹⁶ Marsden will attempt to clarify this point further in 'The New Morality II' essay. There, Marsden argues that in certain forms of faith one discovers an inward creative force, the sublimation of a certain emotion, what she describes as 'passion'. It can be encountered in such intense forms of faith as religion and love and is directly linked with the intuitive faculty referred to above. For her 'passion' as creative energy is distinguished from passion as mere 'desire', or as 'sensuality'.⁹⁷ By passion, 'we do not speak of the turbulent excitation of sense'; rather, we speak for the 'arrestation of all the powers of sense by an object or cause'.⁹⁸ As she tells us:

All passion has an intensifying power: the passion of power, the nearest to creation; the passion of religion, the most ineffable; the passion of great causes, the most spacious; the passion of love, which is creation in itself. All these forms of passion put human consciousness in vibrant

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 101-102.

⁹⁵ Marsden, 'The New Morality I', p. 62. My emphasis.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 62.

⁹⁷ 'The New Morality II', pp. 102.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 102.

communication with the powers which have made human consciousness.⁹⁹

While earlier Marsden condemns the ascetic hatred of the body, here she talks approvingly of the practice of self-restraint and self-discipline, seeing them as instrumental in the development of the faculty of intuition.

Passion is a rare thing, and more valuable that is rare [...]. It is the first suspension of the senses which produces the susceptibility which becomes sensitive in a higher degree to every added manifestation to which the senses may become alive [...] it rivets attention, and it is in the riveted attention which gives knowledge of the open avenue along which creative vibration communicates. Along this avenue the consciousness of the created is in intimate touch with the creative power. Herein the power of sense intensifies a hundred-fold.¹⁰⁰

Her emphasis on the importance of the 'arrestation' and the 'elevation' of the senses here seems particularly poignant. Drawing on a vocabulary of physiology and aesthetics, she seems to interpret 'passion' as a moment of 'aesthetic arrest', which reveals the forces in operation within human consciousness. Passion, she seems to argue is a form of sublimation, an important self-regulating, elevating force which involves seeing through human illusions into the deep recesses of individual consciousness: '[passion] disintegrates the outer *husk* of semblance and lays bare the forces which produce their illusion.'¹⁰¹ The upshot of all this is that passion typically helps bring into communication the various forces forming the human consciousness. Through 'passion', in other words, one is allowed insight into the inner mechanisms of the conscious self, and the various forces which control it. Whereas Nietzsche uses the term 'soul' to refer to this inner consciousness, she employs the term 'living spirit' to avoid any confusion with the concept of the Christian soul (for her the soul is living, becoming organic). For Marsden, 'restraint with its resultant sensitiveness', its retentive and discriminatory powers, are essential in any effort to understand

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 102.

one's own psychology, 'the mystery of [one's] creation'.¹⁰² Drawing on the theory of the artist-genius from the 'Commentary on Bondwomen' essay, she notes the significance of this faculty in the development of the self as an artist: 'through this sense, they will make their greatest revelations of life-manifestations to the world.'¹⁰³

Having established that, Marsden returns to the subject of women's moral psychology to suggest that while this faculty is of great value, 'it has been bought at a high price, so high indeed as to annul almost its entire virtue.' As she tells us: 'Women have the intuitive faculty, without the experience upon which to practice it. They are as a Paderewski would be without an instrument.'¹⁰⁴ Whereas men 'regard the senses as gifts', women, being incarcerated within a slave tradition, see their senses 'as a means to an end', as she will add later, with a punitive, guilty eye.¹⁰⁵ What seems to lie at the heart of the problem for Marsden is that woman in this process of socialization has almost entirely lost 'the instinct for self-realization, the instinct for achievement in [her] own person.' Her desire is still incarcerated within the walls of the old morality, by a slavish 'bad conscience', so to speak: 'There is a genuine pathos in our reliance upon the law in regard to the affairs of our own souls. Our own belief in ourselves and in our impulses is so frail that we prefer to see it buttressed up.'¹⁰⁶ In assimilating the psychology of the servant, women have always had their passion felt through something other than themselves (man, law, religion). Intuition allows insights into the 'voices' of the inner self, a self with its own demands and desires, but, at the same time, women are trapped by the loud clutter of the outer:

¹⁰² Marsden, 'The New Morality I', p. 62.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 62. The comparison of woman to an artist is very interesting here. The ascetic's power of restraint is, in a sense, also to be found in art. The passionate *askesis* of the body, which is encountered in the ascetic, the shaping power of the individual spirit over its nature is comparable to the aesthetic vision of the artist, who in turn forms material reality into an aesthetic image of his own liking and imagination.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁰⁶ Marsden, 'The New Morality III', p. 122.

The long stroll of history is epoch-marked by such instances of the jealous guarding of the claims of the inner voices against those of the outer. It is a curious fact that almost all such advocacies of the inner reason should have been made in respect of external communal concerns such as religion, patriotism, or the commonwealth, that is, they have been inspired by belief in things and persons rather than by belief in the individual self.¹⁰⁷

It seems that what we can draw from all this is that in order for woman's passion to come 'alive', as it were, to recuperate the instincts for 'sense-gratification', the entire basis of her moral psychology needs to be uprooted. In order for her to break free from these 'outer voices', either those of external authority, or those of her own 'bad-conscience' (in Nietzschean terms), woman has to learn to rely on a new faith, the belief in the individual self. For woman to become free and a 'genius' she needs to learn to rely upon 'the self': 'the self has to guarantee therefore the reality of the idea, the worth of the idea, and the strength of purpose to carry the idea into effect'.¹⁰⁸ For this she will need to become her own artist, her own value-creator, to try to find her own 'inner conviction' through being capable of 'living intensely', seeking 'life', 'try[ing] its value'.¹⁰⁹ Marsden is adamant that the individual cannot become conscious of his or her 'inner conviction', nor distinguish between which values are 'right' and which are 'wrong' – to draw on Nietzsche, one will not be able to 'become what one is', without life experience and knowledge. As she points out:

As we said at the outset of the article, many women are coming to realize their own psychology, and are abandoning the old mistrust in life, with its impulses and pleasures. They are beginning to realize that capacity for sense-experience is the sap of life, and to the height of their attainment in the scale of being.¹¹⁰

If we take all this together, it can be argued that the new moral psychology Marsden proposes advises at the same time a turn inward, in the realm of emotion, and a turn outward, in the realm of experience. It is both introspective and vitalistic

¹⁰⁷ Marsden, 'The New Morality V', p. 162.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

¹¹⁰ Marsden, 'The New Morality II', p. 102.

and values the powers of self-reflection and the importance of the 'living spirit'. The latter for Marsden is nothing less than an outward flow of the self's creative power, a sign of its capacity to imagine something beyond the immediate, and express itself in the form of an ideal. It may be said that Marsden's envisioning of a free consciousness, guided by experiment and self-reflection, is a consciousness similar to that of Nietzsche's 'sovereign man'.¹¹¹ It is a consciousness capable of a true re-evaluation of its previous condition, which feels innocent and strong enough to become a creator of new valuations and virtues.

As we have already seen the issue of independent value and self-creation arose in the first essay ('Bondwomen') when Marsden considered the question of the kind of selfhood to which the freewoman type aspires. Central to her conception of the freewoman there was the question of agency, creativity, and strength. In this particular article she sought to separate her ideal of a free-willed individual from a consciousness which was passive, bonded, and servile to ideals that are not of the 'self'. In place of this bonded consciousness, she sought to erect a new ideal of selfhood, a new free consciousness, confident, and self-sufficient. In this essay, Marsden drew on the discourse of 'genius', to discuss the free, artistic, spiritual, model of individuality she envisioned for *The Freewoman*. Genius there was defined as the ability to assert oneself as 'an artist', as an individual who, by developing the faculty of an 'inner reason' (intuition of life-experience), may develop the potential for self-expression and self-knowledge.¹¹² In sum, Marsden envisions a creative spirit (the new individual), who, through experience and self-reflection will seek the

¹¹¹ Nietzsche, 'Essay II', Section 2, p. 37.

¹¹² Marsden, 'Commentary on Bondwomen', p. 21. As she continues to say: 'Our contention is that life should supply the conditions which would enable this native endowment of vision to make itself communicable to others, and we consider that so many women appear ordinary, not because they are ordinary, but because they are bundled pell-mell into a sphere in which they can so no special gift; and because they are expected to be so bundled, they are deprived of the training which would enable them to make their individual revelation communicable, that is, of their chance to become artists' (p. 21).

realization of its autonomous ideal, a spirit strong enough and capable enough to 'record' his own value,¹¹³ becoming its own master:

Nothing but thing – the sense of quality, the sense that a woman has gifts, the sense that she is superior, a master – can give her the strength [...] to seize the 'love' in passing, to suffer the long strain of effort, and to bear the agony of producing creative work. Having this sense, they will learn that freedom is born in the individual soul, and that no outer force can either give it or take it away [...]. For none can judge of another soul's value. The individual has to record its own.¹¹⁴

In a way, Marsden's address to the new freewomen echoes Nietzsche's address to his 'free spirits', those who, as he tells us in the *Genealogy*, are 'of another faith'; the spirits which are 'strong enough and primordially strong enough to give an incentive for contrary valuations and for 'eternal values' to be valued another way round'.¹¹⁵ Like Nietzsche who teaches 'man that the future of mankind is his will, dependent on human will',¹¹⁶ she teaches the woman the necessity of faith in the individual self, and incites her to recognize her inner potential, her inner power, to find the means to cultivate it. In effect in the trope of the freewoman she envisions a self-conscious condition and a self-mastery.

Overall Marsden's new moral psychology envisions a morality of free autonomous, responsible 'masters'. It entails the gift of deep self-knowledge and the ability to construct one's identity in accordance with 'an individual and personal vision of life'. It seeks to set 'limits to the sphere and the working area of external authority', so as to, one day, overcome the 'friendly shelter and protection of law and convention', the obedience to the cause of an ideal, 'unless they are impelled by some inner conviction.'¹¹⁷ It has to start by cultivating a trust in the senses, a trust in

¹¹³ Marsden, 'Bondwomen', p. 2.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ Nietzsche, 'Essay II, Section 2, p. 152.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹¹⁷ Here Marsden is referring to all kinds of ideals, socialism, liberal anarchism included: 'The single pioneer is followed by the "followers" who "organize" the thought of the first comer. That is, they level it down; they pack the new wine into the old bottles, harness the new spirit to the old machine; strangle the new freedom before it is well-nigh born [...]. Every revolution seems to

one's value and one's unique desires. The self/free spirit has to cultivate the trust in the freedom of will and individuality. It has to become aware of a pure self, one unalloyed by convention: to turn inward and shed light onto whatever one's genuine passion (or will) might be. At the end of the 'New Morality' series she sums up her new cult of individuality, through which woman one day will become her own master:

Each change necessitates the belief in one's personal individuality and judgment [...]. We have used the word 'anarchy', where we might easily have used such a word as 'individuality', of set purpose. We have done this deliberately, in order to make clear the truer sense of direction and a truer perspective. Until this is done, we, and especially we women, get a wholly wrong sense of values. We are putting wrong valuations of worth on things [...]. The law and the moral code have loomed larger than the living spirit-material through which these work. So, by setting limits to the sphere and working area of external authority, we have endeavoured to make clear the inner permanence of life-reality to which external law administers as a servant, but may not dictate as a master [...]. To Freewomen this conception is becoming clearer. It is to face life unafraid, to welcome its emotions, to try their value, to be alive and capable of living intensely; to seek life, and that more abundantly; and, if there is a price to be paid for it, to be ready with the toll.¹¹⁸

3.4 New Discourses of Radical Nietzscheanism: John M. Kennedy, 'The Psychology of Sex'; Henri Lichtenberger, *The Gospel of the Superman*; Charles W. Whitby, 'Tragedy of the Happy Marriage'; Edmund. B. Auvergne, 'The Case of Penelope'

In this part I focus on three other *Freewoman* contributors, whose articles extend the connection between Nietzsche, psychology and an ethic of self-creation, providing hence a wider context for understanding the accommodation of Nietzsche in this

follow this cycle-crash and disorder, bloodshed and great sacrifice, one great soul's realization of liberty, one brief glint from off a new idea, then back to the new-old tyranny. And that as far as we have got. [...]. The bishop speaks the truth. He is speaking truth when, for instance, he says, "it would be a gross error to confuse Socialism with Anarchism. The Anarchist refuses to be governed at all. The socialist aspires to be governed too much." 'The New Morality V', pp. 161-162.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

particular tradition of individualism. ‘The Psychology of Sex’ by J. M. Kennedy,¹¹⁹ the eminent Nietzsche translator and *New Age* contributor, is one such example that provides a commentary on suffrage and feminist politics through an individualistic lens. Overall, Kennedy’s article is a critical examination of the ‘consciousness’ of the feminist movement. It attempts to transcribe the radical ethic of creative individualism within the feminist discourse. As Kennedy saw it, there is a notable distinction between the psychology of the suffragists and the feminists:

The distinction between the Suffragists and the Feminists amounts to this: the Suffragists are those women who want voting powers for the redressing of economic grievances and for the purpose of raising woman to the level of man in a purely materialistic sense. The Feminists are those who pay less attention to the securing of the vote – who are, indeed, not particularly anxious to vote at all – for the reason of their grievances are not of the economic but of the spiritual order. They do not wish merely to elevate woman to the level of men for purely financial reasons. They do not wish for economic freedom merely; but for sexual freedom.¹²⁰

According to him suffragists and feminists alike are those women who want to raise woman to the level of man: the suffragists in a purely materialistic sense, via the acquisition of the vote; and the feminists, in a spiritual sense, through sexual and intellectual emancipation. According to him, however, despite the claims to emancipation and freedom, both kind of attitudes prove limiting, especially in terms of their ‘servile’ reliance on ‘causes’, ‘ideas’, and ‘morals’. ‘Anyone who wishes to bring about greater intellectual plus moral freedom for both sexes cannot look to the suffragists for support. Imagine the suspicion awakened in the mind of the average woman by the very expression “moral freedom.”’¹²¹ And at the same time, referring to the growing popularity of Nietzsche among feminist circles, he points out:

Neither, however, can we appeal to the feminist for support [...]; for the feminists are merely ‘interested’ in whatever happens to be the fashion at the moment – Bernard Shaw, the revival of Samuel Butler, Nietzsche,

¹¹⁹ J. M. Kennedy, ‘The Psychology of Sex’, *The Freewoman*, 23 November 1911, pp. 14-16.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Bergson. In very few instances indeed do the disciples prove worthy of the masters they have chosen to follow for the moment; and in either case they cannot be persuaded to take an interest in the body.¹²²

Neither the moral servitude of the suffragists nor the intellectual servitude of the feminists, as shown in the way the latter ‘obediently’ follow any new theory offered to them as the new gospel, can help the woman’s disinterest or hatred for ‘the body’. The same kind of distinction can be seen in the case of men: ‘It must be acknowledged, of course, that males may now, to a very great extent, be divided in the same manner’. The ‘bête humaine’, the male equivalent of the suffragist, according to Kennedy, ‘does not necessarily believe in Christian dogma, but unhesitatingly follows the precepts of Christian morality [and] [...] abjures the body and develops a mind which is necessarily superficial.’¹²³ ‘None of these types of individuals experience life “in the full.”’¹²⁴ Kennedy argues: “‘Im Guten” [in the good], perhaps; “Im Schönen” [in the beautiful], often; but “Im Vollen” [in full, in plenitude], never.’ His main concern is to argue for the replacement of the current feminist values, values which reflect a problematic sex psychology of devotion and discipleship, with new ones, based on an ethic of self-creation and self-governance.

It comes as no surprise that further down Kennedy talks about a ‘third and unnamed category’ of individuals, a class ‘as yet so small that we have no name for it’ in which naturally belong ‘all the great artists of *both sexes* – all real creative artists’.¹²⁵ They are the only ones who seek their virtue in an ethic of creativity which

¹²² Ibid., p. 16.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 16.

¹²⁴ As Lucy Delap notes, *The Freewoman* debates about emancipation reveal a conflict between, on the one hand, women’s political role as characterized by service, duty, and nurturance, an argument resting on a discourse of ‘sexual difference, and which highlighted the moral, emotional or biological divide between the sexes’ – and on the other on ‘an individualistic account of women’s emancipation through self-interestedness. Lucy Delap, ‘Philosophical Vacuity and Political Ineptitude: *The Freewoman’s* Critique of the Suffrage Movement’, *Women’s History Review*, 4 (2002), 613-630 (pp. 616-620).

¹²⁵ Kennedy, p. 16. My emphasis.

serves both the 'body' and the 'intellect'. By this third class, those who live "Im Vollen", he means

not mere romanticist writers; but men like Goethe. It is this third and select class for which there is at present no definite organization; no definite organ. It is, indeed, sincerely to be hoped that there will never be need for any; for an organization or a movement is a bed of Procrustes, a destroyer of individuality.¹²⁶

Here Kennedy aims to replace the romanticized ethic of feminist virtue with a new one of vitalistic creativity, one interested in living out its theory. This ethic envisions a free-spirited modern consciousness which will serve not the collective cause of feminism but rather the individual 'causes' of its members. For him, as for Marsden, freedom from prescribed social and gender roles and the promise of emancipation is reserved for those individuals with a state of consciousness equal to that of creative artists.

In other words, what he seems to suggest is that true individuality and freedom are saved for those consciously corporeal creative individuals who are not afraid to make art out of life. On the whole, it seems that the kind of creative individualism to which Kennedy refers – this state of living life and its ideals aesthetically, fully, with an interest in the 'body' – is not far from what we saw Marsden advocating previously. As with Marsden before, what seems to be proposed here is an alternative to current feminist discourses of emancipation, a new kind of discourse of Nietzschean individualism which supports the virtue of self-creation and agency, and which employs women to become artists, creators of themselves. Kennedy here deploys a Zarathustrian rhetoric which advises one to 'Go away alone [...]. One repays a teacher poorly if one always remains only a student'¹²⁷ – an individualist rhetoric which serves as a useful antidote to the prevalent rhetoric of 'virtue and devotion' of the feminists and suffragists alike. In other words, this kind of

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 16.

¹²⁷ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 'Of the Bestowing Virtue', p. 68.

'Nietzschean-like' type of emancipation, one which advocates a deeper questioning of the principles and the causes that direct one's actions, lends further support to Marsden's own ideal of the 'freewoman'. In essence, this kind of Nietzschean discourse, one grounded upon the notion of a self-governed creative spirit ('a growing Ego', as Marsden would soon call it soon)¹²⁸ seeking its causes, its alternatives and its possibilities of change not in some abstract theory or principle but within itself, is, in my view, a radical alternative to the then-current fashionable Nietzschean discourses of Edwardian feminism.

Kennedy's understanding of Nietzsche in terms of an ethic of the 'body' and 'creative individualism' needs to be pursued a bit further. In addition to playing an active role in Levy's translation project, Kennedy was also responsible for translating Professor Lichtenberger's well-known study *La Philosophie de Nietzsche* (1898) from French.¹²⁹ This study was a follow-up from a course of public lectures on Nietzsche read by Lichtenberger at the University de Nancy during the mid-1890s and was instrumental in establishing Nietzsche's credibility in academic circles. As

¹²⁸ Dora Marsden, 'The Growing Ego', *The Freewoman*, 8 August 1912, pp. 221-222. In this article, Marsden introduces Max Stirner and reviews *The Ego and his Own*: 'We may have laid aside one of the profoundest of human documents, Max Stirner's, *The Ego and his Own*. A correspondent has asked us to examine Stirner's doctrine, and shortly we intend to do so. Just now we are more concerned to overcome its penetrative influence on our own minds [...]. The entire conceptual world, the complete thought-realm he attacks and overcomes and lays at the feet of the Ego. Morality, religion, God, and man are all brought low. They no longer rule as external powers influencing the Ego. To the Ego they are as his footstool. Scarcely so, indeed, for, save as error, they do not exist. The Ego is supreme, and reigns in his lonely kingdom. His joy lies in self-enjoyment, he reigns over himself; his business is "to use himself up". It seems a strange anti-climax, at first sight – so great means, and such small ends. The solution, we must believe, is to be found in the unfolding of the content of the term – the "Satisfaction of the Ego". If the ego is supreme, its satisfaction is a necessity. What it seeks after it must find; what it wants it must have. If its satisfactions do not already exist, they must be created. Hence, if the Ego needs the realization in itself of morality, or religion, or God, then, by virtue of its own supremacy, the realization will be forthcoming' (pp. 221-222).

¹²⁹ Henri Lichtenberger, *Friedrich Nietzsche: The Gospel of Superman*, trans. J. M. Kennedy (London: Foulis, 1910; New York: Macmillan, 1912). In his book on the French reception of Nietzsche, Forth observes that Lichtenberger 'must be credited with conferring upon Nietzsche a degree of bourgeois respectability that helped to deliver him from the relative obscurity of avant-garde literature [...]. Committed to the project of rendering Nietzsche acceptable in European cultural circles, Lichtenberger executed in more academic terms the specifically literary project of Henri Albert. Lichtenberger published biographical and critical studies on Nietzsche as well as some translated fragments and letters, all of which served to temper both the unbridled enthusiasm of the avant-garde and the ad hominem scorn of the literary traditionalists', p. 55.

Forth notes: 'one could legitimately study and even admire the works of Nietzsche within the academy provided that these texts were explicitly viewed as literature rather than philosophy.'¹³⁰ It is interesting to note that although the English translation appeared later, *The Eagle and the Serpent* had been advertising the Lichtenberger book to prospective students of egoism even before the turn of the century. In general, Lichtenberger's study addresses the issue of Nietzsche's stylistics and provides a theoretical basis for appreciating them.

On the whole, the study introduces Nietzsche as a new kind of philosopher who is modeling a radically innovative philosophical method that departs from classical models. Applauding Nietzsche's creative individualism, Lichtenberger contends that Nietzsche is dedicated to a philosophy that leads us away from the outside reality and focuses on the inner awareness of our own existence. As he notes, 'whereas every philosopher pretends to bring us his system as a purely logical construction, as a work of pure *reason*', Nietzsche claims that 'this is an illusion.' For Nietzsche, 'the conscient life of every man has its roots in the inconscient life.' The quest for truth, 'however disinterested it may appear, acts in reality for the profit and under the inspiration of another more powerful and hidden instinct.'¹³¹ Lichtenberger notes that Nietzsche's philosophy should be credited for attempting, through his take on the will-to-power, to contest the model of pure philosophical reason in our conception of the world. As Lichtenberger maintains, Nietzsche's new individualistic philosophy departs from the traditional philosophical model of mind/reason as the highest authority, stressing the importance of the self as the basis of knowledge

For Nietzsche all those mysterious and superhuman metaphysical entities which man has always believed to be without himself, and which has revered under different names – 'God', the world of the 'Thing-in-

¹³⁰ Forth, pp. 55-56.

¹³¹ Lichtenberger, p. 158.

Itself', 'Truth', the 'Categorical Imperative' – are merely phantoms of our imagination.¹³²

Further, for this scholar, Nietzsche's eschewing of pure reason as the standard of judgment, and of the notion of 'absolute truth' in general, carries a lot of weight. In other words, he continues, while philosophical tradition has valued objectivity and impartiality, Nietzsche challenges the classic models of Truth and proposes the self and the creative will as the true determinants of human knowledge and reason: 'he has but little regard for human reason [...] sensitiveness and intelligence are, according to him, the instruments and playthings of an unseen power which masters them and utilizes them for its own ends.'¹³³ Lichtenberger borrows a passage from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to illustrate his claim:

Behind thy feelings and thy thoughts, O my brother, is to be found a powerful master, an unknown sage-he is called 'self' (selbst). He lives in thy body; he is thy body. (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: 'The Despisers of the Body').¹³⁴

As such, Nietzsche's overall skepticism and his psychological insights into the nature of human truths and valuations deserve praise, as they help us understand the artificial nature of our beliefs. For Lichtenberger, Nietzsche's questioning of objectivity, his belief that 'a philosopher's theories are his confessions, his memoirs',¹³⁵ moves the emphasis of philosophy from the quest for an external and objective reality to an internal and subjective one. By turning his back on notions of 'pure reason' Nietzsche redirects our attention towards a new kind of 'reason', an

¹³² Ibid., pp. 115-116.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 3.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 3. The translated passage continues: 'The most immediate reality, which is permitted us to know, is the world of our desires, our passions. All our deeds, wishes, and thoughts, are, in the end, governed by our instincts, and these instincts all spring from our primordial instinct, the "will-to-power", which suffices – according to Nietzsche's hypothesis – to explain by itself alone all the manifestations of life of which we are witnesses', *ibid.*, p. 3.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 158. This is expressly conveyed in 'Part 1. On the Prejudices of the Philosophers', in *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 5-25, where Nietzsche tells us: 'I have gradually come to realize what every great philosophy so far has been: a confession on the part of its author, and a type of involuntary and unself-conscious memoir', Section 6, p. 8.

inner reason which is grounded within the body and its instincts. As Lichtenberger tells us:

The body with its instincts, with the 'will-to-power' that animates it, is what Nietzsche calls man's 'great reason'; as for man's 'little reason', upon which he plumes himself so readily, of the sovereign liberty of which he so often boasts, it is a precious instrument, it is true, but an imperfect and fragile one, which the 'self' makes use of to extend its range of power [...] all else counts for nothing.¹³⁶

For Lichtenberger, Nietzsche's interpretation of philosophical truth as the unconscious record of our individual passions becomes an important aspect of his legacy both as an artist and a philosopher. Nietzsche's emphasis upon the self and its unconscious will as the true sources of our moral and mental reasoning paves the way for a new kind of philosophy – philosophy as psychology and as aesthetic becoming. He borrows a passage from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to illustrate this:

'What does thy conscience tell thee?' he asks. 'Thou must be what you art'. Man, then, must above all know himself, must know his body thoroughly, his instincts, his faculties [...]. Each of us performs this task as well as he can: there are no general and universal rules for becoming one's self.¹³⁷

Overall, for Lichtenberger, Nietzsche's philosophical individualism is important in that it offers a non-dogmatic philosophy of the body as a new philosophical paradigm; one that 'does not profess to bring men a new credo, a body of ready-made doctrines,'¹³⁸ but one that puts faith in the body, and the body's 'reason':

Whilst the majority of philosophers glory in *impersonalizing* themselves, in giving them their ego, in 'letting their eye become light', to use Goethe's expression, Nietzsche makes his own personality the kernel of his philosophy he spends his life in seeking himself out, and is letting us know the result of his investigations. His philosophy is therefore, above all, the history of his soul. [...] He does not set up merely for a thinker. He does not say to mankind: 'I bring you truth, an impersonal, universal truth, independent of what I am myself, and before which all human reason must bow down', but on the contrary: 'Here I am, with my

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

instincts, my beliefs, my truths, and doubtless my errors also; such as I am I say “yea” to existence, to all its joys, as likewise to all its sorrows; see whether you too cannot find your happiness in the thoughts which have made mine.’¹³⁹

Ultimately, he argues, Nietzsche’s eschewing of the objective validity of philosophic Truth (Kantian-Aristotelian categories included) leads to a new type of creative individualism, where philosophy becomes art, performance, experience, and passion. ‘In the first place Nietzsche’s philosophy is strictly individualistic. One of Nietzsche’s most profound beliefs is that ‘everyone should create his own truth and morals for himself.’¹⁴⁰ His own style of writing is an illustration of this new kind of philosophy as self-discovery and self-creation: ‘in short, then, all that a thinker can do is to tell the story of his soul, to say how he has discovered himself, in what beliefs he has found inward peace, and, by his example, to exhort his contemporaries to do likewise, to seek themselves and to find themselves.’¹⁴¹

Kennedy’s translation of the Lichtenberger study appeared at a time when Nietzschean debates were becoming more centered on the psychological significance of a self-reflexive and individualistic philosophy. As Lichtenberger’s account of the philosopher suggests, the ‘inwardness’ of Nietzsche’s philosophy, rather than a symptom of pathological degeneracy and egotism, is to be regarded as a significant aspect of the kind of philosophy he envisions, a certain type of creative individualism which shifts attention from the outer to the inner ‘reason’, a new way of capturing reality. Considering *The Freewoman*’s drive towards a radical new morality, its anti-idealism, and its championing of a new kind of vitalistic aesthetic, it is not surprising to see an appreciation of Nietzsche similar to that of Lichtenberger.

¹³⁹ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

Besides Marsden's own call for an introspective and self-conscious doctrine of individualism, which as I tried to show has a distinctly Nietzschean underpinning, a physiological and psychological interpretation of Nietzsche came from such regular contributors such as Charles W. Whitby. Dr. Whitby, a frequent contributor to *The Freewoman* and *The New Age* (we followed his argument on sexuality and genius in Chapter One) in the debates around sexuality, Uranianism, literature and aesthetics, offers a decisively more sympathetic evaluation of the previously labeled 'degenerate'. In 'The Tragedy of the Happy Marriage',¹⁴² for example, Whitby claims that Nietzsche, in his insights into the human unconscious, is, in fact, a brilliant psychologist: 'I know of no keener psychologist – the "will-to-power" is an absolutely universal characteristic of all conscious beings, and one of the deepest, if not the deepest, of all.'¹⁴³ In *The Freewoman* the shift to an affirmative understanding of Nietzsche's psychology seems to move beyond the debate of pathology and creativity. In this article, Nietzschean psychology is employed to support Whitby's argument against the conventions of what he refers to as the mainstream type of sex literature, a fiction dealing only with 'models, types of usually melodramatic love conflicts [...] directed to the experience of common man, whose notion of love is manipulated through such commonalities.'¹⁴⁴ In this context, Nietzsche's introspective style is framed into a discussion of new psychological literature. In particular, Whitby draws correspondences between Nietzsche's psychological insights and D. H. Lawrence, arguing that Nietzsche's philosophical style is taken as having inaugurated a new type of psychological literature. As Whitby argues for young writers such as Lawrence, the focus has shifted away from the established pattern of Edwardian sentimental fiction, its high moral tone, and the

¹⁴² Charles W. Whitby, 'Tragedy of the Happy Marriage', *The Freewoman*, 30 November 1911, pp. 25-26.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

images and stereotypes of male-female relationships – towards a new form of anti-idealistic literature, one that does away with conventional ‘fictions’ and ‘types’ altogether.

That is how things always happen in fiction: the pity is that they do not happen so in life. But, after all, we need not concern ourselves with the opinions or deprecate the condemnation of the average Philistine: what do we have to do with him? We address that select audience which has at least some inkling of psychology; which knows therefore that human nature cannot submit kindly to constraint, and that the last word has not yet been said about a given union [...]. The members of our select audience are not unacquainted with Boswell, who recorded this memorable saying of his hero: ‘It is so far from being natural for a man and woman to live in a state of marriage that we find all the motives they have for remaining in that state, and the restraints which civilized society imposes to prevent separation are hardly sufficient to keep them together.’¹⁴⁵

This kind of literary orientation of individualism is encountered again in such articles as Edmund B. Auvergne’s ‘The Case of Penelope’.¹⁴⁶ This is another very interesting article which utilizes a discourse of individualism to talk about the tyranny of words and ideals, urging readers to question ideals and romanticized fictions of the past. Drawing on the figure of the chaste and faithful Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, Auvergne refers to this paradigm as another ‘mischievous ideal, which runs through all Western literatures, and poisons the lives of everyday men and women.’¹⁴⁷ Auvergne’s article interprets such feminine examples as ‘eloquent fables’, ‘disguised moral decrees’, legitimized through Western literature and religious tradition for the purpose of perpetuating patriarchal moral temperaments. By employing the image of the chaste and patient Penelope, his article aims to make the reader conscious of the artificiality of such self-sacrificial models of feminine virtue. As he argues, duty, chastity and self-sacrifice are not innate but artificial

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁴⁶ Edmund B. Auvergne, ‘The Case of Penelope’, *The Freewoman*, 22 August 1912, pp. 265-266.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 266.

qualities determined by social conditions and it is important to recognize the underlying forces and behind such 'beautiful words' and ideals:

Chastity and fidelity – what beautiful words they are, and how much unhappiness they have spelled, how many lives have they not withered! The one is the tragedy of celibacy, the other of married life. The Irish are proud of the woman in Shaw's play who wasted her sex and her affections and sat down to wait fifteen years for a lover who had forgotten her. While such ideals are upheld, I marvel how the British Government had the hardihood to tear Hindoo widows from their husband's funeral pyre. But the same mischievous ideal runs through all Western literatures, and poisons the lives of everyday men and women [...] the virtue of Penelope consists in refusing to herself and others pleasure which she cannot possibly share with some one other absent person. In what respect her abstinence benefited her absent lord it is not easy to see.¹⁴⁸

In this chapter I have attempted to extend my discussion of radical egoism to include the presence of Nietzschean ideas in another London little coterie *The Freewoman*. I discussed how *The Freewoman's* discourse of creative individualism engages with Nietzschean theory and the extent to which this discourse provides a reconceptualization of contemporary views about gender and identity. In my view, the individualistic current that runs through the entire 'New Morality' series and which is also evident in the thought of the other articles under examination here, is meant to enrich our understanding of the early modernist response to Nietzsche, shedding light in some little known aspects of Nietzschean literary and cultural reception.

Initially, the rhetoric of Nietzschean radicalism acted as an agent of provocation and change, announcing a break with the past. My examination of *The Eagle and the Serpent* and The Leeds Arts Club in Chapter One provided insights into the early accommodation of Nietzschean ideas to the English intellectual scene, and revealed a certain kinship between anarchist politics, socialist ethics and early

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 266.

modernism.¹⁴⁹ In the present chapter, I sought to demonstrate that a certain continuity of this tradition of radical egoism associated with the philosophy of Nietzsche can be clearly discerned in the early agenda of *The Freewoman*, as mirrored in Marsden's advocacy of free creative individualism. To a certain extent, the *Eagle and the Serpent*'s 'godless' rhetoric of insurgency and renewal, its promise to re-evaluate all those blessed words' and ideals are once more evoked in Marsden's long campaign for a new morality. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that that the ambitious, utopian enterprise initiated there begins to take definite shape in *The Freewoman*'s project of 'a master morality', through a commitment to remove the debris of the past, and to create a new moral consciousness.

As it has already been argued early varieties of Nietzschean egoism are important for appreciating the complex origins of later forms of radical individualism such as the one envisioned in *The Freewoman*. *The Freewoman* shared the anti-idealist, anti-bourgeois and rebellious sentiment of early Nietzschean egoism. Dora Marsden endorsed a similar editorial ethic of openness and heterogeneity that we see in *The Eagle and the Serpent* and *The New Age*. Yet, there are also important differences that need to be taken into account. The critical way with which Marsden and some of the contributors engage with Nietzschean egoism in this early phase of *The Freewoman* (a response which refrains from any explicit identification with the more mainstream currents of Nietzscheanism), while it retains most of the original spirit is considerably more systematic and theoretical in nature. In the pages of *The Freewoman* the rather bombastic rhetoric of the early Nietzschean radicalism gives gradually way to a more refined and mature discourse, in which, Nietzsche becomes provocative in a different sense.

¹⁴⁹ Which announced the twilight of the old idols and espoused a rhetoric of renewal and reformation.

That said, it is my impression that in *The Freewoman* we are witnessing a gradual transition from an early tradition of radical egoism to a more sophisticated reading of Nietzsche and philosophic individualism, which evolves through a careful thinking of the ramifications of the former discourses. The shift in attitude can be seen best in this periodical's gradual abandonment of a rhetoric of individual genius, and its endorsement of a more introspective kind of vitalism, one willing to fight its battles in the more dark and unknown recesses of individual consciousness. Rather than battling with outward material, Marsden's vitalism is driven inward, increasingly placing greater emphasis on 'inner experience'. In *The Freewoman* and later on in *The New Freewoman*, Marsden's critical reflections will progressively lead her to propose a unique type of vitalism, one which places greater emphasis on internalization as the precondition for independent thought and action. While a clearer tie between Nietzsche's literary reception and the emerging *episteme* of psychoanalysis becomes more apparent later (in *The New Age* for example where Nietzsche is seen respectively as a cultural therapist, a precursor of the psychoanalytic novel and is compared to Dostoevsky) – it is my suggestion that the psychological and literary underpinnings in the reception of Nietzsche announce themselves in *The Freewoman*, and provide, to some degree, the basis for the eventual transformation of Marsden's radical movement into an artistic and literary avant-garde.

Chapter Four

Egoistic Chimpanzees and Murderous Nihilists: Types of Artists and Lovers in

Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I aim to discuss the extent to which aspects of this tradition of radical individualism find their way into the work and thought of Wyndham Lewis, a writer whose affinities to Nietzsche have been a subject of great interest to scholars of modernism. Lewis's association with avant-garde factions such as the *Little Review*, *The New Age* and *The Egoist* are by now fairly well-established. A comprehensive account of Lewis's aesthetic and intellectual development in the context of the avant-garde aesthetic agenda of modernism is offered by Paul Peppis in *Literature, Politics, and the English Avant-Garde*.¹ There Peppis argues that one way to begin understanding the complications and nuances of the political and aesthetic discourses of writers such as Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot, is to consider their claims vis-à-vis 'the broad body of public discourse they originally engaged'.² For Peppis recovering those dynamics is essential for dealing with the contentious issue of the 'reactionary' character of modernist radical politics and for providing a more sober, critical and reflexive account of these writers' position in the cultural history of the prewar avant-garde.

The current chapter focuses on Lewis's first novel, *Tarr*. *Tarr*'s intellectual value for the tradition of aesthetic individualism is, as will be demonstrated, multifold. To begin with, it was serialized in *The Egoist*, the successor of *The New*

¹ Paul Peppis, *Literature, Politics, and the English Avant-Garde: Nation and Empire, 1901-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Freewoman from April 1916 to November 1917, and offered, at least to some extent, a response to the intellectual debates current there. It is potentially fruitful, in my view, to consider *Tarr* as in a kind of dialogue with the other art-debates offered there either in the form of essays or serialized novels, which included Joyce's *A Portrait* which had appeared serially a year before (1914-1915), as well as Remy de Gourmont's *The Horses of Diomedes*, which appeared in nine issues of *The New Freewoman* (August-December, 1913), and which was continued in *The Egoist* (January-March, 1913). Each of these texts contains evidence of a consistent preoccupation with the tradition of aesthetic individualism – suggesting important continuities between earlier and later expressions of Nietzschean aesthetic and literary concerns. In addition, *Tarr*'s interesting choice of time and setting (Paris, early twentieth century) is also potentially valuable as it expands our knowledge about the early phase of this tradition, providing early links between individualistic aesthetics and Nietzsche's reception on the Continent. In *Tarr* we see crystallized the mood of avant-garde Parisian culture, a culture which provided many of the crucial influences of Lewis's formative years and helped to encourage a certain aesthetic vitalism, an aesthetic that as Bernard Bergonzi points out, was not unconnected with the interest in Nietzsche.³

Overall, it seems to me that *Tarr* is a servant of two masters: the one is English, the other French. An account of the genesis of the text, its progress through various drafts, and its publication history, allows us to view this novel as an elaborate record of Lewis's cosmopolitan concerns from 1907 till 1917. One way to approach the aesthetics of the text is through Lewis's portrait of the artist-individualist, Frederick Tarr, a character who, as will be shown, transgresses, in a way, the novel's typical time-space coordinates, becoming a dynamically volatile figure operating

³ Bernard Bergonzi, 'Coming to Terms with the Enemy: Some Recent Studies', in *Wyndham Lewis: Literature/Pittura*, ed. by Giovanni Cianci (Palermo: Selleno, 1982), pp. 246-259.

simultaneously within a two dimensions: Paris 1907 – London 1917. Interestingly, Tarr, an English expatriate artist in Paris, inhabits the same aesthetic territory as Lewis himself did from 1903 until 1908, trying to cast off the ‘bad effects’ of ‘English education’.⁴ It will be my concern to show how his aesthetic worldview, as well as that of the other artist in the novel, the German Otto Kreisler, may be understood more effectively when placed in the intellectual environment of which they are both part. In my view, despite the very important fact that *Tarr* was published in *The Egoist*, an evaluation of these characters’ relation to Nietzschean aesthetics would be incomplete, were it independent of the novel’s intellectual and cultural frame. I shall discuss this particularly in relation to the aesthetic ideas and romantic activity of these two artists, which form the basis of the two interrelated central themes of the novel: the theme of aesthetic dualism on the one hand and philosophic pessimism on the other. Lewis deals with these two important questions through featuring two contrasting female characters, Bertha and Anastasya, whom Tarr and Kreisler approach and perceive in accordance with the philosophical outlook that informs their aesthetic/philosophical thinking and view of life in general. Overall, I propose to read *Tarr* as a narrative that dynamically evolves to recapitulate the aesthetic development of Lewis himself within the cross-cultural dynamics of what may be seen as a cosmopolitan avant-garde intellectual current. My analysis aims to explore how via *Tarr*’s intellectual landscape, a fictional space where the cultural scene of pre-war Paris bohemia journeys over to inhabit the pages of Marsden’s individualistic review, Lewis’s text recounts a tale of two cities which simultaneously historicizes and provides a critique of their aesthetic trajectories.

The question of sex politics in *Tarr* becomes central for those critics who have chosen to read Lewis’s work through the lens of Nietzsche’s contemporary reception.

⁴ Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment* (London, New York: Hutchinson, 1950), p. 113.

Toby Foshay's *Lewis and the Avant-Garde*⁵ and Andrzej Gasiorek's *Wyndham Lewis and Modernism*⁶ are equally concerned to draw attention to the ties between Lewisian and Nietzschean aesthetics. Foshay recognises in the crux of Lewis's aesthetic 'an indebtedness to and difference with Nietzschean nihilism and devaluation of values in which [Lewis] explores the structure of the will-to-power and *ressentiment*.'⁷ According to him, 'the fuller implication of Lewis's development as an artist and critic centres on his relation to Nietzsche, his attempt to answer and to circumvent him.'⁸ In particular, Foshay reads Tarr's dualistic struggle to become a creative man as a direct reflection of the author's own aesthetic *agon*, which is in turn grounded upon a Nietzschean aesthetic ambivalence, an overall 'questioning of the very grounds and possibility of both truth and goodness in a post-classical world':⁹ 'Lewis's aesthetic development was caught on the horns of ambivalence, in a dualistic response to Nietzsche's invocation of Dionysian tragedy and will-to-power', and his inability to resolve the dualism resulted in his personal vorticist manifesto, Foshay continues.¹⁰ In Tarr's tragic conception of the self, one might see Lewis's ultimate failure to integrate art into an aesthetic whole, hence leading to a defective egoism which 'refuses to accept the self as artistically and sensuously creative'.¹¹ Tarr's individualism is reduced to a false aesthetic formula, which leads to an alienation of the senses and, ultimately, of his own creative will.¹² Such a vision, the critic concludes, involves a profound isolation both deadly and unproductive.

⁵ Toby Avarad Foshay, *Lewis and the Avant-Garde: The Politics of the Intellect* (Montreal; Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992).

⁶ Andrzej Gasiorek, *Wyndham Lewis and Modernism* (Devon: Northcote House, 2004).

⁷ Foshay, p. 19.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

In a similar vein Andrzej Gasiorek argues that the affinity of two male protagonists, which is expressed through a 'shared obsession' with 'death',¹³ evinces a correspondence between Lewis's standpoint and Nietzschean aesthetics. These characters' wish to break out of the nihilistic impasse of existence leads either to a cold aesthetic purism and contempt for life (in the case of Tarr), or to vindictive *ressentiment* (in Kreisler). According to this critic, 'the flight from abjection leads either to the immolation of life to art or to self-murder', revealing how 'modernism – Lewis's own – may entomb reality in a mausoleum.'¹⁴ He concludes that, '[i]t was not until texts such as *The Revenge for Love* that Lewis was able to go beyond this renunciative conception of self and art.'¹⁵

As Shane Weller argues, such positions differ radically from the critical position held by Lewis' scholars twenty years ago. For instance, in John Carey's 1992 book *The Intellectuals and the Masses* Lewis's relation to Nietzsche is labelled 'proto-fascist', identifying Lewis's intellectual and aesthetic elitism with the more sinister expressions of Nietzsche's radical aristocracy in the ideologies of nationalism and war. In his article 'Nietzsche among the Modernists: the Case of Wyndham Lewis', Weller discusses the way in which the recent interpretations of Lewis's relation to Nietzsche take a turn towards a more informed understanding. Radically opposed to Carey's strategy of tarring Lewis with Nietzscheanism (as a kind of proto-fascism or proto-Nazism) there is the position taken by more theoretically informed commentators such as Toby Foshay, Paul Edwards and Andrej Gasiorek, he argues. The Lewis-Nietzsche kinship emerging from such sophisticated theoretically based approaches is as Weller notes one that shows a 'fully-fledged

¹³ Gasiorek, p. 29.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

postmodernism in the heart of modernism'.¹⁶ As he points out, in order to recover some aspects of Lewis's aesthetic agenda that otherwise would remain misrepresented, one needs to draw attention to the self-referential aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy which mock its own authority. Lewis's reflexive, self-examining prose, his texts' overall resistance to 'grand narratives, to the dream of transcendence, to the very idea of authenticity',¹⁷ reinforces the Nietzschean underpinnings of the writer's aesthetic position. The text's self-critical reflections on the status of art have led critics such as Peppis to describe *Tarr* as a parody of Individualistic aesthetics, and a direct assault in its movement.¹⁸ As he maintains, Lewis implemented his critical assault on English Individualism by writing *Tarr* as a 'harsh satire of the contemporary sub-genre that articulate[d] and idealise[d] the Individualistic world view.'¹⁹ 'In this context', he continues, '*Tarr* works as a literary corrosive to the Individualist ideals *Portrait* seems to have embodied [...] refuting the Egoists' representation of persons as self-defining beings capable of personal liberation [...] and their model of the novel as a *Bildungsroman* narrating the progressive education of a single subjectivity.'²⁰

Indeed, through parody (including self-parody) the text offers a reflective account of this tradition of individualism and Lewis's positioning within it – something that becomes particularly evident in the artist-ascetic Tarr, who finds himself in a continuous state of bafflement throughout the novel, a character perpetually torn between love and a carefully tailored egoism. However, rather than simply renouncing this tradition it is my view that Lewis's text purposely sets out to re-write some of its doctrines (or at least begin to). While I agree with Peppis's

¹⁶ Shane Weller, 'Nietzsche Among the Modernists: the Case of Wyndham Lewis,' *Modernism/modernity*, 14 (2007), 626-643 (p. 628).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 627.

¹⁸ Peppis, p. 135.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

assessment that the central contribution of *Tarr* lies in its criticism of the idealism that underlies this tradition, I tend to disagree with his view that, through *Tarr*, Lewis aims to disown allegiance altogether. The novel assumes a self-reflective tone in connection to its own status and the notion of individualism, but, simultaneously, the insertion of the character of Anastasya, a fellow egoist (and a woman) into the narrative, offers an interesting (affirmative) twist. Rather than reading the novel along these established lines, I would like to see whether *Tarr* is offering any ‘alternatives’, whether the partnership of Tarr with Anastasya does in any way contribute to a revised assessment of the relationships between art and life, individualism and affirmation, thus providing a certain resolution. By taking into consideration the intellectual and cultural framework in which the text was conceived (Paris, turn-of-the-century), and in particular the early debates about Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Wagner, pessimism and art, I will attempt to understand *Tarr* on its own terms and within its own original context.

4.2 Lewis in Paris: Turn-of-the-century Aesthetic Individualism. Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche

It may be argued that Lewis’s ethics of creativity develop against the backdrop of European nihilism, which in art found expression in aesthetic decadence, symbolism, and Schopenhauer’s metaphysics. Nihilism is the conviction that life is meaningless, it is not worth living. Nietzsche’s philosophical (and aesthetic) project consists in determining whether there is a way to move beyond this condition, by proposing a certain kind of philosophic pessimism of affirmation, a certain joyful pessimism born out of the spirit of art. In what follows I will attempt to understand what Lewis means by ‘Panurgic Pessimism’ and ‘sex duality’ in the context of the text, and whether these notions might be seen as having any relevance to the then-current avant-garde debates about Nietzschean and Schopenhauerian aesthetics. Whether the

main character's art-positions echo themes and traces of an early individualistic idiom grounded upon a Schopenhauerian-Nietzschean dialectic. And finally whether through them Lewis manages to construct some kind of compromise, offering a new conception of art that pushes the boundaries of the question of aesthetic dualism beyond a concern with the autonomy of art – towards engagement and participation.

In his autobiography Lewis provides a mature retrospect in which he cites the people, philosophies and events that influenced him during his formative years. Dostoevsky (who exerted 'a magic influence')²¹, Schopenhauer, and most importantly Nietzsche, who was, as he claims, 'the paramount influence' and, more specifically, 'that side of his genius which expressed itself in *La Gaya Scienza*' were some of his favorite readings during his early days as a student-bohemian in Paris.²² In a letter to Augustus John dated 1906, Lewis recommends Baudelaire's *Petites Poèmes en Prose*, the entire works of Voltaire, and Nietzsche.²³ Lewis's early interest in philosophy was a natural corollary of this contact with French culture and letters; 'attendance at Bergson's lectures at the Collège de France [was] one evidence of that'²⁴ as well as his familiarity with the work of such intellectuals as Remy de Gourmont, who played an instrumental role in the dissemination of Nietzsche in Parisian *jeune culture*. These early philosophical impulses had their roots in French soil, and had a lasting effect upon his later life:

My literary career began in France, in the sense that my first published writings originated in notes made in Brittany [...]. During those days I began to get a philosophy [...]. Paris [...] was beautiful and free [...] it was still *la nouvelle Athènes*, divinely disputatious, with an immense student population for whom the publishers poured out 'libraries' of masterpieces.²⁵

²¹ *Rude Assignment*, p. 144.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 120.

²³ *Augustus John Papers: A Schedule of Papers Purchased in 1988 and 1989* (London: Royal Commission of Historical Manuscripts, 1991), p. 133.

²⁴ *Rude Assignment*, p. 113.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

‘Those primordial literary backgrounds’,²⁶ as he calls them, expressed themselves in a kind of youthful ‘vitalistic’ ethic, celebrating characters ‘immersed in life [...] something like a wild garden – full, naturally, of starlight and nightingales, of sunflowers and the sun.’²⁷ However, both in the *Rude Assignment* and in the 1915 preface to *Tarr*, Lewis is particularly careful to distinguish his own youthful vitalism (and his Nietzscheanism) from the kind of ‘vitalistic gospel’ of George Sorel²⁸ as well as that ‘curious obsession of the modern intellectual with the warlike virtues’ manifested in the works of such contemporary thinkers as Péguy, Maurras, Barrès.²⁹ While the nature of Lewis’s own flirtation with such political views remains complex, even a cursory reading of *Rude Assignment* and the 1915 preface reveals Lewis’s unambiguous hostility to this intellectualism of action, accusing them of ‘detachment’ and irresponsibility: ‘There was a beautiful detachment about Sorel [...]. Of all the apostles of dangerous living, pure action, “heroism”, blood and iron, [he] was the worst – the most shrewd and irresponsible.’³⁰ This is not surprising, given the increasingly nationalistic uses to which such rhetoric was put in the years before the outbreak of the war. Lewis is careful to shun these more popular aspects of Nietzschean vitalism, especially in its most ‘supermanic’ tones, which struck a popular cord with the popular cultural conscience of the prewar days:

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

²⁸ As Forth tells us, ‘closely linked to the anarchist literary avant-garde, it was perhaps inevitable that Nietzschean individualism [...] would become an important ingredient in the ideological experiments of revolutionary syndicalism’. In their writings French revolutionary syndicalists cited a variety of thinkers whose works proved an inspiration, especially philosophers like Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Henri Bergson, and Nietzsche. A link between Nietzsche and Sorel was quickly established by the latter’s adherents who saw in Sorel’s *Réflexions Sur la Violence*, and particularly in his praise of ‘the use of violence for its capacity to revitalize society’ and his idea of an ‘all-out class war between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as a means of doing just that’, pp. 122-125.

²⁹ It is doubtless that Lewis had ample opportunity to think about the ideas of Nietzsche in this context. Lewis’s ambiguous flirtation with the neo-royalist *Action Française* and early anarchistic leanings are only one indication. For Lewis’s account of these early interests see *Rude Assignment*.

³⁰ *Rude Assignment*, p. 33. This notwithstanding, Lewis is quick to note that ‘Sorel’s masterpiece of incitement to violence was not, however, directed to inflaming chauvinism but to providing the maximum of class-hatred’, *ibid.*, p. 33.

A majority of people, I daresay found in the author of *Zarathustra* a sort of titanic nourishment for the ego treating in fact this great hysteric as a power-house. At present that is what I like the least about Nietzsche and I was reasonably immune then to Superman. The impulse to Titanism and supernatural afflatus pervading German romanticism has never had any interest for me. On the other hand that side of his genius which expressed itself in *La Gaya Scienza*, or those admirable maxims [...] which he wrote after the breakdown in his health, were among my favorite reading in those years.³¹

The preface to *Tarr* in *The Egoist* represents more than a general disenchantment with the propagandistic usages of Nietzsche's philosophy and politics in general, a disillusionment shared also by the editor herself who in the December issue 1914 commented on the popular vulgarization of Nietzsche:

Nietzsche is now popular [...] [he has] just become popularised, not indeed because the people have read him, but because it chances that at a time when a great war breaks out, and all our prophets and scribes are enlarging upon the wickedness of such as will dare to make war against us, someone happens to say that the enemy possesses a great philosopher, who maintains that on occasion war is a good and necessary thing.³²

It seems that by that time Lewis, Marsden and other writers, such as T. S. Eliot for instance, would have resolved to associate themselves only with that side of Nietzsche that remained unaffected by the war. Interestingly, T. S. Eliot's (otherwise favorable) review of A. Wolf's *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*, written in 1916, starts with the statement: 'Nietzsche is one of these writers whose philosophy evaporates when detached from its literary qualities'³³ – suggesting a kind of careful distancing from the political Nietzsche which we find also in Lewis's 1915 preface to the novel.

In it Lewis writes:

This book was begun eight years ago; so I have not produced this disagreeable German for the gratification of primitive partisanship aroused by the war [...]. He has been on my consciousness (*my consciousness as an artist*, it is true) for a long time.³⁴

³¹ *Rude Assignment*, p. 120.

³² Dora Marsden, 'Views and Comments', *The Egoist*, 15 December 1914, pp. 452-453 (p. 452).

³³ T. S. Eliot, 'Review of A. Wolf's *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*', *International Journal of Ethics*, 26 (1916), 426-427 (p. 426).

³⁴ Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. by Paul O'Keeffe (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p. 13. My emphasis.

Lewis in *Blasting and Bombarding* called the First World War his political education and it was the moment when, as Foshay maintains, 'his aesthetics took a significant departure' from his earlier looking at 'the psychological, social, and political worlds from the point of view of art, [and] turned toward looking at art from the point of view of its role – or, rather, lack of role – in a society which valued it, as he saw it, wrongly or not at all.'³⁵

This critical tone is preserved in the war preface and is carried even further in the first pages of *Tarr*. The oneiric (dream-like) opening of the novel transfers us to a city aesthetically withdrawn and aloof. Rather than the vibrant and cosmopolitan setting we read about in Lewis's autobiography, here we are transported to a setting which exhibits sighs of a life lived in seclusion, of decadence and retreat:

Paris hints of sacrifice. = But here we deal with that large dusty facet known to indulgent and congruous kind [...] It is not across its Thebaide that the unscrupulous heroes chase each other's shadows. They are largely ignorant of all but their restless personal lives.³⁶

Lewis's opening of *Tarr* suggests a remote, almost desert-like landscape, steeped in self-indulgent aestheticism, a place of artistic seclusion. This picture of Bohemian life is trying to tell us something about the state of the Parisian art world, a state which might be seen to resemble the withdrawn, hidden life of the anchorites, for whom isolation, the breaking of social bonds, and asceticism constitute the path to a freer form of life. This description of Paris as a kind of space set apart, as a kind of refuge, an aesthetic sanctuary, detached and purposely self-indulgent; and of artists as a kind of aesthetic hermits might remind us of one of Augustus John's drawings for the *New Age*, titled 'The Bohemians'. In this drawing, two mysterious cloaked and hooded figures (a man and a woman perhaps), holding each other in embrace, dominate the foreground. These two hermit-like silhouettes are placed in a strange

³⁵ Foshay, p. 4.

³⁶ *Tarr*, p. 21.

desert-like setting, a background that conveys, to some extent, the sense of disengagement that sets *la vie Bohème* on a plane of its own, quite detached and insulated.

Given the circumstances at the time when the text was published, it is not surprising to see Lewis problematising the notion of autonomous art, along with the aesthetic practices surrounding it. This critical tone, I believe, has much to do with Lewis's evolving political consciousness as an artist and might be interpreted as a conscious move away from an avant-garde heritage, which he has now grown to see as irresponsible and naively egoistic – guilty of being completely out of touch with the social. The 1915 preface reveals a Lewis distinctly overwhelmed by the reality of history and the nightmare of war which comes to violently upset the Arcadian vision of his artists' aesthetic detachment, 'this famous feeling of indifference',³⁷ that the main character Tarr is so fond of. In effect, the outbreak of the war seems to have rendered the reality of Bohemian autonomy somewhat doubtful, an empty chimera deformed by the bare reality of power.

On first reading *Tarr* one cannot but become interested in the picture of Paris and its Bohemians. Despite its dreamy opening, overall, the Paris of Lewis's narrative is a bohemian capital immersed in a spirit of cosmopolitanism. As Lewis claims in the preface, he began writing the novel sometime in 1907 or 1908, while he was still living in Paris. Lewis's text masterfully communicates the spirit of *fin-de-siècle* Bohemian life. Set in the Latin Quarters and the art-café, it is populated by a very international cast of artist-bohemians, English, French, Russian, German, Italian, who give themselves up to discussions about contemporary art and philosophy. As Paul O' Keeffe informs us the text of *Tarr* is a series of layers built up over seven years and several periods of revision, arguing that the thematic

³⁷ *Tarr*, p. 49.

inconsistencies and satiric energies that characterize *Tarr* reflect, in a way, Lewis's growing aesthetic sense and his literary concerns in general.³⁸ As he notes, in order for one to get some idea of Lewis's intentions, one needs to take into account the text's various stages of development. It is true that the diverse intellectual and aesthetic energies of Paris take up a large part of the novel, and this has led some critics to consider it as a kind of Parisian memoir, which, to some extent, it certainly is. However, the novel is undoubtedly more than that.

The first title considered was 'Bourgeois-Bohemians', possibly an indication of the author's focus on depicting his own life among the bohemians. Sometime around 1912, Lewis came to favor 'Otto Kreisler's Death' (Otto Kreisler being of the character that epitomizes the mood of decadence and nihilism in the novel). Finally, however, the text appeared under the title *Tarr*.³⁹ Such alterations, I believe, mirror the expanding thematic dimensions of the novel. If we choose to interpret the Parisian setting as something more than Lewis's youth memory and consider the aesthetic and philosophic discussions of some of the characters in light of the then-prevalent aesthetic trends, then the text acquires a new purpose. Lewis's introduction to artist-bohemians such as Tarr, Kreisler, Anastasya, and Bertha is very significant from the point of view of gaining insight into a variety of philosophical viewpoints and ideas that seem, as I will try to show, consistent with certain overriding aesthetic concerns connected to such pivotal figures as Schopenhauer, Wagner and Nietzsche. In that respect, the main characters might be seen as embodiments of particular art-notions current among the avant-garde, ideas which the text explores and assesses. In other words, what I want to discuss is how Paris, chosen as the backdrop of the

³⁸ As O'Keeffe tells us: 'The novel must have been started, or the idea of it germinated, in 1907 or 1908 while [Lewis] was living in Paris. Between then and the writing of the Epilogue, the work underwent a series of revisions and a process of expansion from long story to seven-part novella. While none of these earlier versions have survived, the work in progress can be traced through Lewis's correspondence 1909-1915.' 'Afterword', in *Tarr*, pp. 361-382 (p. 361).

³⁹ Lewis's own account of this change of heart is given in 'The Schicksal.-The German in my Fiction', in *Rude Assignment*, pp. 148-152.

narrative, plays a significant role in the novel, how the art-discussions and general aesthetic attitudes provide a useful framework for examining particular doctrines and traditions – as well as for expanding them further.

It is important to note that during the time when the novel was being developed the interest in the philosophy of Nietzsche had already found resonances in the aesthetic preoccupations of the burgeoning literary avant-garde. As Forth in *Zarathustra in Paris* has shown, the philosopher had been hailed with enthusiasm by an emerging avant-garde culture committed to experimentation and artistic innovation. This warm response is said to have had a direct effect upon French intellectual life, serving various purposes and continuing uninterrupted through the 1890s and the early 1900s, until about 1910, when the international tensions escalated, and Nietzsche's reputation fell under the shadows of the war clouds over Europe.⁴⁰ In this context, Nietzsche's ideas were employed to help combat the more decadent strand of the symbolist movement, one which shared affiliations with the aesthetics and philosophy of Richard Wagner and Arthur Schopenhauer.⁴¹ Nietzsche's refreshing boldness and confidence offered an alternative aesthetic vision, outlining the aesthetics of a young literary generation seeking to detach itself from the decadentism it saw inherent in such aesthetic forms. Through such vehicles

⁴⁰ During this time Nietzsche would become a philosopher *non grata* – and in France, as well as Britain (as for instance in *The Egoist*) vitalistic philosophies such as Bergson's would be promoted in place of Nietzsche's as a more desirable alternative. In England only *The New Age* would continue to praise Nietzsche (and only from a few loyal cohorts) and in France only the *NRF*. As Forth argues 'by the time of the Great War, Nietzscheanism clearly represented an un-French phenomenon as was cited as one of the primary intellectual sources of German aggression', p. 14.

⁴¹ As Shehira Doss Dacezac points out, Schopenhauer's philosophy was to become a staple of the French Symbolist movement, and it was primarily his pessimism that first attracted this generation of writers and poets of the 1880s to him. For example, Schopenhauer's existential position is evoked all the time in such novels as Huysmans's *A Rebours* (1884), which was considered by many the 'literary incarnation of Schopenhauer's metaphysics.' Des Esseintes, the 'decadent hero' of the novel is given the following words: 'Schopenhauer extolled to you no panacea did not lull or distract you as a remedy for inevitable ills [...]. He pretended to heal nothing, offered the sufferer [...] not the slightest hope; but his theory of Pessimism was [...] the great consoler of [...] higher souls.' Shehira Doss Dacezac, 'Schopenhauer According to the Symbolists: the Philosophical Roots of Late Nineteenth-Century French Aesthetic Theory' in *Schopenhauer, Pessimism and the Arts*, ed. by Dale Jacquette (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 249-276 (p. 251).

as the little magazines (*les petites revues*) *Le Banquet* (1892)⁴² and *Le Mercure de France*,⁴³ they faithfully promoted a figure of Nietzsche consistent with their cultural and aesthetic outlook, one which sought opposition to the atmosphere of decadence surrounding contemporary art. In such an environment, Nietzsche gradually came to represent the ideal of a social aesthetic which sought renewal in all aspects of cultural life, effecting a rupture with ‘the Wagnerian Church’ as well as the Schopenhauerian pessimism, ‘a break that would by implication seriously undermine one of the foundations of decadent symbolism as well.’⁴⁴ As Forth suggests, the propagation of the aesthetic views of the avant-garde of the 1880s,⁴⁵ the principle of *l’art pour l’art*, and aesthetic disinterestedness in matters of artistic experience and value would come under careful scrutiny by the new generation. This attitude of systematic detachment which manifested itself most visibly in the literary school of symbolism,⁴⁶ an attitude which resulted in ‘the resignation to and even the glorification of “decadence”’,⁴⁷ would be energetically challenged by an emerging avant-garde in search of a new aesthetic (and a new social consciousness). For this young generation, Nietzsche would come to designate an alternative new aesthetic of the affirmative, one praising ‘vitality and action rather than impotence and escape.’⁴⁸ This kind of aesthetic would mostly favor the kind of Nietzsche who emerges from such works as *The Gay Science* (first published 1882 and revised in 1887), *The Case of Wagner* (1888), and *The Anti-Christ* – all mature works that represent a break with such aesthetic/philosophical traditions as Schopenhauer’s and Wagner’s.

⁴² As Forth tells us, ‘*Le Banquet* was formed in 1892 by several recent graduates of the Lycée Condorcet, the most prestigious of the right-bank Parisian high schools. The leader of this literary coterie was Daniel Halévy, and grouped around him were a number of young Jewish intellectuals, including Fernand Gregh, Robert Dreyfus, and Marcel Proust’, p. 24.

⁴³ *Le Mercure de France* also published the collected writings of Nietzsche in French.

⁴⁴ Forth, p. 23.

⁴⁵ For instance, the French writers Gautier, and later Baudelaire and Flaubert renounced all social (and political) ties.

⁴⁶ Which arose during the 1880s, and included among its members such renowned writers as Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, Gustave Kahn, Joris-Karl Hymans and others.

⁴⁷ Forth, p. 17.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

It is general knowledge that both Schopenhauer and Wagner served as early mentors for young Nietzsche, and their impact can be felt in such early works as *The Birth of Tragedy* (1781). But it is also equally well-known that in his later works Nietzsche would turn away from such influences, offering an incisive criticism of them. In the retrospective preface to the *Birth of Tragedy*, (also written around the same time (1886), Nietzsche writes about the decadent ‘Germanism’ of his former ‘masters’:

How differently Dionysus spoke to me! How far removed from all this resignationism! [...] I have learned to consider this ‘German spirit’ with a sufficient lack of hope or mercy; also, contemporary *German music*, which is romanticism through and through and most un-Greek of all possible art forms – moreover, a first-rate poison for the nerves, doubly dangerous among a people who love drink and who honor lack of clarity as a virtue, for it has the double quality of a narcotic that both intoxicates and spreads a *fog*.⁴⁹

Nietzsche’s later works written in the years 1882 to 1888 mark a decisive turn in his vision. Largely in response to the nihilistic dicta of Schopenhauer’s pessimistic way of thinking, as seen for instance in the doctrine that ‘the world’s non-existence would be preferable to its existence’,⁵⁰ the works of this period aim to build a more constructive philosophical approach. In Henri Lichtenberger’s *La Philosophie de Nietzsche* (1898), a study that played an important role in the way in which Nietzsche’s philosophy was conceived in French (and not only French intellectual circles)⁵¹ Nietzsche’s individualism is taken to constitute both a response and a reaction to such immediate predecessors as Schopenhauer and Wagner.⁵² In the

⁴⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, in *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (Michigan: Vintage Books, 1967), pp. 24-25.

⁵⁰ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (Dover: Courier Dover Publications, 1969), p. 171.

⁵¹ As mentioned in Chapter One *The Eagle and the Serpent* had made sure to recommend Lichtenberger’s book to all students of Egoism and included it in its Lending Library together with Georges Brandes’s and Havelock Ellis’s studies on Nietzsche.

⁵² Early connections between Nietzsche and individualism in a French context can be seen, as already shown in the previous chapter, in Henri Lichtenberger’s *La Philosophie de Nietzsche*, which appeared in 1898 (English translation by J. M. Kennedy in 1910) – the first serious academic French study of the philosopher.

chapter 'the Character of F.N', Lichtenberger talks about 'the harmonious unity' that characterizes the individualism of Nietzsche, an 'individuality as powerful as it is rich'⁵³ which seeks an aesthetic justification of life in the binary synthesis of the two unique states – the Apollonian-Dionysian duality as discussed in the *Birth of Tragedy. Or Hellenism and Pessimism*.⁵⁴ As Lichtenberger continues, Nietzsche's primary concern in this text is to deal with 'the problem of existence by studying the solution given to it by the Greeks', a solution quite distinct from that of Schopenhauer:

Nietzsche's starting point is Schopenhauer's metaphysics. He admits, with the great pessimist, that the essence of the world is will [...]. This will is a painful desire, thanks to which the life of man is a never-ending struggle with the certainty of being defeated [...] and which may be summed up thus: to will without cause, to suffer continually, and so on [...]. From this point of view the point of view of intelligence, the world does not justify its existence, the amount of suffering is far greater than the amount of happiness, and hence concludes that man should aim at the abolition of its will.⁵⁵

While Nietzsche recognizes the truth behind Schopenhauer's existential view of the suffering and misery of the world, he proposes a new affirmative credo of life and art that effectively counterbalances Schopenhauer's nihilism by interpreting the world as an aesthetic phenomenon, affirming the idea of the world in terms of the will-to-power as perpetual inventiveness – as a kind of 'self-generating work of art'.⁵⁶ On the subject of art, particularly tragic art, while Nietzsche agrees with Schopenhauer's metaphysical thesis on the idea of the tragic (in Schopenhauer's account, the will-lessness of sublime resignation in the face of the Idea, is the key of tragedy unlike him). He sees the beauty of a work of art in its ability to affirm the human condition, participating (joyfully) in its sorrows.

⁵³ Lichtenberger, pp. 34-35.

⁵⁴ In 1886 Nietzsche added the subtitle 'Hellenism and Pessimism' to the work, a philosophic pessimism associated with his own pessimism of the future (a Dionysian Pessimism), in many ways distinct of Schopenhauer's.

⁵⁵ Lichtenberger, p. 44.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

As Lichtenberger continues, despite the irrational character of existence, for Nietzsche ‘the world, unjustifiable from a rational point of view may perhaps be justified as an aesthetic phenomenon, as a vision of the demiurge-artist, as the supreme work of art, causing its creator to feel a supreme, aesthetic voluptuousness.’⁵⁷ This aesthetic ‘voluptuousness’ is born of the Apollonian-Dionysian duality – a union of the ‘Apollonian artist in dreams’ and the Dionysian Artist in ecstasies.’⁵⁸ For Nietzsche, the Apollonian represents restraint, serenity – it stands for aesthetic permanence and the ‘sublimity’ of aesthetic contemplation, and desires intelligible order. The Dionysian, on the other hand, represents excess, unconsciousness – it affirms the irrational and dissonant that lies behind the Apollonian surface of culture. While mere Apollonian semblance is rejected, the union of the Apollonian with the Dionysian is seen by Nietzsche as essential for counteracting nihilism and aesthetic withdrawal. According to this hypothesis, the creative (truly fecund) artist/individual is offering an aesthetic justification for a life of Apollonian beauty that contains Dionysian wisdom. This is a new pessimist, Lichtenberger tells us, one who does not stop, ‘like Schopenhauer, in the negation of the will to live’, but who finds in art a new strength, a strength that leads him to exclaim, in the same way as the true tragic Hellene: ‘I desire thee; for thou art eternal life!’⁵⁹

In Nietzsche’s later writings a related example of binary synthesis underlies his argument. *The Gay Science*’s version of the tragic artist extends the earlier tragic aesthetic solution with a playful, mocking one. Indeed, ‘gay science’ for Nietzsche signifies ‘the saturnalia of a mind that has patiently resisted a terrible, long pressure’ announcing a new kind of art. Having shunned away from the ‘romantic uproar’ and

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁸ *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 38.

⁵⁹ Lichtenberger, p. 46.

the ‘aspirations towards the sublime’ of modern German aesthetics in this book he demands ‘for those [artists] convalescents [...] *another kind* of art – a mocking fleeting, divinely untroubled, divinely artificial art” – this is a vision of art which having witnessed the painful truth of Schopenhauer, chooses the truth of the artist-parodist, the one who, like the Greeks, remains on the surface ‘*out of profundity!*’⁶⁰ This is a new kind of philosophy, a philosophy of ‘strength’, comedy and illusion, the philosophy of Nietzsche’s Dionysian-like pessimist who invites men to:

[...] learn the art of *this worldly* comfort first; you ought to learn to laugh, my young friends, if you are hell-bent on remaining pessimists. Then perhaps, as laughters, you may some day dispatch all metaphysical comforts to the devil – metaphysics in front. Or, to say it in the language of that Dionysian monster who bears the name of Zarathustra [...].⁶¹

An instance of early correspondences between Nietzschean egoism and such forms of vitalism in an English context is found in *The Eagle and the Serpent*. There we find some of the earliest references to Nietzsche’s Dionysian philosophy of ‘tragic passion’ in its discussions concerning the nature of artistic inspiration. Drawing on the aesthetic pronouncements, as set forth in *The Birth of Tragedy*, its author, writing under the pseudonym ‘Melpomene’ (the muse of drama), discusses the function of ‘passion’ (sensual passion) in the development of great artists:⁶²

Music, according to Nietzsche’s essay *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, is, in its origin a least, the idealised language of pain. Whether we think of Chopin, whose music was in its every note a patriotic elegy, of Tchaikovsky, with his incommunicable marriage secret, which drove him to the brink of suicide and insanity, of Beethoven, Wagner or Schubert, we find that musical biography lends abundant sanction to the thesis [...] tragic humour, said Nietzsche, is the essence of love.⁶³

⁶⁰ *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), ‘Preface for the Second Edition’, pp. 32-38.

⁶¹ *The Birth of Tragedy*, pp. 26-27.

⁶² Melpomene, ‘Tragic Theses: The Function of Tragedy in the Development of Great Composers’, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 July 1901, pp. 43-44 (p. 43). This issue was a special ‘Emerson Number’ and provided parallelisms between Emerson and Nietzsche.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 43. With reference to the novel, and particularly as concerns the kind of aesthetic questions that preoccupy Tarr’s discussion with Hobson there can be seen another characteristic example of the closeness of the text to contemporary artistic matters of the day – and further emphasis on the link between the novel’s key art-debates with Nietzschean current aesthetics.

Discussions of the relationship between Nietzsche and love repeatedly surface in this periodical.⁶⁴ Reprinted with permission from another little periodical, *Beauty and Life*, the author, writing under a *nom de plume*, borrows Nietzsche's argument of 'tragic passion' from *The Case of Wagner* in order to oppose the Kantian ideal of art as purity and disinterestedness. I quote the passage in full:

We propound an important question – Should Artists love? A question not to be confounded with the totally different question Should Artists marry? The reply to the question Should Artists Love, is – that it is the only thing they should do. [...] If we have correctly indicated the conditions of artistic greatness, then it follows that the true artist seeks to be perpetually in love and seeks to have his heart broken over and over again. Only in the tragic soil of such sweet sorrow can his highest genius realise itself. [...] When the artist realizes that his Carmen is among his hearers or is intent upon his every action, and he can repeat to her the words of Escamillo [...] it is just at such a time that he will surpass himself. Have you not incidentally solved the old question How should we listen to music? In listening to tragic music we should baptise ourselves in a flood of tragic recollections – the profoundest tragedies that have touched our lives, pre-eminently the course of thwarted love – that is, for us, the composer's theme. And if one has no personal tragedies to dwell on – well he would do well to get some. One of London's ablest critics has controverted our teaching, our teaching on this point, maintaining that the deepest appreciation of music arises not out of its emotional implications, but is intent alone upon purity of artistic form. [...] Until a composer arises who will set Kant's abandoned *Critique of Pure Reason* to music we must maintain that the emotions are the raw material in which composers work.⁶⁵

4.3 Tarr and Anastasya: A Joyful Union

All these themes are present in *Tarr*. Most of Lewis's characters are preoccupied by the questions of art and love. While often their aesthetic ideas and romantic tastes may appear conflicting, they inevitably revolve around the same axis: the human condition and art as a means of confronting the chaos of life. In fact the problem

⁶⁴ For instance see, 'To Revive the Ancient Glory: Suggestions towards a Classical Drama Based on a Heroic Philosophy of Life', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 October 1899, pp. 148-149. The subtitle reads: 'Extracts from Nietzsche's Writings illustrating his Aesthetic and Philosophical Principles', p. 148.

⁶⁵ 'Tragic Theses: The Function of Tragedy in the Development of Great Composers', pp. 43-44.

‘Should artists love?’ is a recurrent question, one that cannot be put aside either by Tarr or Anastasya, and which acquires deadly and even murderous connotations in the case of Kreisler. What Lewis is attempting here might be understood in the context of the novel’s elaborate pattern of antithesis (Tarr-Anastasya and Tarr-Kreisler). The corresponding antitheses are also all represented in the mind of the conflicted egoist-ascetic Tarr himself with his inner struggles with the aesthetic ideals he so cherishes. Tarr’s answer to the question about love, for instance, tells us something about himself and his art:

What is *love*? he began reasoning. It is either possession or possessive madness [...]. She had captured a bit of him and held it as a hostage [...]. Love performs a natural miracle and they become part of us; it is a dismemberment to cast them off [...]. Or love was a malady; it was dangerous to live with those consumed by it. He felt an uneasiness. Might not a wasting and restlessness ensue? [...]. We are all sicknesses for each other. Such contact as he had with Bertha was particularly risky.⁶⁶

Kreisler, in his turn, has elevated love to a religious status – it serves the purpose of a soporific which induces escapism and death-like stupor:

When the events of his life became too unwieldy or overwhelming, he converted them into love, as he might have done, with specialized talent, into some art or other [...]. The tragedies played there purged you periodically of the too violent accumulations of the too violent accumulations of desperate life. Love too, always meant unhappy love for him [...] he would be killed by a woman he sometimes thought [...].⁶⁷

In spite of their apparent differences in matters of art, both Tarr and Kreisler never stop reminding us of the reality of life which is fundamentally sorrow, pain and death: both suffer the pangs of ennui and discontent. The ‘nausea’ brought about by *life*, (which often stands in the way of *art*) is a perpetual sentiment they both share, a worldview that in a way, recalls the pessimism of the Schopenhauerian universe: ‘Work over, his depression again grasped [Tarr], like an immensely gloomy

⁶⁶ *Tarr*, p. 72.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103.

companion [...]. Nausea glared up at him from every object met.’⁶⁸ This is the typical existential position that Kreisler holds as well. He involves himself in romantic and desperate goals largely to keep off his general sense of ‘void’ and emptiness.⁶⁹ As a true ‘German sculptor of a mock-realistic and degenerate school’,⁷⁰ Kreisler through the course of the novel clings desperately to a mystical, over-sentimental idealism. This materializes in the form of a desperate (and quite ludicrous) love passion for Anastasya which ultimately turns deadly. His outlook, both aesthetic and romantic, is primarily a consequence of his dissatisfaction with reality, displaying a tendency to deception and melodramatic exaggeration. These qualities of Kreisler, who according to Lewis represents, in a way, ‘the melodramatic nihilism of the generations succeeding to the great era of philosophical pessimism’⁷¹, suggests to me a certain affinity towards the kind of decadent aestheticism that Nietzsche attacks in Wagner, an affinity that will be explored in the later section of this chapter.

Kreisler’s character is limited – he is not destined to become either a true artist or an efficient lover. Nor does he offer a satisfying solution to the problem of existence – he ultimately chooses death and hatred, which philosophically translates into nihilism and *ressentiment*. The portrait of the ascetic-egoist Tarr, on the other hand, appears to represent a different aspect of aesthetic pessimism. In the context of the novel, Tarr proves a highly controversial character, whose paradoxes and the stark irony he often employs problematise the key aesthetic notions that the text as a whole is concerned with. As Lewis claims in the preface to the novel the text is concerned primarily with the theme of art and most particularly with ‘the sex conflict

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 207.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 103.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 102.

⁷¹ *Rude Assignment*, p. 149.

[as] a key to the definite duality of the artist today'.⁷² This duality is perhaps best exemplified in the ambiguities that surround the portrait of Tarr. In his case, the sex versus art question becomes a matter of great concern and causes great anxiety to both himself and the women in his life. His discomfort stems from his inability to reconcile his theories about art with his inner impulses, from an attempt to live by an individualistic credo which defies 'emotion' and sexuality as immoderate passions. Tarr 's conflicted persona sometimes evokes the image of an ascetic-egoist – who restricts himself to the Apollonian component of art, and at other times, the image of a 'Panurgic-Pessimist'⁷³ one who, like a Dionysian satyr, half-man, half-beast, 'bites' reality and laughs at it. In the early parts of the novel, Tarr is dressed in the part of the artist-recluse basking in his wild solitudes. He is often seen theorizing about love and art, about aesthetic passion and sexual passion, typically championing the former: 'All the delicate psychology another man naturally seeks in a woman [...] love and passion, I seek in my work and not elsewhere'.⁷⁴ Like Schopenhauer, he assumes a connection between will, worldliness and sexual passion and calls himself an '*Homme égoïste*' because '*Homme sensuel*' would be 'an exaggeration'.⁷⁵ 'His concupiscence had been undeveloped',⁷⁶ he admits. By implication, any appeal to the emotions gets listed as a fallacy and stands in the way of pure contemplation, and, by extension of art, which for him is the exclusive domain of beauty: 'Surrender to a woman was a sort of suicide for an artist.'⁷⁷ 'Why should sex still be active?' he asks Hobson early on: 'That is a matter of heredity that has nothing to do with the general

⁷² This quote comes a cancelled section of the Prologue from 'The Egoist Edition' Prologue (1918). Published with the permission of the Poetry/Rare Books Collection, University Libraries, State University of New York at Buffalo, 'Appendix 3', in *Tarr*, p. 360.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

energies of the mind.’⁷⁸ His notion of love is hardly the healthy enthusiasm with which Anastasya, for instance, approaches the subject. Love is seen as ‘madness’, as ‘malady’, and although he, as he says, is ‘*afraid of giving up* or repudiating this particular madness’,⁷⁹ he denies that it is proper material for a first-rate artist like himself. Subsequently, love, which by definition belongs to the sphere of the material, physical reality cannot but be of lesser (secondary) importance and may be taken only ‘in carefully prepared doses’.⁸⁰

One might argue that Tarr’s retreat into a cloistered preoccupation with ideal forms serves largely to keep the commonplace elements in check – but instead of disencumbrance, his Apollonian individualism itself proves a heavy burden, one impossible to shake off. He continuously struggles to fit into the role of the ideal ascetic intellectual, of the ‘reasonable man’.⁸¹ At the same time he is drawn, almost unconsciously, back to his carnal habits and Bertha, always with the same sense of dread. Favouring pure form – he begins despising humanity and, of course, himself:

Tarr looked with slow disdainful suspicion at Hobson’s face staring at the ground. ‘You have understood the nature of my secret? = Half of myself I have to hide. I am bitterly ashamed of a slovenly, common portion of my life that has been isolated and repudiated by the energies I am so proud of.’⁸²

Faithful to his Apollonian side, he wishes not only to be disassociated from others but also from that ungraceful part of himself which is his vile body. He is proud to say that his friendships and his relationships in general, serve merely as a mirror where he can see himself reflected: ‘A man only goes and confesses his faults to the world when his self will not acknowledge or listen to them. The function of a friend

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 30.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 72.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 293.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 295.

⁸² Ibid., p. 31.

is to substitute this defective self, to be the World and the Real without the disastrous consequences of reality.’⁸³

Seeking relief from reality and the senses, Tarr indulges in fantasies of ‘disengagement’ from Bertha, which for him represent all at once the mundane, the real and the common everyday experience: ‘I do not mean that sex is my tragedy, but art. = I will explain why I am associated sexually with this pumpkin’,⁸⁴ he tells Hobson. It is a fantasy that indicates his own unstable, disorderly and inefficient relation to life and experience: His wish to ‘break off his engagement’⁸⁵ and ‘discard the girl’,⁸⁶ a wish that however sincere it seems, is never fully pursued, seems to indicate a deep-seated existential angst – resting on his Apollonian ideal of art. In a way, his vacillation voices, his inner antagonism. He is torn between two conflicting states: on the one hand, an Apollonian, artistic nature which seeks serenity, plasticity, severance from all worldly ties and cares; on the other, an almost unexplainable impulse that renders him unable to cut himself off completely from common experience ‘it appeared a matter of physical discomfort to leave her [Bertha] altogether’.⁸⁷ ‘The secret of his visits to Bertha and interminable liaison was that he never really meant to leave her at all, he reflected [...] But it would have been absurd not to try to escape.’⁸⁸

In these passages, the text neatly illustrates Tarr’s divided allegiance to the world of experience (the senses), at one end, and to that of artistic experience, where ‘beauty’ is sought in aesthetic contemplation, at the other. This understanding of art

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 31. At this particular point Tarr’s egoism cannot avoid revealing its solipsistic outlook. Instead of providing release from the prison of the self, a friend serves to highlight this sense of aesthetic detachment, revealing the intensity of his alienation from the world and from others. Here, specifically, Tarr’s self-professed solipsism reminds more of the self-indulgent asceticism that informs such characters as James Duffy, providing a parody of aesthetics and individuality.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

reflects a metaphysical thesis – the doctrine that only through disinterested contemplation that ‘beauty’ can be conceived. This rather Kantian/Schopenhauerian understanding of art results in a conflicting dualism, one perpetually troubled by the very boundaries it sets for itself: ‘[Tarr] was ashamed of his sudden interest [...] and instinctively hid it. He was committed to the role of a reasonable man.’⁸⁹ As already seen, debates over the subject of asceticism and passion were frequent in all the periodicals under examination in this thesis. From *The Eagle and the Serpent*, to *The New Age* and *The Freewoman*, discussions about the relationship between genius and creativity, passion and madness, with particular reference to Nietzsche, were frequent and animated. This often Nietzschean-inspired debate is continued further in *The New Freewoman/The Egoist* where it takes various forms, either in articles such as ‘Intellect and Culture’,⁹⁰ ‘Beauty and the Senses’,⁹¹ ‘Modern writers on Chastity’,⁹² ‘Reality and Truth’,⁹³ to name but a few, or literary texts. In particular, in Marsden’s series ‘Reality and Truth’, which appeared in three consecutive issues from March until May 1915 (Joyce’s *A Portrait* was still appearing – and *Tarr* was being prepared), the editor of the journal (by now *The Egoist*) writes:

The Despising of the World of Sense in favour of Reality is the despising of Being in favour of non-entity. To encourage a distaste for ‘this world’ in favour of some ‘other’ non-sensible world is to encourage the distaste for life itself: a phenomenon which *Nietzsche has christened Nihilism* [...]. The great artist would be the Mind which could achieve the *synthesis of the two* – imaging and realizing: such a Mind as would be able to apprehend the new vision so clearly that he could recreate and reproduce it with precision.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 295.

⁹⁰ Dora Marsden, ‘Intellect and Culture’, *The New Freewoman*, 1 July 1913, pp. 21-23.

⁹¹ Dora Marsden, ‘Beauty and the Senses’, *The New Freewoman*, 15 November 1913, pp. 201-203.

⁹² Beeban Porter and Noel Teulon Porter, ‘Modern Writers on Chastity’, *The Egoist*, 16 February 1914, pp. 77-78. They write: ‘The influence of Nietzsche, direct and indirect, has been on the side of the virtue of chastity in its modern sense’, (p. 78).

⁹³ Dora Marsden, ‘Reality and Truth-I’, *The Egoist*, 1 March 1915, pp. 33-37, ‘Reality and Truth-II’, *The Egoist*, 1 April 1915, pp. 49-53, *The Egoist*, ‘Reality and Truth-III’, pp. 65-69.

⁹⁴ Dora Marsden, ‘Reality and Truth-II’, *The Egoist*, 1 April 1915, pp. 52-53. My emphasis.

At another point in the essay Marsden notes that the problem of the distinction between Reality and Truth, appearance and the ‘thing-in-itself’, is a chronic problem that faces both the artist and the philosopher. Marsden sees the artist both as a spectator and a maker. The fashioning of art is a continual growth: ‘We have no interest in the Permanence of a non-sensible “Reality” [...] the hope of immortality is that we shall continue to “be”’: that we shall continue to feel, to sense that is.’⁹⁵ Experiencing life in such dualistic terms deprives the true creative individual from his potential – his vision remains confined within the parameters of an aesthetic asceticism, threatening to barricade him from life altogether. As she points out: ‘There is no reality outside the realm of Sense, lying “there” ready-made until such time as sense can gnaw its way towards it.’⁹⁶ ‘Metaphysics’, according to her, is ‘a verbal disease arising out of grammatical form, and since grammar – very bad grammar – rules the human world in its cultural parts, Gods, Externality, Reality, the Absolutes, Categorical Imperatives, all the fruit which blossoms on the Illusion-yielding branches springing from “There is” have become an inevitable portion.’⁹⁷

The problematic nature of dualistic conceptions, (i.e., Senses-Intellect, Appearance-Reality, Asceticism-Passion, Art-Life, Apollonian-Dionysian), and their ramifications (nihilism – the common lot of the artist-pessimist), is a theme touched on variously by other contributors, providing the backbone not only for *Tarr* but also for such texts as Joyce’s *A Portrait* and Remy de Gourmont’s *The Horses of Diomedes*. Gourmont’s novel belongs to the *fin de siècle* French literary tradition and the serialization of his novel (translated by Cecile Sartoris) in *The New Freewoman/The Egoist* indicates parallel intellectual concerns and theoretical foundations between French and English individualism. The editor of *Le Mercure de*

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 53.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 65.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 69.

France, a prolific writer and an art critic, Gourmont belonged to the circle of intellectuals who were involved in the avant-garde dissemination of Nietzsche's thought.⁹⁸ Such intellectual influences can be found in the theoretical works of the early 1900s, as for instance the *Physique de l'Amour: Essai Sur l'Instinct Sexuel* (1904), which would later be translated in English by Ezra Pound as *Natural Philosophy of Love* (1926). Pound was directly responsible for the serialization of Gourmont's novel in the periodical, a philosophical novel which, interestingly, offers an inside view of the turn-of-the-century aesthetic debates within French intellectual circles regarding passion and asceticism, intellection versus sensation, individualism and love. Like in *Tarr*, such tensions are presented through the two main characters: the artistic pair of Diomedes and Cyran. Gourmont, who in one of his essays, (reprinted in *The Egoist*) would note that, '[m]y tradition is not only French; it is European. I cannot deny [...] Schopenhauer, who began my philosophical education: I cannot deny Nietzsche who gave a principle for my repugnance to spiritualist morality [...]'⁹⁹ – makes the artist Diomedes a mediator of a kind of individualistic sensualism. Diomedes introduces a new aesthetic with the capacity to disrupt the more ascetic version advocated by the artist Cyran, wishing to be led far from 'the hermit's hut with its thatched and perhaps reeded roof.'¹⁰⁰ Unlike Cyran's sober aestheticism, which stands for immaterial, unadulterated art, Diomedes asserts a more sensual credo, remaining perpetually in love, harmoniously undecided between his Apollonian lover, the 'ideal' Christine, and the more 'fleshy' affairs that come his way.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Forth, p. 31.

⁹⁹ Remy de Gourmont, 'Tradition and Other Things', *The Egoist*, 15 July 1914, pp. 261-262.

¹⁰⁰ Remy de Gourmont, 'Chapter III.-The Girdle', *The Horses of Diomedes, The New Freewoman*, 1 September 1913, pp.110-113 (p. 110).

¹⁰¹ 'All of Christine's appearances are chaste: she is always innocent and of a virginity continually renewed by grace. Each one of her lovers, sees her different, following the seasons and the hours; she is, sometimes, always and, sometimes, never the same; she is the field, the heath, the river, the sea; the clouds influence her, and the sun [...]; but Christine is immortal. Gourmont,

The aesthetic dialectic represented through the artistic duo Diomedes-Cyran is, in my view, being internalized in Tarr's own character, a character perpetually torn between aesthetic and sensual pleasure. Despite his statements of aesthetic asceticism¹⁰² and alleged obedience to the mandates of ideal form, the 'sex problem' is a continuous distraction for the young Tarr. At moments his persona reads almost as a caricature, offered by Lewis as a parody or criticism of such ascetic-aesthetic models. Like other literary egoists, as for instance the saturnalian James Duffy of the *Dubliners*, Tarr, also enjoys contemplating about the impossibility of human relations and comically enough delivers his monologues in empty studios:

[H]e came back to his earlier conclusions. = Such successful people as Anastasya and himself were by themselves. It was as impossible to combine or *wed* them as to compound the genius of two great artists. = If you mixed together into one whole Gainsborough and Goya you would get *Nothing*, for they would be mutually destructive. [...] = Co-operation, group-genius was, he was convinced, a slavish pretence and absurdity.¹⁰³

In the context of the novel Tarr seems determined to preserve the boundaries of life and art intact. And his existential trouble arises from the realization of both the necessity and the impossibility of such a task. In a way, both the Kantian distinction between the world of truth, namely the world of unchanging things, and the world of the senses, that is the world of delusion and impermanence, and Schopenhauer's pessimism penetrate him deeply. In a way, Tarr's consciousness seems persecuted by this kind of tension, an aesthetic subtext that underlies the conflicting attitude towards Bertha. Tarr's reference to Schopenhauer whilst observing Bertha's naked body indicates this further: 'A complicated image developed in his mind as he stood with her. He was remembering Schopenhauer [...]. Something was explained. Nature

'Chapter VI – The Marigold', *The Horses of Diomedes, The New Freewoman*, 15 September 1913, p. 131.

¹⁰² As he likes to tell Hobson: 'The tendency of my work, as you may have noticed, is that of an invariable severity. Apart from its being good or bad, its character is ascetic rather than sensuous, and divorced from immediate life. There is no slop of sex in *that*', *Tarr*, p. 30.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

was not friendly to him; its metallic tints jarred.’¹⁰⁴ One might argue that for Tarr, Bertha comes to symbolize what in Schopenhauerian terms is defined as the ‘Will’. In her, Tarr sees the uncontrollable forces of nature which as an artist, a lover of the ‘ideal’, he violently resents. A similar frustration is expressed later on in the restaurant scene. His comment: ‘I realize I’m in life, darling. But I don’t like being reminded of it in that way. It makes me feel as though I were in a *mauvais lieu*’¹⁰⁵ indicates that for him nature is neither welcoming nor pleasing. While the debauchery of ‘being’ in life, as it were, has a rather seductive appeal to Tarr the Man – his artistic side displays a less charitable temper – relegating life to a subordinate position. As he tells Anastasya, art connotes stasis, permanence, a condition that resembles ‘death’: ‘*death* is the thing that differentiates art and life. Art is identical with the idea of permanence. It is a continuity and not an individual spasm.’¹⁰⁶ His conception of art reveres Apollonian stasis – the plastic form which arrests the dynamics of temporality in the deadness of shape: ‘Deadness, then, in the limited sense in which we use the world, is the first condition of art.’¹⁰⁷

While this life-less ‘dream-like’ art is advocated by both male artists (Tarr and Kreisler that is), the character of the Russian *belle*, Anastasya, is brought in, I believe, in order to inform and vitalize the novel’s art-hypothesis. It is important here to note that the lengthy dialogues between Tarr and Anastasya in Parts V and VII were written quite late, and the final revising of this material took place just a few months before the novel’s completion.¹⁰⁸ In a way, it seems to me that such compositional details matter greatly as these sections evoke an aesthetic agenda quite

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 58-59.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 303.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 299.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 299-300. It is a kind of notion that considers the aesthetic as a route to a kind of Buddhist liberation from all willing and suffering, evoking Schopenhauer’s understanding of the relationship of art and the Will. For Schopenhauer art confronts the question of existence and provides a temporary escape from it, from the tyranny of desire.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Afterword’ in *Tarr*, pp. 363-364.

distinct and more promising – and one closer to that of the later Lewis. That said, it is my view that in the parts of the novel that belong to the later writing (the restaurant scene, as well as the scene of Tarr’s ‘seduction’ by Anastasya), Lewis moves beyond the parody of the ‘lifeless’ *aesthesis* that both Kreisler and Tarr represent, and engages in something else. In a way, the confrontation of Tarr and Anastasya, yields something new and different, a new set of ideas coming together (a ‘healthy dualism’ perhaps?)

As noted earlier, the initial aesthetic thesis of *The Birth of Tragedy* was built upon an Apollonian/Dionysian dialectic. For Nietzsche, the Dionysian evokes excess and unconsciousness, a ‘sacred’ animalism. The Apollonian, by contrast, belongs to Schopenhauer’s world of representation.¹⁰⁹ In Schopenhauer’s and Kant’s metaphysics there is a sharp distinction between the real world of things as they are in themselves and the apparent world of things as they feature in experience (the world of representation and experience), which in Schopenhauer’s idiom becomes the distinction between the Will and ‘representation of the Will.’ Wary of such metaphysical divisions, the Nietzsche of *The Gay Science* reconceived the Apollonian and the Dionysian as states immanent in nature, in an effort to return art into the real world of human experience.¹¹⁰ According to this new non-metaphysical thesis, art exists as a thorough affirmation of nature and nature’s power, expressed in the form of a ‘joyful’ naturalism which extols the worldly and its folly as the only true reality: ‘We have abolished the real world: what world is left? The apparent

¹⁰⁹As Ruben Berrios and Aaron Ridley point out: ‘Aesthetically, the Apollonian is the beautiful, the world experienced as intelligible, as conforming to the capacities of the representing intellect’. Ruben Berrios and Aaron Ridley, ‘Nietzsche’, in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. by Berys Gaut and Dominic Lopes (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), pp. 98-108 (p. 98).

¹¹⁰ ‘In fact’, as Sallis notes in *Crossings*, ‘Nietzsche’s critique concludes by analysing Schopenhauer’s theory of the intellect in such a way as to attempt to show that the distinction between will and the world as represented by the intellect (that is, the world of appearances) cannot be sustained.’ While for Schopenhauer the role of art would be to offer a temporary respite from the natural, phenomenal world, ‘a contemplation without interest’ that disengages the will, Nietzsche promotes an aesthetic temper that suggests a dynamic rather than a static metaphor. John Sallis, *Crossings: Nietzsche and the Space of Tragedy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 66.

world perhaps? ... But no! *With the real world we have abolished the apparent world!*¹¹¹ As Stern and Silk point out in *Nietzsche on Tragedy*:

[I]n the perspective of Nietzsche's whole career, his relationship with Schopenhauer seems like an unending *agon* in which he either follows his predecessor or attacks him. Tragedy, says Schopenhauer, gives the spectator a premonition of 'a different kind of experience'. Nietzsche agrees, but asks what kind of existence, and answers: *not* some *nirvana*, but the 'eternal life' which we glimpse through our 'knowledge' that despite the destruction of individuals – *because of* the destruction of individuals – we share in the underlying and indestructible unity of being. Tragedy, says Schopenhauer, gives its spectator 'an exalted pleasure'. Nietzsche agrees again, but asks what kind of pleasure, and answers: *not* the pleasure of mystical resignation from the world but a 'higher joy', an overwhelmingly affecting experience which is capable of reconciling the mystical and worldly instincts. This is the crux of Nietzsche's first overt argument with Schopenhauer, and it is the model of all subsequent arguments with him.¹¹²

As Foshay notes, Lewis's own aesthetic *agon* might be understood as a long quest for a 'harmonious and sane duality', a certain affirmation of the tension of opposites in the tradition of Nietzsche. From the 'nihilistic void'¹¹³ of the *Enemy of the Stars* to *Tarr* and the vorticist manifesto of *Blast*, this notion increasingly occupies a central place. In the second issue of *Blast* for instance Lewis tells us how to 'BE THYSELF':

There is nothing as impressive as the number TWO.
You must be a duet in everything.
For, the Individual, the single object, and the isolated, is, you will admit,
an absurdity.

¹¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 'How the "Read World" at last Became a Myth', p. 51. As Berrios and Ridley point out: 'With this new conception, the appearance/reality distinction is not a distinction between two logically differentiated 'worlds' – an apparent one and a real one – but a distinction that falls squarely within the ordinary, everyday world of actual experience', p. 99.

¹¹² Michael S. Silk and Joseph P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 331. As Stern notes: 'When Nietzsche rejects a Buddhistic-pessimistic negation of the will in favour of the Greek 'pessimism' of strength' (as he labels it in the *Self-Criticism*), or when he denies the meaning of an opposition between objective and subjective art, he is conducting a straightforward dialectical argument with the philosophy of which he was so recently a wholehearted partisan. Schopenhauer is by no means an isolated influence. In tone and in content Nietzsche's book presupposes the cultural and spiritual aspirations of German Romanticism in the *Sturm und Drang*. His aesthetic theories, as we shall see, belong as firmly to that German context as does his Dionysian-Apollonian antithesis. But it is a German context of which Schopenhauer remains, for him, a crowning representative', p. 222.

¹¹³ Foshay, p. 45.

Why try and give the impression of a consistent and indivisible personality?

Hurry up and get into this harmonious and sane duality.

The thought of the old Body-and-Soul, Male-and-Female, Eternal Duet of Existence, can perhaps be of help to you, if you hesitate still to invent yourself properly.

No clear outlines, except on condition of being dual and prolonged.¹¹⁴

Indeed, as Foshay notes, if one considers Tarr on his own, there is not much more there than a mere 'caricature of the artist caught in a dialectic of Apollonian and Dionysian impulses (ascetic art/sexual life), an art-position 'unable to make the leap to a concrete and synthetic will-to-power.'¹¹⁵ However, when put side by side with Anastasya, a different interpretation might perhaps be possible. A thorough analysis of Anastasya's art and life position, which has, in my view, not yet received the full critical attention it deserves, and the effect she has on Tarr, provides new, alternative ways of approaching the text's aesthetics.

Interestingly enough, Anastasya's love ethics look very different from the standard accounts of love that Lewis attributes to the other characters. For instance, she does not stand for 'passion' in the same way that Bertha does. In her, 'passion' becomes a virtue; it is born out of a fullness of life and displays a measured intensity that sharply contradicts the vulgar sensuality typical of her rival. In fact, she is the very antithesis of Bertha, in whom passion is firmly tied to a self-sacrificial ethic points towards a Christian ethic of self-renunciation and chastity (which evokes Nietzsche's parody of Wagner's women): '[Bertha] has a [...] penchant for self-immolation [...]. She is apt to lie down on the altar at the wrong moment – even to mistake all sorts of unrelated things for altars.'¹¹⁶ Neither is Anastasya's idea of passion in any way comparable to the vulgar sexuality that Tarr alludes to in the

¹¹⁴ Wyndham Lewis, 'BE THYSELF', *BLAST: Review of the Great English Vortex: War Issue*, July 1915, p. 91.

¹¹⁵ Foshay, p. 74.

¹¹⁶ *Tarr*, p. 39.

course of the novel. In effect, the figure of Anastasya, Tarr's 'perfect bride'¹¹⁷ and fellow 'individual-genius'¹¹⁸ comes along to rouse Tarr out of his Apollonian slumber, troubling the essential presuppositions that his former aesthetic self seems bound to. Their encounter makes him eventually realize that '[h]e was not an artist in anything but oil-paint.'¹¹⁹ By appearing on the scene, like an aesthetic 'dea ex machina', she serves as Tarr's rescuer from the dead end of pure intellectual contemplation and brings him 'Back to the Earth!'¹²⁰ Indeed, the invocation of Anastasya signals a turn in Tarr former sex-presuppositions. After their initial encounter he goes on to confess: 'It was a queer feeling, after all, to see his sensuality speaking sense. He would marry her!'¹²¹ Anastasya's invitation to make him 'drunk' in the restaurant scene¹²² ('they began with oysters. He had never eaten oysters before. Prudence had prevented him')¹²³, as well as the 'seduction scene' of 'Swagger Sex' in Chapter Three are both, in a way, intended as Tarr's re-education in the issues of life: 'he followed obediently and silently. He was glad Anastasya had taken things to her hands [...].'¹²⁴ For instance, in the restaurant she employs him to drink 'to Waste':

'I'll drink to that!' said Anastasya, raising her glass [...]. 'Here's to Waste!' he said loudly. 'Waste yourselves, pour yourselves out, let there be no *High-Men* except such as happens. Economy is sedition. Drink your *blood* if you have no wine!'¹²⁵

Significantly enough, the scene where Anastasya 'seduces' Tarr takes place in the private space of Tarr's art-studio – a place which Bertha has never managed to

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 320.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 313.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 297.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 307.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 295.

¹²² Ibid., p. 302.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 297.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 297.

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp. 302-303. My emphasis.

penetrate. With 'the key' finally 'in her possession'¹²⁶, Anastasya begins the education of the artist-convalescent by assigning to him a new role, that of the collaborator. Poignantly, she reassures him: 'You won't hear marriage talked about by me. I want to rescue you from your Bertha habits. = Allow yourself to be rescued!'¹²⁷ In some respects Anastasya's scheming and seduction tactics recall Ann Whitefield's boa-constrictor powers in *Man and Superman*. However, in this case the female heroine is brought in to save rather than hinder Tarr's individualism. Anastasya is not Ann's equivalent, although it would be easy to see her as a kind of caricature of Shaw's vitalistic model. In my view, if one were to look for the congruities between Shaw's and Lewis's Nietzschean heroines, this should be in the earthly, sensual image of Bertha, and Tarr's almost involuntary attraction/repulsion towards her. Anastasya, on the other hand, is a character in her own right, posing questions and trying out answers, which Tarr has not been able to consider yet. Such rigid definitions of art as the ones Tarr sets forth are put up for examination. In the restaurant scene Anastasya goes on to ask Tarr 'Still, what *is* it? What *is* art', and in reply to his remark that art is the state where 'it is ourselves disentangled from death and accident' she says humorously: 'Art is Paleozoic matter, Dolomite, oil-paint, and mathematics; also something else. Having established that, we will stick a little flag up and come back another day. = I want to hear now about *life*.'¹²⁸

Anastasya, in some way, achieves a synthesis which Tarr seems unable to grasp in its entirety. Her notion of love, and consequently of art, seems to be inspired by the Nietzschean notion of the will-to-power, a love which connotes energy and strength, as well as self-mastery, which does not mean the conquest of the passions

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 306.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 307.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 300.

but rather their cultivation.¹²⁹ Furthermore, for her the practice of art is more than the production of artworks. Her notion of life and art as mutually interdependent offers a different perspective to that of the Apollonian Tarr:

[Tarr]: ‘Listen. Life is art’s rival and vice versa.

[Anastasya]: I don’t see the opposition!

[Tarr]: No, because you mix them up. You are the arch enemy of the picture.¹³⁰

With Anastasya, Tarr’s categories are for the first time blurred: mind and body, intellection and sensuality, knowledge and experience, subject and object, life and art, they all become tangled. By being the ‘arch enemy of the picture’, the foil to Tarr’s version of Apollonian plasticity, she brings a new fresh gospel of art and life to the novel – to the surprised, but not disagreeably surprised, Tarr. She tells him: ‘Forget those silly words of yours [...] Ha! We’re in life, my Tarr. We represent absolutely nothing = thank God!’¹³¹ For her, the world’s essence lies in its Will – not in its representation, to use Schopenhauer. The artist’s Apollonian instinct to dominate, to gain mastery over form, to impose order is troubled by Anastasya who refuses to be passively possessed by Tarr:

[Tarr] ‘I don’t want *you!*’ Tarr said.

[Anastasya] ‘Oh! = Tell me what you want?’

[Tarr] ‘*I want a woman!*’

[Anastasya] ‘But I am a woman, stupid!’

[Tarr] ‘I want a *slave.*’

She whispered in his ear, hanging on his neck.

[Tarr] ‘No! You may be a woman, but you’re not a slave.’

[Anastasya] ‘Don’t be so quarrelsome. = Forget those silly words of yours – slave, woman.’¹³²

¹²⁹ In the very interesting article ‘The Virtues of Passionate Life: Erotic Love and “the Will to Power”’, the Nietzsche scholar Robert C. Solomon discusses Nietzsche’s concept of the Will in relation to current philosophical approaches to love and life. For him Nietzsche’s love ethic is based on impassioned engagement and emotion, in the cultivation of passion and as such it moves away from Schopenhauer and Kant’s theories of love as ‘compassion’. Robert C. Solomon, ‘The Virtues of Passionate Life: Erotic Love and “the Will to Power”’, *Social Philosophy and Policy* 15 (1998), 91-118 (p. 97).

¹³⁰ Tarr, p. 299.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 304.

¹³² Ibid., p. 304.

By not subjecting herself, not letting herself become objectified by the artist's gaze, she transgresses the traditional boundaries between artist and art-object, subject and object. Drawing Tarr into a real reciprocal relationship with a woman (Eternal-Feminine is the Will-to-Life in Nietzsche) she enables him to overcome the *principium individuationis*, the divisive world-view of neatly ordered distinctions which defines him as an individual and as an artist. It may be argued that Anastasya introduces the idea of reciprocity between art and life. Like love, aesthetic experience entails surrender of the whole self; 'I am your slave' Tarr exclaims, and she replies: 'Thank you Tarr. That's better than *having a slave*, isn't it?'; '[Tarr:] Yes, I think everything is in order.'¹³³ In a way Anastasya awakens him from his ascetic aestheticism providing alternative ways of conceiving the creative enterprise: '[Anastasya:] Then you're my efficient chimpanzee?' '[Tarr:] No, I'm the new animal; we haven't found a name for it yet. It will succeed the Superman. Back to the Earth!'¹³⁴

While on his own, Tarr is portrayed as a genuine puritanical egoist, but when he is paired with her, the picture is radically altered. Their early rapport, and Tarr's long conversation with her in their stroll through the Luxembourg Gardens in Chapter Seven of Part V, 'A Megrim of Humour' begin sketching a different portrait of Tarr, conveying somehow Lewis's altered attitude towards him. We read for instance:

There was no other pair of people who could talk like that on those terraces. They were both of them barbarians, head and shoulders taller than the polished stock around. And they were highly strung and graceful. They were out of place.¹³⁵

Such accounts seem to me to trouble the early portrait of Tarr in Part I, suggesting perhaps the evolving aesthetic concerns of the writer. Interestingly, in this passage,

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

Lewis has the pair ‘promenad[ing] their sinuous healthy intellects [...] [t]here was no other pair of people who could talk like that’, speaking seriously, exploring the dialectic between shifting notions of egoism art and genius, traditional ideals of vitalism, conversing about what it means to be an ‘efficient’ artist as well as an efficient man. Their discussion over the nature of the creative artist is only one instance of this:

[Anastasya] ‘Your philosophy reminds me of Jean-Jacques [Rousseau],’ she said.

[Tarr] ‘Does it? Well, how do you arrive at this conclusion?’

[Anastasya] ‘Well, your hostility to a tidy rabble, and preference for a rough and uncultivated bed to build on brings to mind “wild nature” and the doctrine of the natural man [...].’

[Tarr] ‘I see what you mean. But I also notice that the temper of my theories is the exact opposite of Jean-Jacques [...]. I do not for a moment sentimentalize crudeness [...]. The conditions of creation and life disgust me [...]. Similarly, you *must praise chaos and filth* [...]. When you see men fighting, robbing each other, behaving meanly or breaking out into violent vulgarities, you must conventionally clap your hands. If you have not the stomach to do that, you cannot be a creative artist. If people stopped behaving in that way, *you could not be a creative artist.*’¹³⁶

In such moments, one is tempted to think that Tarr, in a genuinely Lewisian spirit, aims to move away from satire and provocation to a more mature and reflective view of individualism and art. Tarr’s artistic ‘shyness’ with regard to matters of life seems to be efficiently complemented by the reassuring symmetry of Anastasya’s form:

[Tarr] ‘You tempt me to abandon art. Art is the refuge of the shy.’

[Anastasya] ‘Are you shy?’

[Tarr] ‘Yes.’

[Anastasya] ‘You need not be.’¹³⁷

Seen from this perspective, the text’s art hypothesis appears to expand to encompass the notion of life and art as proposed by the harmonious duet Anastasya-Tarr. If the question with Bertha was how to be a true ascetic artist – how to extract himself from materiality – with Anastasya the emphasis is shifted. It is the question of finding the means to reconcile the two realms: how to be an individual without

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 236. My emphasis.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

conceding his identity as an artist. It might be argued that this union suggests an attempt on Lewis's part to negotiate a revised aesthetic position that moves away from the sterile aestheticism which haunts this narrative and the individualistic tradition in general. In my opinion, this pairing of 'genius-individuals' (as Tarr refers to them during their conversations) indicates that reconciling and integrating opposites is central to Lewis's idea of individuation in the text.

Clues concerning the role of such characters as Anastasya, who acts as an important adjunct to Tarr's aesthetic development in the later part of the novel, in my view enable one to appreciate the text's aesthetics under a new way. It is possible to argue that, through this pair, Lewis outlines a hypothesis about how the hiatus between life and art might be crossed. Thus he extends the purposes of his comedy and satire, and calls for a new vitalistic aesthetic. Given Tarr's declaration early on in the novel about being the 'new sort of pessimist', 'the Panurgic-Pessimist', 'drunken with the laughing gas of the Abyss' in light of Anastasya's life and art ethic, one might begin to wonder whether the text is offering something to counteract the 'spirit of gravity' or the spirit of *ressentiment* (Nietzschean terms for nihilism) that is so conspicuously present in the text. Tarr's own sense of aesthetic and moral trial can be seen in his constant battle with the spirit of 'squalor and idiocy', his effort to remodel the Flaubertian pessimism and aestheticism into a more affirmative vision:

I gaze on squalor and idiocy, and the more I see it, the more I like it. Flaubert built up his Boulevard et Pécuchet with maniacal and tireless hands. It took him ten years. That was a long draught of stodgy laughter from the gases that rise from the dung-heap? He had an appetite like an elephant from this form of mirth. But he grumbled and sighed over his food. I take it in my arms and bury my face in it!¹³⁸

The Rabelaisian traits of Tarr's Panurgic 'appetite' aside, this pessimism of good health, which Tarr refers to in this passage, might plausibly be a reference to Nietzsche's proposition of affirmative pessimism as expounded in *The Gay Science*.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

Such an interpretation of the aesthetics in *Tarr* is further reinforced by a passage in the preface which was cut from the original published version. There Lewis tells us: more than a rant of a bitter comedian, Tarr's credo is meant to present us with a healthy type of pessimism of 'joy' and 'unconsciousness':

[Tarr's] message, as he discourses, laughs, and picks his way through the heavily obstructed land of this story, is a message of a figure of *health*. His introspection is not *melancholy* [...]. He exalts life into a Comedy when otherwise it is, to his mind, a tawdry zone of half-art, or a silly Tragedy.¹³⁹

This kind of new Nietzschean-like pessimism seems to be a start towards addressing anew the issue of aesthetic dualism and pessimism that faces individualistic aesthetics. As Lewis further notes in this unpublished part of the preface, the character of Tarr is meant to stand for unconsciousness and health, he is an artist who needs to find the means to dispose of such contradictory aesthetic 'tremors' 'to his satisfaction'.¹⁴⁰

That said, in my view, Tarr's calling for a new earthy aestheticism in Chapter Three of Part VII 'Swagger Sex', connotes Lewis's challenge to stereotypical notions of aesthetic egoism, as well as the traditional image of individual genius-artist *Übermensch*. Lewis here, through Tarr, his new animal, his 'Egoist-chimpanzee', aims to refine the crude divide between vitalism and idealism which haunts individualism, thus attempting to bridge the gap between reason and imagination, to ease the tension between life and art. Most importantly, through Anastasya, who may be seen as a catalyst to Tarr's creative vision, the text attempts to conceive a union of oppositions, a union incited by a certain joyful spirit which promotes not only a carefree existence but one requiring cunning, wisdom and strength, the same worldly, light-hearted forbearance as that advocated in *The Gay Science*. Seen in this light, the text might be said to echo the yes-saying of 'la gaya scienza' – the spirit of

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 387.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 387.

joyful wisdom seen according to Nietzsche in the art of the medieval Provençal troubadours.¹⁴¹ Going beyond the idea of *Tarr* as a direct expression of Lewis's aesthetic cul-de-sac, this kind of reading reveals *Tarr* as a kind of egoist 'convalescent', who seeks new (affirmative) ways of dealing with reality.

4.4 The Case Against Kreisler: Lewis's Critique of Decadence

At the other end of the narrative we have characters such as Otto Kreisler, a German art-student, who has sought refuge in Paris, possibly as a result of his father's betrayal (he has married Kreisler's fiancée). As Lewis himself acknowledges in *Rude Assignment*, Kreisler is a character at the same time 'aloof and violent', who 'enjoys drifting silently with time'¹⁴² and for whom 'the brink is never far off.'¹⁴³ As he adds, the pessimism of this character is a pessimism that comes close to that of Shakespeare's "'signifying nothing!'"¹⁴⁴, a reference, most probably, to Macbeth's famous soliloquy about the meaninglessness of human life:

MACBETH

Out, out, brief Candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
*Signifying nothing.*¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ As Kathleen Marie Higgins tells us in *Comic Relief: Nietzsche's Gay Science*, for Nietzsche *la gaya scienza* represents an entire culture that grew up in medieval Provence and was celebrated by the troubadours. The motifs of art and courtly love hint at the way of life and thought that Nietzsche was trying to advocate. The term 'troubadour' itself conveys an adventurous attitude. The opening poem of the German rhymes, 'Joke, Cunning and Revenge', that appears as 'prelude' to the philosophy urges the reader, as Higgins puts it, 'to be bold enough to try the "fare" that is offered and patient enough to acquire the taste for it.' Poem 28, similarly, 'offers encouragement to those who begin their journey, and describes the process of growth (revaluation) as gradual and initially clumsy, just as a toddler taking his first steps. Kathleen Marie Higgins, *Comic Relief: Nietzsche's Gay Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 16-19.

¹⁴² *Rude Assignment*, p. 151.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹⁴⁵ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth, The Riverside Shakespeare, Vol. 1* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), p. 1385.

The text's emphasis on Kreisler's craving for nothingness and the series of events that together chart the trajectory of his inward emotional degeneration, all point to the kind of pessimism Kreisler represents. As mentioned already, for Lewis, Kreisler is the heir of German romanticism, a degenerate artist who seeks to be distracted by his art, an art of extravagant love and despair.¹⁴⁶ As Gasiorek rightly infers, this sort of degenerate pessimism may be understood more fully in the light of Nietzsche's notion of *ressentiment*. As the critic points out, Kreisler's *ressentiment* may be traced to 'the relationship to the father [...] to what the Father symbolizes: the social realm of privilege and position from which the son is excluded.'¹⁴⁷ Indeed, Kreisler's mode of existence could be sought in Nietzsche's man of *ressentiment*, namely the weary individual unable to come to terms with his experience of life (his deeds and misdeeds included). Like him, he suffers from the same psychological 'indigestion' that Nietzsche talks about in *On the Genealogy*,¹⁴⁸ resorting to other means of consolation, 'narcotics' or 'palliatives'¹⁴⁹ of sorts, as well as a 'hypnotic sense of nothingness'¹⁵⁰ – which in Kreisler's case, at least in part, becomes translated into a dream of mystical union with Anastasya, promising a death-like return to the womb. In him, it is not difficult to see the same kind of existential pessimism and ennui that so often afflicts Tarr, but here it has degenerated into a resentful conscience that lusts for revenge and death – a nihilism turned sour, underpinned by an ultimate craving for nothingness. The duel with Soltyk – a protracted scene with an absurd and unfulfilling outcome – instead of providing relief, exaggerates even further Kreisler's feeling of *ressentiment*. In such moments, Kreisler's gloomy seriousness and worn-out chivalry may be seen as Lewis's parody of a certain aesthetic ideal. From

¹⁴⁶ *Rude Assignment*, p. 150.

¹⁴⁷ *Tarr*, p. 28.

¹⁴⁸ *On the Genealogy*, p. 129.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

Kreisler's treatment of love to the fantasy of himself as a vengeful aristocrat one may see traces of a hysterical fatalism which has turned voyeuristic and irrational.

As seen already in Chapter Three, *ressentiment* refers to a psychological state where reaction and not action makes up the individual. 'Bad conscience', as defined by Nietzsche, has its origins in the internalization of aggressive impulses and the feeling of *ressentiment* it generates. *Ressentiment*, in turn, is an unconscious rage, an incurably persistent hate that interferes with vitality (the will-to-power), denoting a failure on the part of the individual to become master of himself, that is, a 'sovereign' and 'free' spirit. The expression of this sick conscience in contemporary art is one of the major themes of *The Case of Wagner*. There 'bad conscience' and *ressentiment* are diagnosed in aesthetic terms (rather than psychological) – and are discussed in relation to Schopenhauer and Wagner, Nietzsche's two most representative examples of cultural degeneration and decadent modernity.¹⁵¹ As Lichtenberger tells us in his study, in this book Nietzsche deals with a 'new problem':

A new problem appeared to Nietzsche, a problem which never ceased to occupy his mind until the end of his conscient life: what does this modern decadence consist of? What are the symptoms which characterise it, the signs that reveal it? What is the depth and breadth of the nihilistic evil? How can it be cured? As soon as the matter appeared to him in this light, his judgment of Wagner and Schopenhauer was modified from top to bottom.¹⁵²

More particularly, in the polemical tract *The Case of Wagner*, which calls for a complete renunciation of prevailing German aesthetics, one can read the attack on Wagner as an attack on all that was artistically degenerate in modern culture.¹⁵³ A closer examination of Nietzsche's treatment of contemporary German art in this book

¹⁵¹ *The Case of Wagner*, p. 156.

¹⁵² Lichtenberger, p. 83.

¹⁵³ For an informed recent account, see Bruce Ellis Benson, *Pious Nietzsche: Decadence and Dionysian Faith* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), and more particularly chapter six, titled 'Wagner's Redemption', pp. 97-118.

raises interesting correspondences between the aesthetics of Lewis's decadent anti-hero and such forms of art-conscience. Interestingly, in *The Case of Wagner* the German composer is often accused for his proclivity toward the sensationally exceptional and artificial. In particular, Nietzsche tells us that in Wagner's case the conception of love is all about overt 'sentimentality' and mere 'sensuality'¹⁵⁴; that his music (which is Schopenhauerian in tone) is 'sick', made for those 'weariest' in life:

[Wagner] flatters every nihilistic (Buddhistic) instinct and disguises it in music [...] Open your ears: everything that ever grew on the soil of *impoverished* life, all of the counterfeiting of transcendence and beyond, has found its most sublime advocate in Wagner's art – *not* by means of formulas: Wagner was too shrewd for formulas – but by means of persuasion of sensuousness which in turn makes the spirit weary and worn-out.¹⁵⁵

And his polemic continues: 'Our physicians and physiologists confront their most interesting case in Wagner' he points out:

The problems he presents on the stage – all of them problems of hysterics – the convulsive natures of his affects, his overexcited sensibility, his taste that required ever stronger spices, his instability which he dressed up as principles, not least of all the choice of his heroes and heroines – consider them as physiological types (a pathological gallery)! – all of this taken together represents a profile of sickness that permits no further doubt.¹⁵⁶

It is not perhaps impossible to argue that Kreisler, this 'romantic German'¹⁵⁷ could perhaps be a part of such a pathological gallery. His sanctification and fetishization of the Russian *belle* are perhaps the most convincing evidence as to that. His penchant for theatricality and artificiality, his perception of life as a kind of drama enacted almost 'cinematographically',¹⁵⁸ his preference for illusion over reality (a cunning device to keep himself perpetually distracted), also add to this impression.

¹⁵⁴ *The Case of Wagner*, p. 158.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

¹⁵⁷ *Rude Assignment*, p. 151.

¹⁵⁸ *Tarr*, p. 103.

One of Nietzsche's most frequent accusations against Wagner in his book is the latter's bad taste in 'love'. Unlike Bizet's conception of love, which is 'love translated into nature',¹⁵⁹ Wagner's is one that lures one away from nature: 'What a clever rattlesnake! It has filled our whole life with its rattling about "devotion," about "loyalty," about "purity"; and with its praise of chastity it withdrew from the corrupted world.'¹⁶⁰ Nietzsche's polemic continues: 'Wagner is incapable of just 'put[ting] forth the human condition and *celebrate*[ing] it; he has to fix it by way of redemption.'¹⁶¹ All of the composer's operas are, in a way, stories of redemption, according to him. This is presented as one of his most serious faults:

The problem of redemption is certainly a venerable problem. There is nothing about which Wagner has thought more deeply than redemption: his opera is the opera of redemption. Somebody or other always wants to be redeemed in his work: sometimes a little male, sometimes a little female – this is *his* problem.¹⁶²

Nietzsche, who at the end of the book pleads that 'music should not become an art of lying',¹⁶³ accuses Wagner's aesthetics of 'redemption',¹⁶⁴ as being merely a passionate love of beautiful form, inducing a flight from reality into a lie. They are meant to corrupt by their beautiful lies ('Music as Circe'),¹⁶⁵ to seduce by their heroic ideals, becoming thus a 'stimulanti[um] of the exhausted.'¹⁶⁶ Ultimately, and perhaps most importantly for Nietzsche, Wagner is a '*névrose*',¹⁶⁷ a symptom, 'a child of *this* time'¹⁶⁸ to be associated with the age's cultural and social neurosis, and in particular with a new ideal of virtue which requires 'training, automatism, "self-

¹⁵⁹ *The Case of Wagner*, p. 158.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹⁶¹ Benson, p. 111.

¹⁶² *The Case of Wagner*, p. 160.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹⁶⁵ *The Case of Wagner*, p. 183.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 155. My emphasis.

denial””, which denotes a constitution ‘Teutonic’ in spirit.¹⁶⁹ In his conclusion to the book he announces prophetically:

It is full of profound significance the arrival of Wagner coincides in time with the arrival of the ‘*Reich*’: both events prove the very same thing: obedience and long legs. – Never has obedience been better, never more commanding. Wagnerian conductors in particular are worthy of an age that posterity will call one day, with awed respect, *the classical age of war*.¹⁷⁰

To return to *Tarr*, as Lewis notes in *Rude Assignment*, Kreisler’s ‘romantic involvements’ (which are in the sharpest contrast with Tarr’s), are ‘always melodramatic and rooted in a stormy pessimism and painful wonder’.¹⁷¹ For this character the story becomes ‘an unrelievedly gloomy epic of spiritual freedom – which the further you went, for to look more and more like predestination.’¹⁷² Indeed, in reading Kreisler’s account of his life, one sees reiterated the same theme. Kreisler remains perpetually entangled in the folds of a quasi-Nietzschean pattern of ‘eternal return’. Through Kreisler-Anastasya-Soltyk he reenacts old traumatic themes (Son-Mother-Father) – experiencing the recurrence of the same repressed feeling anew, yet without the hope of true redemption.

A central problem that troubles him is the problem of ‘indifference’ in life. Unable to transform his ‘bad conscience’, so to speak, into anything active, his character resorts to a romantic pessimism which allows to take leave from those ‘many empty and depressing hours he had lived.’¹⁷³ In fact, his longing for love is irreparably associated with his longing for ‘redemption’ from those aspects of life that seem too great for him to handle: ‘When the events of his life became too unwieldy or overwhelming, he converted them into love, as he might have done, with

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹⁷² *Rude Assignment*, p. 146.

¹⁷³ *Tarr*, p. 284.

specialised talent, into some art or other.’¹⁷⁴ Consequently, it may not unreasonable to argue that the theatrics of his supposedly threatened honor (in the case of Soltyk), as well as his mock-role as a tragic lover (in the case of Anastasya), might be a means to compensate for an otherwise mundane existence. Such ‘[t]ragedies’, we read at one point, ‘purged [him] periodically of the too violent accumulations of desperate life.’¹⁷⁵ Particularly with regard to Anastasya, Kreisler’s suspiciously sudden interest in her is never far from the mood of existential resignation that haunts him. The salvific character of his passion for her can be seen as one manifestation of his spiritual trouble. Like a hypnotic siren, romantic passion provides a temporary comfort from ‘[t]he useless ennui of his life’, from the knowledge that ‘sooner or later he must marry and settle down [...] multiply his image. Things had gone too far’.¹⁷⁶ It is important that Kreisler’s chance encounter with Anastasya at the café is turned into an imaginary tale of unrequited love. The mysterious sudden passion that he declares for her, her total idealization, reads as a parody of chivalric romance: ‘He realised suddenly all the possibilities of this chance acquaintanceship, plainly and cinematographically. [...] There he was like some individual who had gone nonchalantly into the presence of a *prince*.’¹⁷⁷ What is more, the love story he contrives, his fantasy of redemption by her which becomes increasingly more vicious, violent and desperate: (‘[C]asting about desperately for means of handling the situation he remembered she had spoken of getting a dog to *guide her* [...]. He would be her dog! Lie at her feet!’)¹⁷⁸, and, ultimately, his duel with Soltyk, all evoke a vision of life and art which is as artificial as it is escapist.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 123.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 103. My emphasis.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 103.

It seems that Kreisler is prone to two kinds of moods, that of the stoic ascetic on the one hand: ‘This life was now settled, pressure ceased. He had come to a conventional and respectable decision [...]. Death like a monastery – was before him, with equivalents of a slight shaving of the head merely, a handful of vows, some desultory farewells, very restricted space, but none the worst for that [...]. Instead of rearing smooth faces of immense stone against it, you imagine an unparalleled immobility in life’¹⁷⁹ – and that of the dramatic hero on the other. A true actor, he assumes different roles, both as a victim and as an avenger, a master and a slave. Following carefully the events that lead to Kreisler’s suicide, we discover that his art consists of his having transformed his life into a tragic melodrama, at the center of which one finds an understanding of existence never far off from the irrational, absurd, impersonal picture of nature we see in Schopenhauer. Instead of affirming it, as Tarr wishes to do,¹⁸⁰ Kreisler, this existential ‘snob’, vehemently repudiates it:

The mood [...] was virulent snobbery. [...] He had, at his last public appearance, taken the role of a tramp-comedian. [...] The world seemed to wish to perpetuate this part for him. But he would not play! He refused! A hundred times, he refused!!¹⁸¹

Increasingly unhappy with the role assigned to him by life, he takes up a new one – one that seems to suit his decadent mood better. Seeking to salvage some part of ‘the beloved self’,¹⁸² Kreisler’s growing indifference (‘he was almost dead’)¹⁸³ finds refuge in a chivalric daydream: ‘A beautiful woman’ was at the bottom of it. [...] *Tant pis* for the other man who had been foolhardy enough to cross his path.’¹⁸⁴ One might argue that beneath all these heroic fantasies and exaggerated stage-acting,

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 164.

¹⁸⁰ Tarr tells Anastasya in Chapter Seven of ‘A Megrim of Humour’: ‘Similarly, you must praise chaos and filth. *It is put there for you* [...]. If you have not the stomach to do that, you cannot be a creative artist.’ *Tarr*, p. 236.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 263.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 263.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 263.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 267-268.

one is able to read Lewis's parody of a certain decadent form of art. In the course of the novel Kreisler emerges as a true virtuoso in his own right. Like Wagner, he turns into a maestro of 'hypnotic tricks',¹⁸⁵ a 'first-rate actor',¹⁸⁶ 'very *decadent*',¹⁸⁷ conjures up 'tragedies' to entertain 'weary nerves.'¹⁸⁸ Kreisler's tempestuous love-ethic might even remind one of Wagner's 'Flying Dutchman', constantly in search of a woman who will redeem him through her love.¹⁸⁹ Kreisler too is doomed, not by the devil, but by his 'bad conscience', and throughout Part II 'Doomed, Evidently – The "Frac"', seeks some sort of redemption. His rather perverse view of himself as Anastasya's slave, his wish to be her 'dog', and his obsessive determination to rescue her, 'to fill [...] the void that *must* exist in her spirit'¹⁹⁰ masks his own emptiness and malady. The appearance of 'Woman', which, as we are told was 'Art or expression' for him, his imagining of himself both as a humble rescuer and a loving servant, represent his avoidance of reality, his own impotence, and his pursuit of illusion. In one of the recurrent fits of ennui, while walking down the dark boulevard, he suddenly remembers Anastasya. Thinking of 'his weakness', 'the vortex', Kreisler seeks anything to help him feel better: 'Anything, death and annihilation was better than going back into that terrible colourless mood.'¹⁹¹ At this moment, the reminiscence of Anastasya – or rather the idealized form in which Kreisler has cast

¹⁸⁵ *The Case of Wagner*, p. 166.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

¹⁸⁹ Wagner's main literary source for *The Flying Dutchman* was Heinrich Heine's *Memoirs of Herr von Schnabelewopski* (1834), in which a Dutch captain, who rashly swears "by all devils in hell" to round a certain Cape, is doomed by the devil to sail the seas until the Last Judgment, unless he is redeemed by the fidelity of a woman's love. Wagner's Dutchman, allowed to come ashore every seven years to seek redemption (a central and recurring theme in Wagner's operas), is rescued from his plight by Senta who, filled with pity and a deep sense of destiny, forsakes her lover Erik and assures the Dutchman that she will be true to him unto death. At the end, in an ultimate act of sacrifice, she hurls herself over a cliff into the sea, so ensuring the Dutchman's salvation.' Howard Gray, *Wagner* (London: Omnibus Press, 1990), p. 38.

¹⁹⁰ *Tarr*, p. 103.

¹⁹¹ *Tarr*, p. 124.

her, serves to somewhat lessen the overwhelming darkness of the abyss, alleviating, at least for a time, his suffering:

His weakness drew him on, back into the vortex. [...] He had escaped from it for a time. Late agitations had given him temporary freedom, to which he was now committed. If Anastasya was there [...].¹⁹²

Kreisler's love vision however is nothing more than peevishness turned inward and sublimated into saintly submission and sacrifice:

But he wanted to suffer still more by her: *physically*, as it were, under her eyes. That would be a relief from present suffering [...]. The bitter fascination of suffering drew him on, to substitute real wounds for imaginary.'¹⁹³

In such moments, one may see suppressed traces of an exhausted conscience. On the whole, it appears that Kreisler's redemption through love is a means to overcome weariness. His aesthetic taste, however, proves somewhat unsavory as it is permeated by death, hate and *ressentiment*. His conscience – a bad resentful conscience that Kreisler always carries with him – remains always limited, signifying a will to *eros* turned *thanatos*, one which 'cannot get rid of anything, one cannot get over anything, everything hurts'.¹⁹⁴ That said, the histrionics of Kreisler's *modus amore*, his fantasy of himself as an obedient, self-denying canine lover reveal a fatally bad taste in love that spells decadence. One might even go further and suggest that Kreisler's taste for the sublime, the inauthentic, reads as a critique of the kind of decadence we read of in Nietzsche's polemic.

Overall, one might argue that Kreisler's grandeur, his simultaneously pompous and masochistically slavish adoration and false pomposity, the empty and false language of sacrifice in love, are all things Nietzsche associates with aesthetic corruption. Furthermore, his aesthetics of 'love and death' and his yearning for ideal comfort, echo the kind of unhealthy escapism that Nietzsche detects in the romantic-

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 124.

¹⁹³ Ibid., pp. 124-125.

¹⁹⁴ *On the Genealogy of Morals*, p. 27.

Wagnerian formula. In the course of the novel, the dream of 'redemption' is turned into a neurotic love-game for Kreisler which reeks of decay and death. Far from being creative and affirmative, Kreisler's commitment to the role of the love-stricken courtier reveals a masochistic conscience which chooses to take pleasure in cruelty, particularly in cruelty to oneself. Ultimately, Kreisler's aesthetic turns out to be the end product of a degenerative will turned back upon itself, an intimation, perhaps, of the period's 'bad conscience', a conscience about to turn deadly.

To conclude: *Tarr* is a complex novel that operates on several levels at once. As this chapter aims to illustrate, the Nietzschean aspects of Lewis's novel are tied into the then-current discourses of Nietzsche and aesthetics. Taking into consideration Peppis's claim regarding the significance of situating *Tarr* in its original context, my account attempts to consider *Tarr*'s contribution to the contemporary debates about individualism and aesthetics. In my view, establishing the place of artist figures of Tarr and Kreisler within the Parisian bohemian milieu helps Lewis to communicate more powerfully the particular artistic outlooks these characters embody and to provide an assessment of them. The contrasting aesthetic attitudes attributed to them, might be seen to serve simultaneously as a critique of particular aesthetic trends and as an extension of some of Lewis's aesthetic ideas that had been brewing and fermenting within him during this period. That said, *Tarr* may also be read as a record of the wider turn-of-the-century aesthetic debates concerning Schopenhauerian, Wagnerian and Nietzschean aesthetics, and as a contribution to the discourses of aesthetic individualism present in the *Egoist*. The novel critiques and extends some of the traditional notions of aesthetic individualism, suggesting an attempt to overcome some of its limitations. More than a simple parody of individualistic aesthetics, the sane (but not unproblematic) pairing of Tarr and Anastasya, in my view, attempts to dissemble and reconfigure some of the traditional

notions of aesthetic egoism and Nietzschean vitalism. Lewis's quest for a 'healthy duality' in the narrative is mediated through this pair of fellow egoists (a man and a woman at last). In particular, Tarr's and Kreisler's addressing of Anastasya as an 'individual-genius' and a 'prince' respectively, their shared conception of her as 'master', adds an interesting angle to the novel's treatment of sexual politics in aesthetic dualism. In my view, it is Anastasya that gives flesh and urgency to Tarr's words on 'Panurgic Pessimism', and, through her mediation, a new egoistic animalism can finally be conceived. While Kreisler is a man broken, whose aesthetic appreciations can never lift him out of a decadent existence, but with the 'pair of egoists' the narrative reaches beyond the established traditional notions of the genius-artist as an ascetically withdrawn over-man, towards a more joyful and wise individualism that indicates Nietzschean convalescence. I propose that, by way of such artistic models, we can start exploring Lewis's developing concerns with regard to a certain tradition of individualism – one that might be viewed as seriously committed to exploring possibilities of cultural rejuvenation and individual emancipation. In *Tarr* one sees the traces of a tradition of aesthetic egoism-individualism in transition: from an idealistic conception of genius and art, as formulated in the earlier *Übermensch*-like artist-types, towards a more animalistic, down-to-earth conception which attempts to bridge the gap between the real and the ideal, the self and the other, offering an alternative approach to the problem of nihilism via the route of Nietzschean affirmation.

Chapter Five

Chapter Five – James Joyce and Nietzschean individualism: ‘The Death of God’ in *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines James Joyce’s reworking of the figure of the artist-egoist, starting from *Stephen Hero* and going on to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. I attempt to contextualise Joyce’s interest in egoist aesthetics within a certain kind of radical Nietzscheanism contemporary to the writer while focusing on Joyce’s ongoing preoccupation with different models of egoism, as evidenced in the character of Stephen Dedalus. Jean-Michel Rabaté was the first to discuss Joyce’s interest in the aesthetics of egoism: from his ‘early view of life modelled on Ibsen and Nietzsche’ to the ‘collective utopia blending language and politics with avant-gardist and anarchistic overtones of *Finnegans Wake*’.¹ Rabaté discerns elements of an egoistic attitude going back to 1903, in the unpublished manuscript of *Stephen Hero*, linking this early egoism with Joyce’s youthful Nietzscheanism. As already seen in this thesis, the earliest little magazine that functions as a platform for both Nietzsche and radical egoism/individualism in England was the *fin-de-siècle* *The Eagle and the Serpent*. Chapter One discussed this periodical as a fascinating site of Nietzschean activity in an English context, helping construct a map of the avant-garde reception and accommodation amongst radical and literary coteries. In order to support the fresh critical insights of critics such as Rabaté, in the first part of this Chapter I return to the curious case of *The Eagle and the Serpent*. This

¹ Jean-Michel Rabaté, *James Joyce and the Politics of Egoism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 2.

contextualisation aims to begin positioning *Stephen Hero*'s systematic egoism within the intellectual framework that first accommodated Nietzsche. To start unraveling what Rabaté and others have loosely seen as a Nietzschean thread running through Joyce's early thought, my analysis will attempt to situate Stephen Dedalus's early egoistic notions of cosmopolitanism, art, and love in the turn-of-the-century debates of this periodical.

Stephen Hero, the manuscript that makes up a first inconclusive draft of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a largely autobiographical narrative quite different from the published version. Written in realistic style it may be read as a youthful sketch of Joyce's university days, including events that the final version leaves out. It might have been started in 1900 or 1901 when Joyce himself was nineteen or twenty, and it offers a detailed portrait of Stephen Dedalus as an emerging egoist-artist. This egoism, as will be argued, suggests complicated correspondences between the early Joyce and turn-of-the-century Nietzschean notions of art and life. To say the least, this 'ineradicable'² and 'unapologetic egoism'³ of Stephen is difficult to establish. Its part Byronic, part Mephistophelian fashioning denotes a kind of radicalism tied equally to the past and the future. The early text draws constant attention to a temper which is as heroic as it is mocking, as visionary as it is idealistic. Like all new organisms, it relies on its vitality and instinct for survival.

Both *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait* are texts focused around Stephen, however each does it in its own distinct way. Meticulous revising of the early draft from 1907 onward would culminate in the version of the novel as it appeared in the *Egoist* (February 1914-September 1915, *The Egoist*; 1916, book form). The version serialized in Marsden's periodical is undeniably a completely different text in terms of narrative

²James Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, (New York: New Directions Book, 1963), p. 34.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

style and perspective. In the first place, it proves difficult not to notice Joyce's dropping of the term 'egoism' in the published version. A close look confirms that not even a single reference survives from the early draft to suggest a connection between Stephen and his attempt toward an egoist outlook of life. This omission is significant as it might lead us to think that by that time Joyce had arrived at a negation of that ideology. Further, the question of self-emancipation seems to acquire renewed strength in the published version. The stylistics of introspection in *A Portrait* return to the original thesis of *Stephen Hero* and his decision to renounce God, Truth, and all Absolutes for Art as the only vehicle towards self-individuation. As a consequence, we experience a 'fall' of sorts, from the early heroic and visionary tone to the inward, esoteric and private sphere of Stephen's guilty conscience in the published version. Rather than another polemic treatise on egoism, we are presented with what, as will be argued in the second part of this chapter, constitutes Stephen's 'ascetic' aesthetic, one formulated upon a dialectic of sin and redemption. In the published version the early idiom of egoism gives way to a discourse of priesthood and asceticism and an aesthetic which leads Stephen to assume the role of an artist ascetic, 'a priest of the eternal imagination',⁴ half artist, half monk.

Further, just as the early character of the artist-egoist is suggestively remodelled, so is Joyce's perspective and objective there. *Stephen Hero*, a text rich in detail, dialogue and incidents, presents the contradictions between the outside world and Stephen. In *A Portrait*, on the other hand, the text attempts to expose these contradictions further, as interiorized tensions which express themselves indirectly and suggest themselves in what I propose forms what Nietzsche calls a 'bad conscience'. To further clarify this point the second part of Chapter Five turns to examine how these

⁴ *A Portrait*, p. 116.

inner tensions manifest themselves in Stephen's ascetic and aesthetic consciousness in the published version. Breaking with realistic conventions, *A Portrait's* concern with form and perspective offers a Nietzschean 'vivisection' of Stephen's inner mind through a narrative of psychological introspection.

5.2 *The Eagle and the Serpent: Wit, Wisdom, and Nietzschean Egoism in James Joyce's Stephen Hero*

In the first part of Chapter Five I turn to discuss James Joyce's *Stephen Hero*. In particular, I aim to examine James Joyce's early preoccupation with an aesthetic of egoism, as conveyed in Joyce's portrait of Stephen Dedalus in this early text, and show how this may help to understand better what aspects of Nietzsche's initial reception might have been most appealing for the young Joyce. Considering how Joycean scholarship has consistently drawn correspondences between Joyce's early individualism and Nietzsche,⁵ this part aims to see whether it is possible to begin situating this relation historically, in the context of turn-of-the-century avant-garde thought.

In discussing Stephen Dedalus, mainstream scholarship has consistently overlooked *Stephen Hero's* account of egoism, despite the obvious presence of many references to it in the text. Literary criticism has been more eager to approach Stephen's aesthetics through the more canonical routes of Ibsen, Aquinas and Aristotle. On the

⁵ With regard to Joyce's early affinity with Nietzschean thought, Jacques Aubert and Klaus Reichert point out several lines of intersection, mostly in terms of Joyce's early theoretical essays. For Aubert, whereas these aesthetic concerns are more often seen as articulated through Joyce's references to Ibsen's 'new drama', these are not without echoes of a Nietzschean aesthetic of individuation. Jacques Aubert, *The Aesthetics of James Joyce* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), pp. 24-26. As Reichert adds, it 'may be safely be assumed that [Joyce] read the German philosopher [...] before the turn of the century, and that it was to Nietzsche that he owed the radicalness, the fierce impetuosity and the acid irony of his early essays'. Klaus Reichert, 'The European Background of James Joyce', in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 55-83 (pp. 69-70).

other hand, the importance of egoism, a notion to which Stephen returns in many instances in the early novel, had, at least until recently, escaped their attention. Jean-Michel Rabaté was the first to stress the importance of the running association between egoism and aesthetics in Joyce's work in *James Joyce and the Politics of Egoism*. In Chapter Three, 'Joyce the Egoist', he discusses Joyce's involvement in a tradition of philosophical egoism and draws fascinating connections between Joyce's own version of (aesthetic and social) egoism and that of *The New Freewoman/The Egoist*, in which *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* originally appeared. As Rabaté tells us, 'that Joyce's work should have found its way into the pages of Marsden's journal was more than mere coincidence.'⁶ Founded in 1911, the periodical went through various names: *The Freewoman* (1911-1912), *The New Freewoman* (1912-1913), and *The Egoist* (1914-1918). The main editor throughout most of its existence was Dora Marsden⁷ whose more autonomous-minded vision of feminism and literary concerns led her to start *The Freewoman*, aimed at providing 'a fighting weapon for pure disinterested individualism'.⁸ While *The New Freewoman/The Egoist* is regarded as being of great importance as an active organ of high modernism, the earlier *Freewoman* is significant for another reason. As demonstrated in Chapter Three *The Freewoman* occupies a crucial place in the transition from earlier forms of egoism and Nietzscheanism to the more introspective literary forms of philosophic and aesthetic individualism generally associated with the *Egoist* group.⁹ Further, while Marsden's periodical provides clear

⁶ Ibid., p. 53.

⁷ After 1914 Dora Marsden became a contributing editor (with Harriet Shaw Weaver, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot joining the editorial staff), increasingly devoting her energies to her exposition of a personal philosophy of egoism, as presented in articles for *The New Freewoman* and *The Egoist*, as well as in the form of treatises as *The Definition of the Godhead* (1930) and *The Mysteries of Christianity* (1935).

⁸ Clarke, p. 91.

⁹ Cary Franklin's recent thesis 'Freewoman: Dora Marsden and the Politics of Feminist Modernism' sheds light in the early phase of Marsden's periodical and discusses its role in this transition. Cary Franklin, 'Freewoman: Dora Marsden and the Politics of Feminist Modernism' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Oxford University, 2002).

links between Joyce and egoism, Rabaté sees Joyce's encounter with some aspects of this philosophic tradition dating from much earlier. He suggests that a consistent preoccupation with aesthetic egoism might be traced from as far back as Joyce's youthful flirtation with anarchism and Nietzsche. This attitude is more clearly manifested in 'what remains of *Stephen Hero* and the 1904 "Portrait of the Artist", all stress[ing] the need of systematic egoism.'¹⁰ Rabaté points out entries in Stanislaus Joyce's diary from that period, where the latter describes his brother's nature as 'naturally antagonistic to morality' and his conduct of life as grounded upon 'a principle of impulse [...] [a] conduct of life which bristles with contradictions.'¹¹ Rabaté attempts to put this egoism into perspective. Such an attitude, he notes, suggests 'a combination of lax socialism and easy Nietzscheism that was so dominant a pose among young esthetes at the turn of the century [...] [and] a major component of 'early Modernism' with which Joyce himself seemed to be in contact.'¹²

While Marsden's periodical undoubtedly provides an invaluable source of reference and connection with regard to Nietzsche and radical strains of thought, it belongs to a somewhat later stage of Nietzsche's reception in an Anglophone context. In order to get a proper view on the turn-of-the-century 'Nietzscheism' that Rabaté refers to, one should look earlier in time. In this part of the chapter I want to focus on *The Eagle and the Serpent*, which, as already shown, offers interesting insights into Nietzsche's initial reception from the time that Joyce began writing. Beginning its publication in 1898, the year in which the young Joyce entered University College Dublin, it was the first little periodical which spoke of Nietzsche and radicalism, egoism and vitalism, art and life in the same breath. Interestingly, its life span loosely coincides

¹⁰ Rabaté, p. 54.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 54.

¹² Ibid., p. 54.

with the period the manuscript of *Stephen Hero* covers.¹³ Even more importantly, the periodical's brand of radical Nietzscheanism provides insights into some previously unknown aspects of the early reception of Nietzsche among the avant-garde – a kind of early aesthetic egoism which might prove useful when thinking about Joyce's own intellectual sympathies during this period. Considering the evidence of the presence of a radical type of egoism in Joyce's early fiction (as the various references in *Stephen Hero* suggest), as well as Joyce's youthful fascination with Nietzsche (as Richard Ellmann has shown), it would be worthwhile to consider more carefully whether there might be a connection between the two – and therefore begin situating Stephen's (and Joyce's) early 'egoism' historically.

Richard Ellmann informs us that by 1903 Joyce had already become familiar with 'the writings of Nietzsche, "that strong enchanter" whom Yeats and other Dubliners were also discovering.'¹⁴ In his view, being a Nietzschean in early twentieth century Dublin would imply an interest in the 'extraordinary', centring around the 'cult of the *Übermensch*', an impression most probably based upon the idealist and spiritualist proclivities of Yeats's circle, and their subsequent understanding of Nietzsche on such grounds.¹⁵ Hence while Ellmann notes how it was most probably upon Nietzsche that Joyce drew when he expounded to his friends 'a neo-paganism that glorified selfishness, licentiousness, and pitilessness, and denounced gratitude and domestic values', he also adds how: 'at heart Joyce can scarcely have been a Nietzschean [...] his interest was in the ordinary even more than in the extraordinary.'¹⁶ Indeed, Joyce's could hardly be labelled a 'Nietzschean' in the sense that Ellmann understands the term – a claim

¹³ The discrepancies regarding its inception seem to settle, as Theodore Spencer has noted in his introduction to the manuscript, on a date around 1901, when Joyce himself was nineteen or twenty. *Stephen Hero*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁴ Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 142.

¹⁵ Yeats's understanding of Nietzsche was based upon his earlier reading of William Blake and occult literature, and suggests a mystical, hero-like kind of Nietzscheanism. For further discussion see Bridgwater, pp. 67-90.

¹⁶ Ellmann, p. 142.

further strengthened by the mocking references to the concept of the *Übermensch* in Joyce's letters from the period and later works such as *Ulysses*.¹⁷ Ellmann rightly points out how this kind of Nietzscheanism could not have had any lasting effect on Joyce, but he seems to overlook the fact that the early avant-garde Nietzscheanism was hardly a uniform phenomenon, and cannot be confined or be determined exclusively by way of the intellectual agendas of prominent writers such as Yeats. The initial favourable response to Nietzsche and the relationship between turn-of-the-century aesthetics and his thought was more diverse and more complex as this thesis has tried to show so far. The literary generation of the nineties credited Nietzsche for his aspiration to re-evaluate traditional values and for his praise of individual creativity. As Carolyn F. Ulrich, Frederick J. Hoffman, and Charles Allen have pointed out, Nietzsche's name would gain currency in the fin-de-siècle avant-garde scene as 'an important accompaniment to the criticism of society advanced by the men of the nineties [...] a spokesman for the artist.'¹⁸ Although this is true, still, different 'Nietzscheans' chose to express their 'Nietzscheanism' differently, as the examples of writers and intellectuals such as Arthur Symons, John Davidson, Havelock Ellis, and G. B. Shaw were already showing. The mixture of radicalism and anarchism that informs Joyce's own Nietzschean 'gospel of churchless freedom' seems to me also quite particular and unique. Joyce, as an avid Ibsenite with an anarchistic sense, would have been understandably reluctant to rely on such readings as that of Yeats's.¹⁹ Joyce's emerging interest in anarchism and radicalism (as Ellmann informs us, by 1904 he had complemented his Nietzschean insurgency with works of Bakunin, Proudhon, and

¹⁷ A card to George Roberts of July 1904 asks for a pound and is signed 'James Overman.' In *Letters of James Joyce*, ed. by Stuart Gilbert (London: Faber, 1957), p. 56.

¹⁸ Allen, Hoffman, and Ulrich, pp. 72-73.

¹⁹ It does not seem particularly likely that the idealistic and visionary elements of Yeats's Nietzscheanism would have appealed to the young Joyce, whose essay 'Drama and Life' (1900), 'The Day of Rabblement' (1901), 'James Clarence Mangan' (1902), all express disillusionment and discontent with such models.

Benjamin R. Tucker), and, in turn, his unique vision of art, seem to indicate a different kind of reading, and one closer to the kind of Nietzscheanism we encounter in this rather queer little periodical.

As Ulrich, Hoffman, and Allen say in their study of the little periodicals, Nietzsche's early legacy may be traced primarily in the literary experiments of *The Savoy* and *The Eagle and the Serpent*.²⁰ If the *Savoy* is important for introducing Nietzsche to an English public (Havelock Ellis's study of Nietzsche was published in instalments there in 1896 – and subsequently collected in his volume *Affirmations* in 1898), *The Eagle and the Serpent* is important for being the first English periodical to associate Nietzsche's affirmative pessimism with philosophical egoism, as well for beginning to make Nietzsche's texts accessible to a larger audience. Chapter One of this thesis offered an extensive discussion of the early correspondences between radicalism, egoism, and Nietzsche. Two years before Joyce began the composition of *Stephen Hero*, *The Eagle and the Serpent* would announce its plans to 'save the world' employing an interesting mantra of 'Wit, Wisdom and Wickedness'.²¹ As shown already, in this periodical there are suggestive connections between anarchism, socialism, Nietzscheanism and aesthetics. Broadly speaking, the periodical liked to fantasize a project of cultural revival inspired by a Nietzschean social ethic of self-creation and self-knowledge. Several files of so-called 'radical literature' were prepared as part of its education project. It proposed the study of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* alongside Benjamin Tucker's *Instead of a Book: a Fragmentary Exposition of Philosophical Anarchism*, as well as books of renowned anarchists such as Proudhon and Bakunin, advancing an understanding of Nietzsche alongside principles of radical

²⁰ Allen, Hoffman, and Ulrich, p. 73.

²¹ It has to be noted here that in the Edwardian context the terms egotism and egoism tend to be used interchangeably, though the first with increasingly uncomplimentary connotations, implying an unhealthy type of egoism, an aesthetic withdrawal into one's self, and moral degeneration.

individualism and anarchism. Further, the projects of translating Nietzsche's oeuvre (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* appeared in serial form there), of French modern authors (a project continually promised but never materialized), and its 'Egoist Circulating Library', all convey the central role literature played in the programme. The distinctive tone of this kind of Nietzscheanism was even reflected in its choice of title. Alluding to Zarathustra's two favourite animals, the eagle and the snake, it indicated its allegiance to a kind of subtle, surreptitious form of radicalism, in which knowledge, danger and concealment coexist with health and life.²² The editor referred to the periodical as a 'rostrum' for 'all radicals (atheists and egoists alike) who aim at a consistent philosophy of life [...] promoting the gospel as transvalued by Nietzsche's religion of Joy.' As its subtitle announced *The Eagle and the Serpent* was 'A Journal for Free Spirits and for Spirits Struggling to be Free', a further allusion to Nietzschean transvaluation and self-overcoming. Such connections are evident in some of the editorial notes where Nietzsche is 'prescribed', so to speak, as one of the two remedies for modern culture. 'Nietzsche and Music', John B. Barnhill announces are the only two consolations for those seeking to 'escape the mad house', those free spirits in need of convalescence.²³ Imbued with a millennial outlook, the periodical aspired towards a gradual change in prevailing norms and valuations. Its Nietzschean mission to 'save the world' out of the spirit of music suggests an affirmative stance, a certain heroic positivism which should aim at helping one get in touch with what best enhances individual expression and autonomous self-creation. Imploring individuals to live life aesthetically, as Nietzsche does in *The Birth of Tragedy*, it praised 'the art of life and the life of art – we stand for that freedom which is the life of art and can alone teach us the art of living', proposing

²² For a discussion on the snake imagery in Nietzsche see Nicholas Pappas, 'The Eternal Serpentine', in *The Bestiary in Nietzsche*, ed. Christa Davis Acampora and Ralph R. Acampora (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), pp. 71-82.

²³ Mc, Call, 'Reformer's Consolations', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 September 1900, pp. 9-10 (p. 9).

the mutual interdependence of life and art as ‘the only way out of three thousand years of sorrowful experience’.²⁴

Joyce’s *Stephen Hero* captures some of the subtleties of such a vision as it becomes crystallized in Stephen’s redeeming egoism. It offers a vivid account of the intellectual development of Stephen Dedalus, an egoist-artist in progress, which breaks abruptly with Stephen’s decision to discontinue his studies at University College Dublin. In contrast to the introspective narrative of Joyce’s completed novel, this unpublished text is a fragmentary draft based on dialogue and semi-autobiographical realism. What is striking is the detailed emphasis on Stephen’s conversations and his interaction with his surroundings – mapping Stephen’s mind within the intellectual tapestry of turn-of-the-century Dublin. Although there are no direct references to Nietzsche, the early text’s suggestive allusions to a serpent-like form of ‘egoism’, and its references to a ‘vivisection’ vitalistic aesthetic present interesting parallels between Joyce’s artist-hero and contemporary Nietzschean discourses of genius and creativity. The text seems to simultaneously respond to and vividly record the intellectual-cultural dynamics of *fin-de-siècle* Dublin, presenting us with a character who contemplates his own formation as a cosmopolitan intellectual-cum-aesthete in the increasingly alienating environment of his native country. Stephen, ‘this fantastic idealist’,²⁵ seeks redemption in his imagining of himself as a wicked renegade aesthete-egoist, ‘that ineradicable egoism which he afterwards to call redeemer’ in alliance with a ‘some movement already proceeding out in Europe.’²⁶ In contrast to the taciturnity and aloofness conveyed by another of Joyce’s famous egoists, James Duffy of ‘A Painful Case’, here we are presented with a character who is as solitary as he is militant. In *Stephen Hero*, as it will be shown, Stephen’s egoistic discourse sanctions to a great

²⁴ McCall, ‘A Creed and Aim’, *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 September 1898, p. 50.

²⁵ *Stephen Hero*, p. 36.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

extent his campaign to escape Ireland and the moral obligations which nation, religion and family place upon him, while inciting him to a journey of self-discovery and self-growth.

Although we cannot know for sure whether Joyce had any direct contact with the radical spirit of *The Eagle and the Serpent* (at least not until 1918 when bound files for it would be available for sale from the Egoist Press) – his artistic counterpart, the early Stephen Dedalus, would have been a keen reader. In this early manuscript, the ‘young eccentric’²⁷ does not miss the chance to reiterate again and again the blessings and curses of a serpentine gospel of ‘unapologetic egoism’²⁸ before an inartistic and passive audience of fellow university students. There are several references to egoism (especially in the discussions of Stephen with Madden and Cranly), all of which are omitted in *A Portrait*. In this version, Stephen’s persona advocates his belief in ‘an egoism which proceeded bravely before men’;²⁹ ‘that ineradicable egoism which he was afterwards to call redeemer’;³⁰ and an ‘egoism’ to take him off ‘the path of remunerative respectability.’³¹

The context of these allusions is critical as it paints a portrait of Stephen as a young artist very different from the one in *A Portrait*. Stephen’s egoistic idiom, his extrovert, self-assured persona in *Stephen Hero* markedly clashes with the later Stephen. The early Stephen’s ‘ineradicable’ and ‘unapologetic’ egoism expresses positivism and strength – colouring an outlook at once godless and confident. In this early text Stephen is introduced as a youthful forward-looking revolutionary, a ‘renegade from the Nationalist ranks [...] [who] professed cosmopolitanism.’³² He shares a reputation for

²⁷ Ibid., p. 39.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 151.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 162.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 34.

³¹ Ibid., p. 49.

³² Ibid., p. 50.

upholding ‘dreadful ideas, that [he] read[s] dreadful books [...]. That [he] [doesn’t] believe in God’, as Emma tells us.³³ Indeed, throughout the narrative, we see Stephen’s parading his guilt-free godlessness, an egoist-artist who despite his wish to be alone, is often seen debating his views on art and life – and getting into trouble for it. A character ‘fond of saying that the absolute is dead’,³⁴ he is prepared to bear his cross of unbelief with a resolute and steady heart, acknowledging that at heart he is ‘a product of Catholicism’: ‘I was sold to Rome before my birth. Now I have broken my slavery but I cannot in a moment destroy every feeling in my nature. That takes time.’³⁵ This knowledge, that he too is a product of this past, instead of confounding him or making him tame, bolsters his sense of selfhood and his wish to create himself in his own image:

[...] can we not root this pest out of our minds and out of our society that men may be able to walk through the streets without meeting some old stale belief or hypocrisy at every street corner? I, at least, will try. I will not accept anything from them. I will not take service under them. I will not submit to them, either outwardly or inwardly. A Church is not a fixture like Gibraltar: no more is an institution. Subtract its human members from it and its solidity becomes less evident. I, at least, will subtract myself [...].³⁶

While this is how Stephen is portrayed in this early draft, in the later novel we watch Stephen nervously oscillating between a belief in God and a belief in art (which is offered as a substitute). The aesthetic experience of Stephen there, is, in my view, significantly altered: his ascetic-based vision markedly clashes with the healthy dualism proposed in the early text, one trying to balance successfully the demands of life with those of art. Significantly, Stephen’s aesthetic vision in *A Portrait* bears the interiorized torment of his sense of sin and guilt; it is chaste and withdrawn. There are no such contradictions to be found in *Stephen Hero*. The early Stephen is presented as a kind of

³³ Ibid., p. 103.

³⁴ Ibid., 206.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 73.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 233.

artist-genius in progress, for whom this ‘silent self-occupied honest egoism’³⁷ offers an alternative to the intellectual parochialism of Dublin and prevailing models of art. In particular, Stephen’s ‘honest egoism’³⁸ is evoked simultaneously as resistance to and potentially escape from Irish tradition, where art is turned either into a dogmatizing mouthpiece, ‘an ally of collectivist politicians’,³⁹ or a lifeless, ‘cynical’ romanticism which withdraws from the social.⁴⁰ Stephen’s discussions with Cranly and Madden express his overall mistrust regarding indigenous cultural forms (Irish Nationalism that is) and mark his attempt to find an alternative suggestion. In particular, Stephen’s essay ‘Art and Life’, which ‘[e]xcept for the eloquent and arrogant peroration [...] was a careful exposition of a carefully meditated theory of esthetic’,⁴¹ marks the beginning of his career as a renegade-artist, as a misunderstood radical. More specifically, Stephen’s essay, which as Stephen proudly confesses ‘is the first of my explosives’⁴² can be read as a pointed retort against Irish Revivalism and cultural insularity. The scene between him and Madden, where the latter offers to read Stephen some of Hughes’s verse is also quite revealing and indicates further the youth’s sense of resentment and frustration:

Madden took from his inside pocket a sheet of foolscap folded in four on which was inscribed a piece of verse, consisting of four stanzas of eight lines each, entitled ‘My Ideal.’ Each stanza began with the words ‘Art thou real?’ [...]. After this mournful idealism the final stanza offered a certain consolatory, hypothetical alternative to the poet in his woes: it began somewhat hopefully:

Are you real, my Ideal?
Wilt thou ever come to me
In the soft and gentle twilight
With your baby on your knee?

³⁷ Ibid., p. 33.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 146.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 147.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 174.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 80-81.

⁴² Ibid., p. 81.

The [combined] effect of this apparition on Stephen was a long staining blush of anger. The tawdry lines, the futile change of number, the ludicrous waddling approach of Hughes's 'Ideal' weighed down by an inexplicable infant combined to cause him a sharp agony in the sensitive region. Again he handed back the verse without saying a word of praise or of blame but he decided that attendance in Mr Hughes's class was no longer possible for him [....].⁴³

For Stephen, this kind of mournful idealism is regarded as a poor substitute for real living experience and is mocked for its idealistic and chaste tone. As he confesses, 'art' should not be 'an escape from life': 'That is wrong: this is the great mistake everyone makes [...]. Art, on the contrary, is the very central expression of life.'⁴⁴ Stephen's conviction that art should not be offered as an escape and that '[a]n artist is not a fellow who dangles a mechanical heaven before the public. The priest does that. The artist affirms out of the fullness of his own life, he creates'⁴⁵ – as well as his objection to Madden's calling his ideas 'mystical' ('But there's nothing mystical in it I tell you. I have written it carefully', he tells him), all are important for the anti-idealistic, anti-romantic, and anti-moralizing tone they evoke. It is not surprising then that we see Stephen's theories derided and remorselessly attacked by an inquisitor-like audience at the meeting of the College Literary Society:

The essay was pronounced a jingle of meaningless words, a clever presentation of vicious principles in the guise of artistic theories, a reproduction of the decadent literary opinions of exhausted European capitals. The essayist was supposed to intend parts of his essay as efforts at practical joking [...]. Ancient art loved to uphold the beautiful and the sublime: modern art might select other themes: but those who still preserved their minds uncontaminated by atheistic poisons would know which to choose. The climax of aggressiveness was reached when Hughes stood up. He declared in ringing Northern accents that the moral welfare of the Irish people was menaced by such theories. They wanted no foreign filth. Mr Daedalus might read what authors he liked, of course, but the Irish people had their own glorious literature where they could always find fresh ideals to spur them on to new patriotic endeavours.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 82-83.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 86.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 86.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 102-103.

Stephen's 'art and life' credo, its fervent anti-idealism on the one hand, and its confidence in life experience on the other, seem to me not far from the youthful aesthetic egoism encountered in *The Eagle and the Serpent*. Not only this but also the allusions to serpents, animalism, and sanity with regard to Stephen's egoism throughout the text seem to support this impression as well. In Chapter XVII for instance, the passage where Stephen recalls his classmates' response to his views on classical tradition reveals not only Stephen's increasing isolation from the college community but also gives an interesting description of his character as a 'serpent':

A great contempt devoured him for the critics who considered 'Greek' and 'classical' interchangeable terms and so full was he of intemperate anger that [all week Saturday] when Father Butt gave 'Othello' as the subject for the essay of the week Stephen lodged on the following on day a profuse, downright protest against the 'masterpiece'. The young men in the class laughed and Stephen, as he looked contemptuously at the laughing faces, thought of a self-submersive reptile.⁴⁷

Perhaps this can be read as a kind of reference for the distinct type of egoistic temperament that Stephen's character evokes, one that like *The Eagle and the Serpent's* is cunning, wicked, and self-assured. While in *A Portrait* the text's allusions to serpents evoke Stephen's sense of guilt and desolation – Stephen's moral 'battle' with the sting of Catholicism, as John Paul Riquelme has illustrated⁴⁸ – here the serpentine metaphor can be read differently. Whether the epithet is here used to describe Stephen himself or the men in the class the allusion to Lynch and Stephen as 'shrewd animals' later on in the text seems to confirm its connection to Stephen:

Stephen had lent his essay as he had promised to do and this loan had led to a certain intimacy. Lynch had almost taken the final vows in the order of the discontented but Stephen's unapologetic egoism, his remorseless lack of sentiment for himself no less than for others, gave him pause. His taste for fine arts, which had always seemed to him a taste which should be carefully hidden away, now began to encourage itself timidly. He was very much

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

⁴⁸ John Paul Riquelme, 'Desire, Freedom, and Confessional Culture in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*'; in *Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Richard Brown (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 34-54 (pp. 44-45).

relieved to find Stephen's aestheticism united with a sane and conscienceless acceptance of the animal needs of young men, for, being a shrewd animal himself [...].⁴⁹

In this particular passage the animal imagery is used with reference to Lynch and Stephen's 'respective taste for fine arts', an aesthetic predisposition 'carefully hidden away' and one related to the 'remorseless', 'animal', 'sane', and 'unburdened' ethic of Stephen. This kind of surreptitious, defiantly serpentine logic invoked in these passages is central, I believe, to the conception of egoism Stephen adopts. Egoism, in this context, will serve as a kind of cunning device helping him to slither through the paralytic and deadening intellectual environment that constrains him. The frequent references to health, sanity (and equally madness and decadence) throughout the text serve to describe two distinct states: the 'moral state' (society) and the aesthetic state (individuality), which Stephen conceives as being antagonistic and irreconcilable.

The description of Stephen as a kind of aesthetic madman may be taken to suggest further correspondences between Stephen's ego-styled aesthetic and then-current debates about artistic genius and Nietzsche's individualism. He is said to be one for whom 'the representations of authority cherished the hope [...] that they would one day have the pleasure of receiving him officially into some hospital or asylum',⁵⁰ an aesthete formed (or deformed) in the manner of the 'mad fellows he is reported to read'.⁵¹ As seen already, Nietzsche's individualism and perspectivism, his reliance on experience and life as material for proper for philosophy, while unsanitary for some, would prove nothing less than a healthy alternative to conventional art and culture for others. One is not at all surprised to see the studies of Shaw, Ellis, Brandes and Lichtenberger's recommended for study in *The Eagle and the Serpent's* 'Egoist Library', nor is it difficult to imagine how Stephen, an ardent student of egoism himself,

⁴⁹ *Stephen Hero*, p. 151.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

would have found them particularly enlightening.⁵² It is important here to note that in spite of Stephen's wish to 'subtract' himself from organized and institutionalised society⁵³ and his contempt for the 'sense' and 'sanity' of conventional life, his is not merely a passively self-absorbed form of egoism. While it indicates Stephen's gradual disengagement from involvement in the social and cultural life of Dublin, this is neither the result of indifference nor aloofness. As he tells us, if he remains 'silent' this is because: 'No-one would listen to his theories: no-one was interested in art [...]. The young men in the college regarded art as a continental vice [...] They didn't want that kind of thing in their country.'⁵⁴ And when someone finally does listen, it never ends as Stephen would have hoped. Convinced that 'the tomahawk, as an effective instrument of warfare, had become obsolete',⁵⁵ Stephen, throughout the course of the narrative seeks more 'noble means'⁵⁶ to express his apostasy. For him, a reputed 'eccentric'⁵⁷ and a 'notable-extraordinary',⁵⁸ the only appropriate attitude seems to be that of:

a silent self-occupied, contemptuous manner [...]. He acknowledged to himself in honest egoism that he could not take to heart the distress of a nation, the soul of which was antipathetic to his own, so bitterly as the indignity of a bad line of verse: but at the same time he was nothing in the world so little as an amateur artist. He wished to express his nature freely and fully for the benefit of a society which he would enrich and also for his own benefit, seeing that it was part of his life to do so. It was not part of his life to undertake an extensive alteration of society but he felt the need to express himself such an urgent need, such a real need, that he was

⁵² G. B. Shaw's understanding of the concept of the Superman as a regenerative-therapeutic force in *The Sanity of Art* (1895); Havelock Ellis's affirmation of Nietzsche's model as 'pensée literature', a philosophy that finds all its material in experience, dealing 'with art, religion and morals and the relation of all these to life' (Excerpt from *Affirmations in The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 December 1898, p. 76); and Henri Lichtenberger's dealing with Nietzsche's *amor fati* wisdom as strictly empirical and individualistic (*The Philosophy of Nietzsche* 1893; trans., 1910), all illustrate the positive shift in Nietzsche's reception.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁵⁶ 'The life of an errant seemed to him far less ignoble than the life of one who had accepted the tyranny of the mediocre because the cost of being exceptional was too high.' *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39. The whole sentence reads: 'Many risked the peril of rebuff to engage the young eccentric in talk but Stephen preserved a disdainful silence', *ibid.*, p. 39.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

determined no conventions of a society, however plausibly mingling pity with its tyranny, should be allowed to stand in his way [...].⁵⁹

Put together, those aspects of Stephen's egoism considered so far begin to assemble a sketchy but illuminating picture of the kind of egoism proposed in the early text. It may be argued that in such a strait-jacketed environment, Stephen's kind of egoism functions as a 'silent' presence. Unwilling 'to sacrifice reality to an abstraction',⁶⁰ nor individuality for the tyranny of the many, Stephen's egoism is 'as much in love with laughter as with combat',⁶¹ and considers self-exploration as the first step towards any form of liberation, be it individual or collective. As we read further on, Stephen increasingly comes to realise that although he:

at least nominally so far, was still in amity with the order of society into which he had been born, he would not be able to continue so [...]. He, at least would live his own life according to what he recognised as the voice of a new humanity, active, unafraid, and unashamed.⁶²

These qualities of Stephen's egoism discussed so far seem to me to be close to the vision of egoism prophesied in the pages of *The Eagle and the Serpent*. In the passages I have discussed the notion of radical egoism is fruitfully tied to a discourse of heroic genius and self-creation which was a staple of the periodical throughout, and illustrates the positivism and sense of renewal that underpins its philosophy of life and art. Romantically anti-idealistic, this youthful egoist seeks the means to defend himself against ideals which he does not recognise as his own, choosing instead the life of the errant, the exile, the outcast, as the only path for self-creation. As seen already, egoism in *The Eagle and the Serpent* connoted a constant conflict between individual and social morality. Stephen's proud contempt of others, his warning against all saintly forms of

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 146-147.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 147.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 74.

⁶² Ibid., p. 194.

art and empty causes echo, in a way, the egoistic maxims adopted there. In the 'Egoist Sayings for Saving the World' one is told that:

THE VIRTUE CONSISTS IN THE THIRST OF DANGER AND
COURAGE FOR THE FORBIDDEN.
HE WHO TELLS THE TRUTH IS TURNED OUT OF NINE CITIES.
THE WORLD NEEDS A NEW RELIGION: CONTEMPT FOR THE
PUBLIC OPINION.⁶³

All these sayings seem to accurately describe the motif of ostracism, self-exile and apostasy that runs through Joyce's early text. What is more, Stephen's radicalism is presented as an implicit saviour, in a way; a quiet but active agent against the spirit of paralysis, 'the hemiplegia of the will', as Stephen calls it:

The deadly chill of the atmosphere of the college paralysed Stephen's heart. [...] He seemed to see the vermin begotten in the catacombs in an age of sickness and cruelty issuing forth upon the plains and mountains of Europe. [...] Contempt {of the body} of human nature, weakness, nervous tremblings, fear of day and joy, distrust of man and life, hemiplegia of the will, beset the body [...] every natural impulse towards health and wisdom and happiness had been corroded by the pest of these vermin.⁶⁴

In an effort to combat this spirit of degeneration, the sickness of tradition and culture, Stephen uses his egoism with, on the one hand, an 'aestheticism united with the sane and conscienceless acceptance of the animal needs of young men'⁶⁵ and, on the other hand, what he calls a truly modern method of 'vivisection':⁶⁶ 'The modern spirit is vivisective. Vivisection itself is the most modern process one can conceive [...]. The modern method examines its territory by the light of day.'⁶⁷ The term 'vivisection' in the context of Stephen's remark may be taken to refer to Nietzsche's psychological critique of modern consciousness as expounded in his Essay II of *On the Genealogy of Morals*. As Nietzsche puts it:

⁶³ 'Saving the World: Egoism's Saints and their Sayings', *The Eagle and the Serpent: Special Issue on Socialist Stupidities*, [1902(?)], p. 94.

⁶⁴ *Stephen Hero*, p. 194.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

We moderns have inherited millennia of *conscience-vivisection* and animal-torture inflicted on ourselves: we have had most practice in it, are perhaps artists in the field, in any case it is our *raffinement* and the indulgence of our taste. For too long man has viewed his natural inclinations with an 'evil eye', so that they finally came to be intertwined with 'bad conscience' in him.⁶⁸

Nietzsche's genealogical method as practiced in *On the Genealogy* is often described as a kind of 'vivisection' of morals. The three treatises in the book are concerned with exposing the origins of our 'human-all-too-human' moral values. This new genealogical method would at the time have held particular interest for fellow 'vivisectionists': aesthetes, and radicals alike. In *The Eagle and the Serpent* this impression of Nietzsche as a kind of 'vivisectionist' of modern morals is tied with the kind of philosophy expounded there. Inspired by the pride and wisdom of Zarathustra's two favorite animals, its radical philosophy hoped to educate the individual so that he could one day rise above 'herd morality' (as he termed institutionalized morality and altruistic ethics) instead of being subdued by them. Using Nietzsche's call for re-evaluation and self-creation, *The Eagle and the Serpent* attacked such ideals as altruism, pity, self-abnegation, and humility, with an ideal based on a re-evaluation of old valuations and an overcoming of nihilistic modes of thought. In one of its first issues the editor makes the observation:

We trust that we have sufficiently indicated the type of altruism against which the proudest animal under the sun and the wisest animal under the sun wage uncompromising warfare [...] the altruism by which the exploited are taught to bless (and curse not) the Shylocks who despitefully use them and to enter an imaginary heaven through the pu(t)rifying process of a living hell.⁶⁹

Returning to Stephen, who is described in *Stephen Hero* as this 'free-spoken individual [...] one who had not forsaken the world, the flesh and the devil'⁷⁰ we may, once more, suggest parallel concerns. As all references indicate, this early portrait of

⁶⁸ Nietzsche, 'Essay II', Section 24, p. 66.

⁶⁹ 'Valedictions and Benedictions', *Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 April 1898, p. 48.

⁷⁰ *Stephen Hero*, p. 73.

Stephen as egoist is associated with his wish to be redeemed from the various forms of servitude evident in the intellectual, artistic and social life of Dublin. Invested with a Zarathustrian-like mood, his egoism serves simultaneously as an attack against the 'faith and fatherland' rhetoric of both Catholicism and National Revivalism, as well as a symbolic act of defiance against what he sees as inaesthetic and parochial. Stephen wishes to express his defiance and contempt against a localised authority of Irish State and Catholic Church, releasing himself from priestly vows of chastity, servility and obedience. His egoism is meant to redeem Stephen from the claims to 'altruism' which for him is nothing but an empty concept; it serves as a prophylactic from an ethic of altruism which threatens to impose a moral debt, a duty upon him: 'Daedalus, said the Auditor crisply, you are a good fellow but you have yet to learn the dignity of altruism and the responsibility of the human individual.'⁷¹ In *Stephen Hero* Stephen's egoism offers a powerful retort to the rhetoric of altruism and opens up the possibility for self-emancipation. In *A Portrait*, however, Stephen's 'ascetic-like' attitude to art and life leads to a different situation. Stephen's religious apostasy leads him to seek redemption, catharsis in self-renunciation (first in the form of religion and ultimately in art): 'His soul was made fair and holy once more holy and happy [...] to live in grace a life of peace and virtue and forbearance with others.'⁷² In *Stephen Hero*, conversely, Stephen's discourse indicates a guilt-free, unrepentant conscience. Unafraid of the sting of religion, in this version he confidently renounces this 'kind of Christianity which is called Catholicism' for a cult of the self. While in *A Portrait* Stephen's religious apostasy acquires tremendous power and leads him to a kind of ascetic aestheticism',⁷³

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 52.

⁷² James Joyce, *A Portrait of an Artist as the Young Man* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2000), p. 157.

⁷³ As Colleen Jaurretche argues, in *A Portrait* Stephen's creates a 'monastic persona', which 'merges the aesthetic with the ascetic'. Colleen Jaurretche, *The Sensual Philosophy: Joyce and the Aesthetics of Mysticism* (Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 1997), p. 70.

in *Stephen Hero* religion is experienced as a burden, as something that ‘seemed to him to stand in his way and forthwith he removed it’.⁷⁴

Significantly, in the earlier text not only social but also sexual nonconformism is treated as a path towards emancipation and self-expression. Rather than the sanitized aestheticism of *A Portrait*, in this text sexuality signifies a threat only when perceived within the parameters of social convention, that is, in terms of its operation within wedlock. Early on we read that: ‘On [Stephen’s] side chastity, having been found a great inconvenience, had been quietly abandoned and the youth amused himself in the company of certain of his fellow-students among whom (as the fame went) wild living was not unknown.’⁷⁵ Further, in Chapter XIV we see him trying to explain his sex-ethic to Emma, but without much success:

Do you know, Emma, even from my window I could see your hips moving inside your waterproof? I saw a young woman walking proudly through the decayed city. Yes, that’s the way you walk: you’re proud of being young and proud of being a woman. Do you know when I caught sight of you from my window – do you know what I felt? [...] – I felt that I longed to hold you in my arms – your body. I longed for you to take me in your arms. That’s all [...]. Then I thought I would run after you and say that to you [...]. Just to live one night together, Emma, and then to say goodbye in the morning and never to see each other again! She tried to take her arm away from his and murmured as if she were repeating from memory:--You are mad, Stephen [...]. Stephen let go her arm and took her hand in his, saying: [...] You say I am mad because I do not bargain with you or say I love you or swear to you. But I believe you hear my words and understand me, don’t you? [Emma] If I had known [if] it was for this mad talk [...]. You must not speak to me any more [...].⁷⁶

Stephen’s bold and unconventional declaration of love – his unwillingness to use the romantic language of passion and chastity in this scene is quite significant. Stephen’s ‘mad’ talk, as Emma calls it, points to a certain free love ethic linked to his wish to break away from the decay and hypocrisy around him. As before, he refuses to conform to any ideal of chastity and ideal passion. His imploring her to ‘live one night together’,

⁷⁴ *Stephen Hero*, p. 147.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 197-198.

the ‘unholy’ discourse used to declare his love, rather than mere licentiousness, is consistent with a serpentine-like vision of selfhood and life, his wish to create himself unconstrained by any conventions opposing his will.

Overall, it appears that the kind of egoism to which Stephen returns time and again in the text communicates a fresh and uncompromising vision of life and art – one suggesting interesting correspondences with early radical Nietzscheanism. This is, one might say, a kind of egoism that conveys the youthful spirit of an age in transition. Thus, it is not surprising that this early portrait of Stephen here differs so much from the later versions of *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*. In *Stephen Hero*, Stephen opts for exile towards what he calls ‘art and life’ but this is different from the Stephen we meet in the first chapters of *Ulysses*, who is, by then, a spectre, a dismembered Dionysus; for whom exile has now been interiorised, leaving him cynically sober:

Cousin Stephen [...]. You were awfully holy, weren't you? [...]. You prayed to the devil in *Serpentine* avenue {italics mine} [...]. I was young. You bowed to yourself in the mirror, stepping forward to applause earnestly, striking face. Hurray for the Goddamned idiot! Hray!⁷⁷

I would suggest, then, a fresh way of approaching *Stephen Hero* by proposing that it can be analysed in relation to the intellectual climate at the turn-of-the-century, specifically the radical spirit of modernity embodied in the philosophy of Nietzsche. As well as pointing to some direct links between Nietzsche's texts and *Stephen Hero*, I have focused on the ways in which a particular strand of the avant-garde responded to these works in relation to the interrelated subjects of aestheticism and egoism, and have tried to show that it is fruitful and legitimate to position *Stephen Hero* in dialogue with these ideas as much as with Nietzsche's texts themselves. *The Eagle and the Serpent* serves as an early example of the ways in which Nietzsche's ideas informed notions of

⁷⁷ James Joyce, *Ulysses* (London : Penguin Edition, 2000), pp. 49-50.

aesthetic and social egoism, and I have argued that it is possible to identify a certain level of congruence between such conceptions and Joyce's engagement with these subjects in *Stephen Hero*. The portrait of the artist-egoist in *Stephen Hero* suggests an immersion in the period's intellectual climate: it registers the tone of radical Nietzscheanism and the affirmative spirit of the age, and it thereby provides some tentative links between Joyce and contemporary responses to Nietzsche. I believe that the period's little periodicals can provide a new framework for expanding our knowledge of Joyce's engagement with the egoistic discourses that were engendered by Nietzsche's works, and here I have attempted to provide a foundation from which the correspondences between *The Eagle and the Serpent* and Joyce's *Stephen Hero* can be further illuminated in relation to this topic.

5.3 Stephen's Portrait as an Ascetic Priest: Nietzschean 'Guilt', 'Bad Conscience', and the Solution of Art in *A Portrait*

As seen in Part I of this Chapter *Stephen Hero* raises important questions about the belief in absolute truths and values. Stephen's expression of unbelief and godlessness communicates an enthusiasm for a new ideal of selfhood, and a youthful confidence in his own powers to fulfil it. As argued already, Stephen's egoism – which echoes that of *The Eagle and the Serpent* (e.g.: 'God is the centre and soul of most altruistic codes. Man is the centre and soul of all egoistic codes')⁷⁸, shares the aphoristic heroic rhetoric

⁷⁸ 'Distinctions and Definitions', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 February 1898, pp. 11-12 (p. 11).

of its brand of radical Nietzscheanism. On the whole, Stephen's wish to rid himself of attachments, religious, spiritual, and moral has a very Nietzschean feel. His art and life credo in the early text seems prompted by the desire to dispel the shadow of the 'dead God' (to use Nietzsche's term here), a potent wish to overcome nihilism and decadence, 'the age of sickness and cruelty issuing forth', as Stephen calls it. This optimistic view could be understood, in my view, as evocative of the temper of the age, one eager to recuperate from the 'bad conscience' of millennia, hopeful of affirming itself anew.

Like Nietzsche's assertion of 'the death of God', Stephen's claim that 'the absolute is dead' however is not a simple matter, and is one that we see Joyce expanding, reflecting on and problematising later in *A Portrait*. One might argue that *A Portrait* offers a vivid psychological portrait of Stephen in the wake of his loss of faith – dealing with the consequences and implications of this former assertion. In the course of the novel Stephen's aesthetic and ethical emancipation is made increasingly difficult – becoming his greatest burden, stigmatizing him emotionally, spiritually and intellectually. The end of *A Portrait*, where we have Stephen's defiant cry of *non serviam*, 'I will not serve that in which I no longer believe',⁷⁹ has been often interpreted as this character's overcoming of God through the medium of creative selfhood, an aesthetic *apotheoses*, in a way – but in my reading the novel presents this as a more complex and ambiguous process than it was in *Stephen Hero*.

Closely connected with this theme in the novel is the gendering of art and its intimate association with the image of the feminine. Sexuality, a key aspect in the psychological anatomy Joyce practices here (especially in the episodes dealing with Stephen's change of faith, from a religious to an aesthetic one) is, one might say, conspicuous by its absence. Interestingly, it is the figure of the feminine at the juncture

⁷⁹ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 208.

of Stephen's spiritual crisis, a potent symbol that seems likely to offer a plausible liberation when transmuted into aesthetic vision. The psychological profile of the ascetic-turned-artist in these final chapters helps establish implicit connections between the different kinds of emotion and the different kinds of desire Stephen experiences. His nervous ambivalence between a sensual and a chaste life, as well as his thoughts of guilt and anxiety, prompt images of religious and ultimately aesthetic redemption. In this context, Stephen's spiritual journey through an uncompromising asceticism to art is presented, in a way, as liberation from former crutches. Nevertheless, whereas this liberation is announced as a kind of leap *from* faith, suggestive in a way of Stephen's growing recovery, from his own 'bad conscience', so to speak – this, I want to argue is hardly the case. Notwithstanding the ostensible sincerity of Stephen's declamation, Stephen, in my opinion has been (wilfully) duped. While the final scene seemingly indicates an overcoming of religious, moralistic, ethical boundaries, symbolizing rebirth and the beginning of selfhood, his vision of a sea girl suggests another kind of religious fervour, aesthetic this time. The ultimate aestheticism he embraces retains a great deal of the structure and psychology of his earlier position – turning Stephen into a servant of another God: this time romantic art. More particularly, it is my intention to show that the theme of asceticism and religious piety on the one hand, and that of aesthetic expression on the other, share common characteristics despite their ostensible disparity. While the religious realm and the realm of art are presented as being opposing, it is my view that they are prompted, at least in some respects, by similar psychological motives. Drawing upon Nietzsche's views about art and truth, and in particular his discussion of the aesthetic as a problem of 'physiology', this part of the chapter discusses Stephen's aesthetic emancipation – whether his art offers a fully satisfactory alternative to faith.

5.3.1 Nietzsche and Aesthetic Idealism: 'The Death of God' and the Problem of Art

Nietzsche's mature philosophical writings propose a systematic critique of any so-called truths and ideals. They may be understood as a warning against the dangers lurking in the plane of metaphysics and religious foundations modern man inherits. In this respect, the event of God's death represents 'the passing away of religion, philosophy, and morality', namely '[t]he Good, the Beautiful, and the true for Plato and Greek philosophy [...] the Way, the Light, and the Truth for two thousand years of Western thought' as we have come to know it.⁸⁰ While on the whole the event has been positive, it is not without complications. As Nietzsche maintains although the belief in God as such has decreased (namely the belief in a metaphysical being functioning as the main source of truth, permanence and solace), the shadows of the deceased God (including belief in metaphysical realities) are still lingering, for they still serve pervasive psychological needs. David B. Allison provides a summary of the death of God and its effects as understood by Nietzsche:

The first effect of God's death is to remove the universal foundations of morality [...] there is no longer an absolute or transcendent ground for ethics and morality; the second effect is that we will continue to live under the shadow of the dead God, we will continue to display his raiments and trappings for some time. There will begin an age of metaphysical nostalgia [...] a period that shall be carried along by the mere inertia and habit of theology and metaphysics; a third consequence is that we enter an age of ambiguity and transition, characterized precisely by the nostalgia of the earlier age [...]. Like young Oedipus, we have each killed our father and we are condemned to leave our father's home [...] the forth consequence of God's death is the *recognition of man's birth* [...] without God's support, we become divine. We now become the responsible bearers of world and history. Our existence will embrace this whole, and no other, world; it will invoke no sanction or salvation outside the world. For Nietzsche we shall embrace the thought of 'eternal return' and this will be our newly found significance, a significance that will transfigure reality, humanity, and history as we know them. Indeed, this shall be our 'gay science'.⁸¹

⁸⁰ David B. Allison, *Reading the New Nietzsche* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), pp. 91-92.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-99.

In this passage above, Allison eloquently summarizes Nietzsche's understanding of how things may look after the end of God, namely, the end of metaphysical truth. According to him there will be a good deal of confusion, nostalgia and insecurity which will mark the transition from the past to the future. Nietzsche presages a transitional period in the course of which the need for 'truth' continues unabated as the need for solace and stability is still very much present. Dependence on a higher authority for direction, safety and purpose is one of the symptoms of resistance to growth and self-actualization, and is a natural corollary of the process of individuation and the new type of humanity as envisioned by Nietzsche. The metaphysical nostalgia described above can take many forms (artistic, philosophical, and scientific), all of which however are merely variations of one theme: the quest for an absolute, uniform and stable truth – which in reality is a by-product of a bad moral/intellectual conscience. This period may be extended as long as the individual continues to operate within the principles of the former models of faith, until humanity finds a way to move past such dualistic, transcendental propositions, the residues, as it were, of old Christian moralism. As mentioned already, Nietzsche's whole philosophical project can be seen as an attempt to challenge and to dispense with all such former philosophical, theological and aesthetic ideals. Particularly in connection to art, his Dionysian formula may be taken to propose the beginnings of a remedy against aesthetic ideals that are based on metaphysics, a higher truth, a reality beyond – all of which are subordinate to the ascetic ideal, as Nietzsche suggests in *On the Genealogy*. As Lawrence J. Hatab notes in 'How Does the Ascetic Ideal Function in Nietzsche's *Genealogy*',⁸² rather than attempting to reform lived experience by way of moral or aesthetic transcendence, Nietzsche's aesthetic

⁸² Lawrence J. Hatab, 'How Does the Ascetic Ideal Function in Nietzsche's *Genealogy*', *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 35/36 (2008), 106-123 (p. 108).

naturalism restores legitimacy to the world of lived experience.⁸³ Contrary to the type of art which becomes ‘an advocate of the beyond’, ‘the great slanderer of life’⁸⁴ (an art which rests on the same base as the ascetic ideal), he speaks of an art that has ‘a good conscience on its side’,⁸⁵ is of this world and its goal is to arouse the will, placing it on the side of life:

Beginning with *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche seems to shape his naturalism in part by way of an intimate connection among nature, art, and tragedy, with the latter presenting an art world that best ‘imitates’ the surging creative/destructive dynamic of nature and that least alienates humanity from finite nature.⁸⁶

More specifically, Nietzsche’s notion of art is closely related to his critique of ‘truth’ in Essay III of *On the Genealogy* as well as his critique of the ascetic ideal. His aesthetic offers ‘a nature-attuned alternative to the counter-natural nihilism of the ascetic truth ideal’,⁸⁷ by acknowledging the absence of any secure foundation and truth and by exhibiting a commitment to an empirically based truth. This is opposed to the idealistic ‘ascetic’ type of art which seeks refuge in some secured higher meaning. As discussed in the previous chapter the classic example of aesthetic asceticism for Nietzsche can be sought in Wagner. In the *On the Genealogy* Nietzsche refers to him as:

An oracle, a priest, in fact, more than a priest, a sort of mouthpiece of the ‘in itself’ of things, a telephone of the beyond [*ein Telephon de Jenseits*], from now on this ventriloquist of God – he talked metaphysics: hardly surprising that one day he ended up talking ascetic ideals, is it?⁸⁸

Taking his cue from Schopenhauer, Wagner translated metaphysics into a ‘chaste’ aestheticism, one ‘never tired of singing the praises of this escape from the “will” as the great advantage and use of the aesthetic condition.’⁸⁹ For Nietzsche such a definition of

⁸³ Ibid., p. 108.

⁸⁴ *On the Genealogy*, p. 114.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 114.

⁸⁶ Hatab, p. 117.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 118.

⁸⁸ *On the Genealogy*, p. 73.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 75.

beauty, one which seeks to disassociate itself from lived reality and nature and respectively pays homage to ascetic ideals is suggestive of an art which serves as a refuge, which wants to free itself from 'torture', to provide an escape of the reality of the Will, namely life.⁹⁰ In fact, for Nietzsche this type of art is essentially the aesthetic equivalent to the ascetic ideal.

Not only is Nietzsche refuting the 'chaste' form of art as proposed by Wagner, but is also objecting to Schopenhauer's notion of beauty as will-lessness, and in particular the latter's view that proper aesthetic appreciation of nature demands disinterestedness, namely, the absence of passion. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche tells us in Essay III of *On the Genealogy*, understands the aesthetic as a result of the subduing of sex drives. For Nietzsche however, the relation of sensuality to art is more complex and is intricately related to his ideal of art as will-to-power.⁹¹ In contrast to the 'chaste', disinterested contemplation proposed by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche suggests that the aesthetic form is, in reality, desire disguised, even from itself. According to him, not only sensuality is not removed by the approach of the aesthetic state, as Schopenhauer believed, but the aesthetic state is in fact underscored by desire, a desire however sublimated and sanctified.⁹² As Matthew Rampley notes, the Schopenhauerian model of aesthetic

⁹⁰ It is important to remember that the ascetic ideal may be equally of positive or negative value; depending on the kind of use it is put. As Nietzsche tells us: '[A] certain asceticism, a hard and hearty renunciation with a good will, belongs among the most favourable conditions for the highest spirituality', ('Essay III', Section 9, p. 81); '[t]he ascetic ideal points the way to so many bridges to *independence* that no philosopher can refrain from inwardly rejoicing and clapping hands on hearing the story of all those who, one fine day, decided to say "no" to the curtailment of their liberty, and go off into the *desert*', (Essay III, Section 7, p. 77). As Nietzsche argues further, ascetic values such as poverty, humility, and chastity are to a certain extent to be welcomed as they are 'the most proper and natural prerequisites' for optimum existence and productivity, p. 78.

⁹¹ As Matthew Rampley notes, Nietzsche's philosophy of art is expressed through a critique of Kant's and Schopenhauer's notion that aesthetic experience should be disinterested. Matthew Rampley, 'The Physiology as Art: Nietzsche on Form', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 33 (1993), 271-282 (p. 273).

⁹² Nietzsche, 'Essay III', Section 8, pp. 80-81. The passage is meant as an introduction to Nietzsche's theory of the 'physiology of aesthetics', as he calls it: 'Let us now apply this interpretation to what we are saying about Schopenhauer: the sight of beauty clearly worked by stimulating the *main strength* in his nature (the nature to contemplate and penetrate deeply); so that this then exploded and suddenly took control of his consciousness. But this certainly does not exclude the possibility that that remarkable sweetness and fullness characteristic of the aesthetic condition might well

experience as disinterested contemplation, an aesthetic that Nietzsche equates with the Christian ethic of self-sacrifice and self-chastisement, is ultimately self-defeating.⁹³ This is because for Nietzsche the aesthetic is invested with a particular function or use value which enmeshes it within the system of means and ends, in short, the economy of desire.⁹⁴ Nietzsche opposes Schopenhauer to Stendhal, for whom '*le désintéressement*, is *rejected* and eliminated',⁹⁵ and concludes by saying that aesthetic idealism (a form of aesthetic asceticism in a way) as theorized by Schopenhauer, and as practiced by Wagner, conceals within it ample traces of an aesthetic of the body and its will. He tells us: 'Idealism [...] that sweetness and fullness characteristic of the aesthetic condition' springs directly from the ingredient of sensuality.⁹⁶ And he adds: 'When our aestheticians tirelessly rehearse, in support of Kant's view, that the spell of beauty enables us to view even nude female statues "disinterestedly" we may be allowed to laugh a little at their expense.'⁹⁷ This suggestion will lead to the point made later in the essay that 'all art is applied physiology', an idea which binds the notion of art, artistic creativity and aesthetic experience to desire and willing.⁹⁸

5.3.2 A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Ascetic

He stands and harks: what does he hear?
 What sound is ringing in his ear?
 What struck him down? What mortal fear?
 Who once wore chains, will always think
 That he is followed by their clink.

descend from the ingredient 'sensuality' (just as that 'idealism' characteristic of nubile girls descends from the same forces) – that in this way, sensuality is not suspended as soon as we enter the aesthetic condition, as Schopenhauer believed, but is only transfigured and no longer enters the consciousness as a sexual stimulus', *ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

⁹³ Rampley, p. 274.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

⁹⁵ Nietzsche, 'Essay III', Section 6, p. 74.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁹⁷ 'Essay III', Section 6, p. 75.

⁹⁸ Rampley, p. 275.

‘The Unfree Man’, Friedrich Nietzsche,⁹⁹

One aspect of individualism, the prioritising of personal agency over the burden of moral and social conscience, informs to a large extent the motif of freedom and self-creation in *A Portrait*. From a first reading, it is clear that there are significant variations, both stylistic and thematic, allowing one to say that the Stephen of *A Portrait* is a much more complex, divided and potentially conflicted character than his youthful counterpart. On the whole, *A Portrait* as it appeared in *The Egoist* may be seen as a portrait of Stephen’s disillusionment, providing one with a thorough re-evaluation of Stephen’s youthful doctrine of egoism and godlessness. Stephen’s resolute claim of renouncing religion for the cult of the self in *Stephen Hero*, his view of Catholicism as a burden, proves to be an issue far more complex than formerly thought, and one that the published text returns to and develops at length.

As seen already, in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche warns us: ‘God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. – And we – we still have to vanquish his shadow, too.’¹⁰⁰ Stephen’s ‘new religion of unbelief’ reminds us of what Nietzsche says in this passage, for instance when he says in *Stephen Hero* that: ‘I am a product of Catholicism; I was sold to Rome before my birth. Now I have broken my slavery but I cannot in a moment destroy every feeling in my nature. That takes time.’¹⁰¹ The differences between the two texts in literary form and perspective suggest a shift in authorial perspective lending the portrait of Stephen a more mature, critical and self-reflective dimension. In this inward-looking narrative, the question of belief proves to be much less simple and straightforward, and the account of Stephen, may serve as a warning: that although the

⁹⁹ *The Gay Science*, ‘Joke Cunning and Revenge’, Poem 32, p. 53.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, Section 109, p. 167.

¹⁰¹ *Stephen Hero*, p. 73.

passing away of the old faith is considered a finished thing, its effects are nevertheless still lingering.

Joycean criticism has regularly drawn attention to the overall structure of the *A Portrait* as a means to address Joyce's authorial intentions in the shaping of his artist-aesthete. Wayne C. Booth's classic essay, 'The Problem of Distance in *A Portrait of the Artist*',¹⁰² notes how Joyce's carefully constructed structure sustains the inherent ambiguity of the novel's ending:

The structure of this 'authorless book' is based on the growth of a sensitive boy to young manhood. The steps in his growth are obviously constructed with great care [...]. Now here is clearly a careful structural preparation – for what? For a transformation, or for a merely cyclical return? Is the final exaltation a release from the depressing features of Irish life which have tainted the earlier experiences? Or is it the fifth turn in an endless cycle? And in either case, is Stephen always to be viewed with the same deadly seriousness with which he views himself? Is it to artistic maturity that he grows?¹⁰³

The issue of authorial irony, that is, the question 'to what extent *A Portrait*'s structure conforms or not to the form of the *Bildungsroman*', is one that has and continues to invite varied critical responses. The problematic status the concept of 'development' occupies in the novel can be felt in the tension between the more traditional tendency to interpret Joyce's careful arrangement of events as suggestive of an essentially progressive sense of development of the character's spiritual and intellectual growth – and those who regard it with doubt. Tobias Boes for instance in '*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and the "Individuating Rhythm" of Modernity',¹⁰⁴ troubles the text's linear status by pointing out that:

Any approach to Joyce's work that conceives of *Bildung* as a teleological process, a smooth and gradual journey towards individual and collective

¹⁰² Wayne C. Booth, 'The Problem of Distance in *A Portrait of the Artist*', in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 323-336.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 327.

¹⁰⁴ Tobias Boes, '*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and the "Individuating Rhythm" of Modernity', *ELH* 4 (2008), pp. 767-785.

destiny, is bound to be frustrated by the contradictory dynamics of his novel.¹⁰⁵

Calling attention to the main character's inherent contradictions, the critic discusses Stephen's nervous 'oscillating back and forth between those influences that urge him to move forward in life and those who encourage him to linger and thus to see his identity as essentially predetermined by the past.'¹⁰⁶ Stephen's perpetual back and forth motion clashes with the ostensible linearity of the text, uncovering an underlying structure of recurrence and cyclical return, an 'internally contradictory' pattern of 'radical *polyrhythmicality*'.¹⁰⁷ On the whole, Boes's proposition of a model of recurrence is quite fascinating, providing the text with an open-ended and ongoing potential: *A Portrait* is meant 'neither [as] a eulogy to lost possibility, nor as a quiet resignation'. It offers a celebration of life in a colonial society 'caught between tradition and modernity in all its confusing, contradictory, and sometimes also disheartening complexity', one 'filtered through the mind of an individual desperately trying to compose his "individuating rhythm" amidst a polyrhythmic tapestry'.¹⁰⁸

Both Kenner's and Boes's suggestions are, it seems to me, particularly relevant to the theme of individuality and art in the novel. The kind of 'internally contradictory'¹⁰⁹ structure discerned by them seems particularly useful when turning to consider the psychological dynamics of Stephen's heretic-turned-ascetic-turned-aesthetic persona throughout the novel. The variety of contradictions and eccentricities, the elusive tensions between belief/unbelief, heresy/obedience, sin/repentance, good conscience/bad conscience, rebellion/obedience, and self-growth/self-mortification, state a great deal, in my

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 768.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 771.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 771.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 773.

¹⁰⁹ Boes, p. 772.

view, about Stephen's notion of selfhood and art-faith. In particular, in my view what starts as a progressive movement ends as a regression. As I will try to argue, Stephen's shift from an ascetic to an aesthetic persona in Chapters IV and V as well as his ambivalent attitude towards the 'Feminine' throughout the course of the novel, seems to suggest a motif of recurrent *stasis*, one that if considered in the light of Nietzsche's notions of 'bad conscience' and the 'ascetic ideal' provides interesting insights regarding the notion of self-becoming and individuation in the text.

To begin with, a motif of conflict and tension can be traced throughout, manifesting itself in the mixed portrait of Stephen who appears at times as a heroic sinner and at others as a saintly ascetic. At the beginning of Chapter III, Stephen's restless night strolls about 'the squalid quarter of the brothels'¹¹⁰ and occasional visits to the prostitutes, may be taken in a way as symbolic of his desire to sin and rebel in the face of death. In this passage, Stephen, in 'sinloving' fashion'¹¹¹ enacts a certain worldly sacrament of the flesh, as it were, – symbolic of his initiation (via sexuality) into the ways of the world. As he works his way through his mathematic assignment his mind drifts back to memories of the night before and we follow his emotion while it transforms itself into a vision of a dying star. Feeling enraptured by 'a sudden movement' of 'his own will or a sudden call to his sinloving soul',¹¹² we read how Stephen finds himself drawn by a mysterious 'will' ordering him to sin, a 'will' that relishes in the thought that it can challenge God. In his imagination he re-experiences once again the incident with a certain irreverent pride, one that while knowing it has sinned 'fatally', however, delights in bearing the burden of sin, as a token of power and independence: 'A certain pride, a certain awe, withheld him from offering to God even one prayer [...]. His pride in his own sin, his loveless awe of God told, him that his

¹¹⁰ *A Portrait*, p. 86.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 86.

offence was too grievous to be atoned.'¹¹³ Stephen's thoughts on moral burden, sin and atonement are particularly interesting here.¹¹⁴ His statement might be taken to suggest a personal striving for autonomy.

His divided self indicates a battle of two faiths: The faith of Stephen to himself and his faith to God and the moral law. His 'conscious heresy' suggests a 'deliberate kind of sinning', as Richard Brown has very well pointed out¹¹⁵; a deliberate statement, as it were, of free will and agency: a victory of the will of the self over the will of God. Stephen's resolution that despite the knowledge 'it was in God's power to take away his life while he slept and hurl his soul hellward ere he could beg for mercy [...] he will not obey', might be taken to denote a moral self-consciousness, which feels confirmed in the pleasure of mastering its sense of fear and anxiety in the face of Authority. Stephen's imagination of his soul as impenitent and his lusting after experience is vividly reflected in the imagery he employs of the soul as both a star and self-annihilating will:

Going forth to experience, unfolding itself sin by sin, spreading abroad the balefire of its burning stars and folding back upon itself, fading slowly, quenching its own lights and fires. They were quenched: and the cold darkness filled chaos.¹¹⁶

This representation of the soul 'unfold[ing] itself'¹¹⁷ going forth into experience, and the image of the self as a product of sin, affirmed in all its destructive force, is particularly poignant. It is notable that an image of 'burning stars' with strong life-

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹¹⁴ It has to be noted here that guilt is not something that Nietzsche rejects altogether. As Stephen Houlgate points out, Nietzsche wants us to come to a positive, tragic evaluation of guilt, rather than a negative, moral one. To accuse someone of sin in a moral sense, Nietzsche believes is to burden them with bad conscience'. The opposite, however, is the case for the Nietzsche's tragic artist however, the one whose aim is through art to 'imbue sacrilege with dignity', to 'celebrate human power audacity and independence, and thereby to banish bad conscience', Stephen Houlgate, *Hegel, Nietzsche and the Criticism of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 194-195.

¹¹⁵ Richard Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 161.

¹¹⁶ *A Portrait*, p. 86.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

generating connotations is evoked by Stephen's memory of his encounter with the prostitute the previous night. At this point Stephen's memory of sinning generates a vivid vision of life as rapturous, wasteful – extending the analogy between the life and experience as both will to creation and destruction. This might be taken to echo one of Zarathustra's most celebrated sayings: 'One must still have chaos within, in order to give birth to a dancing star'.¹¹⁸ Stephen's imagery (of the dissipation of the self into orderless dust), seems to hold positive connotations, affirming both the chaos and squandering inherent in life. Like a rite of passage, sexual experience may be taken in the above passage to suggest Stephen's initiation to the world of animal energies, marking, in effect, the end of innocence; or, rather, the beginning of selfhood. Desire and its satisfaction here can be read as a metaphor for the affirmation of self-consciousness, setting in motion Stephen's destiny towards growth, individuation and life. In this context, the figure of the 'woman' comes to signify Stephen's entrance into the life of experience, and may function as a trope of life, an all-powerful nature imposing itself to Stephen, animating his will to experience while binding him inexorably with death and finality. Interestingly, Nietzsche's own star-imagery appears in Zarathustra's opening speech, the part that announces 'the death of God' and outlines his new worldly gospel:

Once blasphemy against God was the greatest blasphemy; but God died and therewith also those blasphemers. To blaspheme the earth now is the dreadfulest sin, and to rate the heart of the unknowable higher than the meaning of the earth! Once the soul looked contemptuously on the body, and then that contempt was the supreme thing:-the soul wished the body meagre, ghastly, and famished. Thus it thought to escape from the body and the earth. Oh. This soul was itself still lean, ghastly, and starved; and cruelty was the lust of this soul!¹¹⁹

The message of Zarathustra's 'sermon of the body', as it were, in the passage above, may be taken to provide some interesting comparisons and links with the teaching of

¹¹⁸ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 15.

¹¹⁹ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pp. 11-12.

Father Arnall's teachings about the soul in Chapter III, as well as with the theme of dualism and conflict between mind and soul personified in Stephen himself. As Ofelia Schutte points out in *Beyond Nihilism: Nietzsche Without Masks*, Zarathustra's 'overcoming of morality requires the overcoming of one's present understanding of the self'.¹²⁰ It symbolises 'the end of dualism between body and spirit that has fragmented the lives of human beings':

What is called for is the complete transformation of the divided self which claims us at present [...]. The dismissal of the ego-consciousness as the ruler of the organism as well as the overcoming of resentment indicated the types of radical psychological changes that need to take place before one can approach the possibility of living a fully creative life.¹²¹

Such overcoming, as conceived by Nietzsche, is, however, not something yet possible for Stephen despite his celebration of chaos and experience in the passage above. Partly in his 'visions of hell', partly in his model of ascetic resignation, in the latter part of Chapter III the Zarathustrian energies which had hitherto supported Stephen's pride seem quenched, broken up under the weight of the religious doctrine and its burning threat of eternal punishment. Contrary to the picture of Stephen as a panegyrist of nature, in the scene following this one, 'nature' comes to designate 'death' – and in turn, the body is condemned as a source of sin, guilt and suffering.

The text's emphasis on these two states, from Stephen's early affirmation of sexuality as proud, to a state wherein the former affirmation of the will of the self, and subsequently sensual desire, degenerates into a wound, a mark of shame and sin, serves to underline the powerful, and for a large part covert effects of moral consciousness. As Nietzsche says in the *On the Genealogy* the genesis of 'conscience' or else, of 'the soul' has a dark and painful history. Moral conscience is the product of internalized cruelty, arising out of a memory of punishment. 'Bad conscience' or the 'memory of the will', is

¹²⁰ Ofelia Schutte, *Beyond Nihilism: Nietzsche Without Masks* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986), p. 120.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

characterized by a sense of guilt, debt and duty, and carries within it a history of pain and cruelty: Nietzsche asks in the second treatise how the moral conscience is born:

This age-old question was not resolved with gentle solutions and methods, as can be imagined; perhaps there is nothing more terrible and strange in man's pre-history than his *technique of mnemonics*: 'A thing must be burnt in so that it stays in the memory: only something that continues to *hurt* stays in the memory' – that is the proposition from the oldest (and unfortunately the longest-lived) psychology on earth. When man decided he had to make a memory for himself it never happened without blood [...] the cruellest rituals of all religious cults (and all religions are, at their most fundamental systems, systems of cruelty.¹²²

The Hell sermon in *A Portrait* is a good example of one such cruel ritual – and it is there to remind the impious Stephen his debt to God, introducing the theme of moral burden and 'bad conscience' in the novel. In Chapter III, Joyce's text begins to draw attention to the psychological mechanisms of guilt operating within Stephen, uncovering the inner conflict of Stephen and his conscience. Just after the school rector announces the religious retreat, mixed thoughts about debt, justice and punishment rush almost involuntarily through the young man's mind:

As he sat in his bench gazing calmly at the rector's shrewd harsh face his mind would itself in and out of the curious questions proposed to it. If a man had stolen a pound in his youth and has used that pound to amass a huge fortune how much was he obliged to give back?¹²³

The questions that begin to arise in the imagination of Stephen progressively fuel his mind with images of torture, punishment and pain: evidence of a latent sense of guilt Stephen would rather deny. Such questions, of whether the 'debt' can be paid in full, how does one pay back a wrongdoing, and whether the culprit can truly redeemed, serve as powerful metaphors for the sense of guilt and moral consciousness that haunts Stephen. What is more, they uncover an almost involuntary sense of duty, an unconscious awareness of a moral contract, whose terms Stephen confesses have been

¹²² 'Essay II', Section 3, p. 38.

¹²³ *A Portrait*, p. 89.

broken 'not once but many times'.¹²⁴ Interestingly, Stephen understands sin and guilt in terms of monetary value. The link between debt and punishment that the *On the Genealogy* identifies is essential in Nietzsche's understanding of the origin of moral consciousness of guilt ('bad conscience'). There, he goes on to ask:

How, then, did that other 'dismal thing', the consciousness of guilt, the whole 'bad conscience', come into the world? [...] Have these genealogists of morality up to now ever remotely dreamt that, for example, the main moral concept '*Schuld*' ('guilt') descends from the very material concept of '*Schulden*' ('debts')?¹²⁵

Nietzsche believes that from very early times the relation between individual members and the community was based in the contractual relationship between creditor and debtor. Through a process of moralization (religion) 'debt' was translated into guilt, and duty into moral duty, our creditor being in fact 'God'.¹²⁶ The vivid imagery of crime, judgment and punishment employed in the course of the sermon, the rhetoric of debt and obligation (all techniques intended to instil moral memory and guilt according to Nietzsche), gradually elicit a latent sense of guilt in the mind of Stephen: The rector's words: 'He who *remembers* the last things, says Ecclesiastes, shall not sin for ever. He who *remembers* the last things will act and think with them always before his eyes';¹²⁷ his advice to 'think only of the last things, death, judgment, hell and heaven' bring into the surface images of death and judgment: 'The next day brought death and judgment stirring his soul slowly from its listless despair. The faint glimmer of death became a terror of spirit as the hoarse voice of the preacher blew death into his soul.'¹²⁸ Clearly, the priest's mnemotechics here are used as a mechanism for eliciting responses of regret and guilt after transgression. Indeed, in the course of the sermon, the nightmare of moral

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 87.

¹²⁵ 'Essay II', Section 4, p. 39.

¹²⁶ For full analysis see Maudemarie Clark's 'Nietzsche's Immoralism and the Concept of Morality', in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, and Morality*, ed. by Richard Schacht (University of California Press, 1994), pp. 15-34.

¹²⁷ *A Portrait*, p. 93.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 94.

debt and its punishment is something that Stephen is not allowed to forget, one played and replayed several times over. Moral memory, as Nietzsche argues in the second treatise, is the one 'real problem of mankind', a sickness which can only be counteracted by an active ability to forget, to shut 'the doors of consciousnesses for a while':

Forgetfulness is not just a *vis inertiae*, as superficial people believe [...]. To shut the doors of consciousness for a while; not to be bothered by the noise and battle with which our underworld of serviceable organs work with and against each other; a little peace, a little *tabula rasa* of consciousness to make room for something new [...].¹²⁹

Such forgetfulness is something that Stephen can find hard to achieve. The memory of history is a nightmare Stephen finds it hard to awake from, as he tells us in *Ulysses*, and which he experiences as something painful and agonizing throughout that text.

In the second essay of the *On the Genealogy*, a text which provides valuable insights into the psychology of torture and cruelty, Nietzsche tells us that the birth of the 'soul' has its origin in 'animosity, cruelty':

The whole inner world, originally stretched thinly as through between two layers of skin, was expanded and extended itself and gained depth, breadth and height in proportion to the degree that the external discharge of man's instincts was *obstructed*.¹³⁰

In turn, moral conscience has its residues in practices of cruelty throughout history: the most disgusting mutilations, torments and punishments 'all this has its origin in that particular instinct which discovered that pain was the most powerful aid to mnemotechnics.'¹³¹ Peter Sedgwick summarises Nietzsche's mnemotechnics for us:

The individual, initially a creature dominated by the drives and the whim of the moment, is by degrees transformed into a being of culture [...] the moral memory that characterises and differentiates humankind from animals was therefore quite literally, battered, burnt and stamped into existence by way of force being exerted over the body.¹³²

¹²⁹ 'Essay II', Section 1, p. 35.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, Section 16, p. 57.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, Section 3, p. 38.

¹³² Peter R. Sedgwick, *Nietzsche: The Key Concepts* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 12.

It is not surprising to see then that the rhetoric of Divine punishment in the sermon makes ample use of images of physical pain, invoking thus a half-unconscious memory deeply ingrained, traces of which soon become apparent in Stephen. It is the images of 'the flesh [...] tortured'¹³³ that Stephen fears most, a fear that may imply a sense of moral conscience waiting to be awakened. Throughout the course of the Hell-sermon Stephen mind seems arrested by the intensity of the Father Arnall's Christian rhetoric and its imagery of cruelty and physical torture:

As the waters of baptism cleanse the soul with the body, so do the fires of punishment torture the spirit with the flesh. Every sense of the flesh is tortured and every faculty of the soul therewith: the eyes with impenetrable utter darkness, the nose with noisome odours, the ears with yells and howls and execrations, the taste with foul matter, leprous corruption, nameless suffocating filth, the touch with redhot goads and spikes, with cruel tongues of flame. And through the several torments of the senses the immortal soul is tortured eternally in its very essence amid the leagues upon leagues of glowing fires kindled in the abyss by the offended majesty of the Omnipotent God and fanned into everlasting and ever increasing fury by the breath of the anger of the Godhead.¹³⁴

Torn, lacerated and inflicted by the cruel sting of morality, Stephen's desire appears worn out, and we see him relapsing into a state of helplessness he seems unable to rise from. In a way, this passage helps bring out the consonance of the novel's notion of the punishment and cruelty that underlies Catholic morality with the concept of 'bad conscience' as set out in *On the Genealogy*, a notion that (together with the principle of 'the ascetic ideal'), suggests the psychological incarceration of one's conscience in the face of culture and tradition. Stung by moral guilt, the portrait of the moral convalescent which Joyce offers here, suggests the kind of process experienced as a result of the individual's confinement (conscious and unconscious) within the oppressive narrowness and etiquette of custom. As Nietzsche put it, 'bad conscience' is the inevitable outcome

¹³³ *A Portrait*, p. 103.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 102,103.

man undergoes when he becomes enclosed within the walls of society and peace. In the face of culture and tradition man is turned into:

[T]his animal that rubbed itself against the bars of its cage as one tried to 'tame it'; this deprived animal, racked with homesickness for the wild, who had to turn himself into an adventure, a torture chamber, an uncertain and dangerous wilderness – this fool, this yearning and desperate prisoner became the inventor of 'bad conscience'.¹³⁵

The passage describing the harrowing impact of the spiritual exercises upon Stephen, as well as scene of repentance in Chapter IV, both become enormously expressive of the irreconcilable tensions between morality and selfhood, soul and body. Stephen's imaginary repentance and the attendant fantasies of punishment, torture and mortification serve as a symbolic purification of this guilt, providing a sense of religious catharsis. On the whole, the feeling of guilt that appears to curtail the young aesthete's intellectual energies in Chapter IV, where Stephen is confronted by Father Arnall's incarcerating rhetoric, reveals the dynamics of morality and tradition that undercut Stephen's progress towards selfhood. It is in the hands of the priest, a master in the art of guilt, ('this real artist in feelings of guilt', Nietzsche says), that guilt takes form and shape.¹³⁶ That 'the priest rules through the invention of sin', is further manifested in the imagery of the sadistic imagery of the threefold sting of conscience.¹³⁷ The 'rebellious pride of the intellect',¹³⁸ the quest for knowledge, experience, selfhood so proudly proclaimed earlier on, degenerate into a festering wound burned into Stephen's memory. Stephen's tortured dwelling upon the notions of sin and repentance, his fears and doubts about nature and God that reach their paroxysm in the scene of repentance and his subsequent 'retreat' back to God, may be taken in a way as signifying instances of Nietzschean 'bad conscience'.

¹³⁵ 'Essay II', Section 16, p. 57.

¹³⁶ 'Essay III', Section 20, p. 104.

¹³⁷ *The Anti-Christ*, Section 49, p. 178.

¹³⁸ *A Portrait*, p. 112.

Joyce's sense of entrapment felt by the moral individual, who finds himself incarcerated by the Catholic code of guilt which constitutes, regulates, and penetrates the self is powerfully evoked in Stephen's imagining of how '(t)he preacher's knife had probed deeply into his diseased conscience and he felt how now how his soul was festering in sin.'¹³⁹ Stephen's sin of sexual knowledge is burned into his diseased conscience suggesting that his Christianity functions as an open wound. In the course of the novel this symbolic branding of the self materializes itself fruitfully in the discourse of cruelty and suffering of Father Arnall's sermon. Stephen's progress towards individuation is cut short by the priest's graphic vision of Hell as an eternal life of torture. In the context of the sermon Stephen is asked to imagine Hell as an eternal recurrence of physical suffering

And through the several torments of the senses the immortal soul is tortured eternally in its very essence amid the leagues upon leagues of glowing fires kindled in the abyss by the offended majesty of the Omnipotent God and fanned into everlasting and ever increasing fury by the breath of the anger of the Godhead. It is the eternity of Hell that is offered as the last torture.¹⁴⁰

In the course of the novel Stephen finds it difficult to come to terms with moral guilt and the will of the body. A fascinating account of Stephen's own 'dread [...] of the mystery of his own body'¹⁴¹ unfolds in the scene at the beach where Stephen watching his friends bathing imagines 'their bodies, corpsewhite or suffused with a pallid golden light or rawly tanned by the sun'.¹⁴² The expression of terror and disgust in the face of the 'pitiable nakedness' of life and the images of corpses and flesh decaying, the body as powerless in the face of death and time could stand as a powerful metaphor for the way Stephen interprets nature as threatening, deadly, and in extension of himself as weak and finite. Moreover Joyce's vivid description of Stephen's psychological crisis in

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 141.

Chapter III accentuates how sensual knowledge fuels Stephen's sense of powerlessness with images of despair and futility:

He felt the deathchill touch the extremities and creep onward towards the heart, the film of death veiling the eyes, the bright centres of the brain extinguished one by one like lamps, the last sweat oozing upon the skin, the powerlessness of the dying limbs, the speech thickening and wandering and failing, the breath, the poor breath, the poor helpless human spirit, sobbing and sighing, gurgling and rattling the throat. No help! No help! He, he himself, his body to which he had yielded was dying. Into the grave wit hit! Nail it down into a wooden box, the corpse.¹⁴³

Stephen's body and soul dualism is confirmed no less by Stephen himself in the famous scene where Stephen confesses to Cranly and Lynch his desire to flee the constricting strictures of family, religion and State:

The soul is born, he said vaguely, first in those moments I told you of. It has a slow and dark birth, more mysterious than the birth of the body. When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets.¹⁴⁴

His declaration of freedom of conscience, his claim that he is determined to fly by the constricting strictures of Catholicism, Nationalism and tradition, is, in my view, rather restricted and limiting, for it is informed by the very dualism it seeks to overcome. In this passage, Stephen's understanding of the nature of the self is constituted in clearly dualistic terms, and the soul's primacy as the first and foremost actuality in the process of self-creation may be seen as decisive role in his ethic of self-creation.

This soul-body dichotomy is a notion increasingly relevant in the course of the novel, taking on the unique form of Stephen's ascetic persona. Interestingly, the Hell-sermon passage is followed by a certain restoration of faith which culminates in Stephen's vision of his soul finally being restored. It is a panegyric to chastity, to a child-like innocence of how: 'It was easy to be good. God's yoke was sweet and light. It

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 171.

was better never to have sinned, to have remained always a child [...].¹⁴⁵ This is perhaps one of the most characteristic displays of Stephen's wish-fulfilment fantasy of redemption, indicative of a sickened 'bad conscience' willing its retreat to the comforting burden of Godly Truth and Authority: 'It was a terrible and sad thing to sin. But God was merciful to poor sinners who were truly sorry'.¹⁴⁶ In Stephen's trading of his former rebellion for this new selfhood one reads in Nietzschean terms, the marks of a nauseated 'bad conscience' that seeks to absolve itself from the guilt of the body and its affects. Stephen is paralysed by the consequences of his act, as expressed in his image of the 'threefold sting of conscience': 'the pain of loss', that is, 'to be separated for ever from God [...] who had called that soul into existence from *nothingness*';¹⁴⁷ 'the pain of conscience', and 'the pain of eternity'.¹⁴⁸ Nauseated by a vision of Hell as a vision confirming the terrifying nature of existence 'for all eternity', a vision where the senses are eternally doomed to suffer their sin in 'the greatest physical torment(s)';¹⁴⁹ pained by the loss of God, the loss of origin, purpose and truth that is, and equally, by the fear of a life eternally unredeemed is more than he can bear. Rather than journeying towards selfhood, he wanders back into a child-like dependency, sinless and lifeless at the same time.

In Chapter IV again, the dialectic of 'fall' and 'redemption' as well as the fascination with death and cruelty is continued unabated as it comes to be materialized in the ascetic discipline to which Stephen resorts. The tension between chastity and sensuality within Stephen (dualism) and its related matters (sin, guilt, 'bad conscience') finds vent in resolute piety and an ethic of self-abnegation. 'What is the meaning of ascetic ideals', Nietzsche asks us in the opening of the third essay:

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 108-109.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 103.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 101.

What do ascetic ideals mean? – With artists, nothing, or many different things [...]; with priests, the actual priestly faith, their best instrument of power and also the ‘ultimate’ sanction of their power; with saints, an excuse to hibernate at last, their *novissima gloriae cupido*, their rest in nothingness (‘God’).¹⁵⁰

In some way or another all these impulses: the impulse to ‘hibernation’, the will to the unreal, to be removed from the world, the quest for solace and harmony, redemption from the burden of sin – are all explicitly or implicitly present in Stephen’s thoughts. The turn from sensual to chaste, from life-affirming to life-denying, from sinner to saint in this Chapter provide interesting questions about the purpose and uses of the asceticism. Either in the form of religious asceticism or romantic-chaste idealism, the ‘ascetic ideal’ as practiced by Stephen implies the need for redemption (from his ‘bad conscience’, from his body, from life in general), a salvation or escape of sorts. Unable to accept the natural order on its own terms Stephen transforms life into ‘a divine’ reality¹⁵¹ as an effort to resolve, at least temporarily, his problematic relationship to nature, the body and the self: ‘Life became a divine gift for every for every moment and sensation [...]. Meek and abased by this consciousness of the one eternal omnipresent perfect reality [...].’¹⁵² In purifying himself he seeks redemption; in making himself pure he yearns to elevate himself beyond mortality (paradoxically by mortifying the senses) creating a life beyond. In self-chastisement, which is nothing but mortification of the will and life, Stephen seeks escape from what is real, substituting this life with a consoling vision of one beyond. As seen already, Schopenhauer’s and Wagner’s aesthetic is based upon a claim that the value of art lies in its ability to appease the will and relieve suffering. In his discussion of the ascetic ideal, Nietzsche parallels the renunciation of the will of the ascetic and the quest for redemption with the type of detached disinterested aestheticism proposed by Schopenhauer and practiced by

¹⁵⁰ ‘Essay III’, Section 1, p. 68.

¹⁵¹ *A Portrait*, p. 126.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 126.

Wagner. In these figures, Nietzsche detects an outlook which is locked within a tension of contradictory values. For Wagner for instance he tells us that 'he has within his body values, words, phrases and morals of contrasting origins.' In physiological terms, he is false 'always sitting on the fence, with one breach saying "yes", and with the other "no"' ¹⁵³.

As in Chapter III, in similar fashion this connection between 'bad conscience' and cruelty is largely present in the covert sadomasochism that underpins Stephen's ascetic practices. In Stephen's seeking of a kind of trusting mysticism by way of an anti-natural scholastic ethic, one may read a symbolic lapse into a former state of innocence, symbolic of a will which, once faced with the agony of the absence of the old faith, circles back to deify the old God in order to find repose and solace. Stephen's process of ascetic catharsis is taken to constitute a kind of imaginary flee, elevating Stephen into oneness with a higher reality beneath the world of the senses, a likely solution to the spiritual crisis he experiences so far: 'His soul was made fair and holy once more holy and happy. It would be beautiful to die if God so willed. It was beautiful to live if God so willed, to live in grace a life of peace and virtue and forbearance with others.'¹⁵⁴ In this moment in Stephen's self-development (a moment witnessing Stephen's giving over to afterwordly illusions as a means to relieve his nausea with the realities of individuation), the will to life, the call to growth (and hence selfhood), seems too overwhelming and heavy a burden. In Chapter IV the religious regime that Stephen imposes upon himself, a self-imposed mortification of the mind and the flesh, seeks to correct, discipline the body, desire and its venomous ramifications, and subsequently

¹⁵³ As Nietzsche tells us in Essay III, the ascetic ideal serves many purposes for different types of people (the artist, the philosopher and the ascetic priest respectively). It has both positive and negative associations and may serve both to enhance and inhibit life and new values. Particularly in relation to the type of ascetic philosopher (example: the nihilism of Schopenhauer), and idealistic art (Wagner), Nietzsche argues that the ascetic ideal is an effort to resolve man's problematic relationship to nature the body and its desire/will that is.

¹⁵⁴ *A Portrait*, p. 122.

expiate the self from the tripartite schema of pain, sin and loss to which one feels subjected:

Each of his senses was brought under a rigorous discipline. In order to mortify the sense of sight he made it his rule to walk in the street with downcast eyes [...]. To mortify his hearing he exerted no control over his voice which was then breaking, neither sang nor whistled and made no attempt to flee from noises which caused his painful nervous irritation such as the sharpening of knives [...]. He had no temptations to sin mortally.¹⁵⁵

Taming and chastising the body serves to redeem Stephen from the burden of 'bad conscience'. A psychological invention of sorts that compensates for his feeling of guilt and shame following Father Arnall's sermon, Stephen's self-torture, the fantasy of self-annihilation suggests a will that remains ambivalently divided between a sense of individuality, an emerging ego-consciousness and moral guilt. For Schopenhauer denial of the will is likened to the experiences of ascetics and mystics. Both denial of the will and mystical experience are accompanied by the disappearance of the phenomenal forms of space, time and subject-object duality (what belongs to the realm of appearances, especially through the senses and immediate experience that is). Schopenhauer speaks of salvation (aesthetic salvation as well), as the process through which one transcends the illusion of the self as one and undivided (principle of individuation), and becomes aware of himself as part the world-will.¹⁵⁶ Redemption from the ego, the silencing of individual will is sought by way of virtue and morally right conduct, holiness and asceticism:

Salvation comes from a metaphysical understanding of ultimate reality which leads one towards a blissful state of peace. Yet one must begin to follow this path by seeing the world as it is in all its horror. Hence the path of salvation involves coming to the realization that the world is best interpreted as a vale of tears. The true sense of tragedy is the deeper insight that what the hero atones for is not his own particular sins, but *original sin*, in other words, the *guilt of existence* itself.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁵⁶ 'Schopenhauer, Religion and Morality', p. 17.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 17. My emphasis.

Ascetics, these ‘sportsmen of “holiness”’,¹⁵⁸ according to Nietzsche, finally rid themselves of that deep, physiological depression (in Stephen’s case the burden of experience, the body and the self), with the help of a system of hypnotizing methods. Loss of the self, sanctification what in aesthetic terms translates into romantic idealism, suggest interesting parallels between ascetics and aesthetics, according to Nietzsche. As seen already in his writings Nietzsche exposes the essence of religious belief as a truism and its doctrines (original sin) as a moral fiction that need to be overcome and ultimately replaced by a different kind of faith, an intelligent self-conscious understanding of one’s position in relation to one’s self and the world. In the aftermath of the loss of the belief in a transcendent purpose, there has to be conjured a counterpart, a new humanity or selfhood in touch with concrete, bodily experience. Ultimately, for Nietzsche, the reality principle that serves as a countermeasure for such truisms is simply ‘the body and the world it inhabits’. In the words of Zarathustra:

The self says to the ego, ‘Feel pain here!’ Then the ego suffers and thinks how it might suffer no more – and that is why it is *made* to think. The self says to the ego, ‘Feel pleasure here!’ Then the ego is pleased and thinks how it might often be pleased again – and that is why it is *made* to think.¹⁵⁹

Contrary to such advice, Stephen’s sense of nostalgia and guilt (a restless feeling of guilt would always be present with him: he would confess and repent and be absolved, confess and repent again and be absolved again, fruitlessly’),¹⁶⁰ seems to lead to the abandonment of the reality of this world for ‘a faded world of fervent love’ beyond.¹⁶¹ A true ascetic artist of the will, Stephen emerges as a tamer of the natural self, and constructs himself as an artefact not less purified and chaste than his idealized feminine imaginaries later on. Stephen’s formation of the ascetic self as a moral offering, as a will resisting the penetrating rawness of the natural elements echoes one type of ascetic

¹⁵⁸ ‘Essay III’, Section 17, p. 97.

¹⁵⁹ For a thorough discussion see Allison, especially pp. 135-140.

¹⁶⁰ *A Portrait*, p. 129.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

aestheticism, one that, as Nietzsche argues, offers redemption through the hypnotization of the senses, the denial of the will: this need for aesthetic and existential redemption has its sources for Nietzsche in the Christianity, it is ‘the quintessence of all Christian needs’.¹⁶² Stephen’s commitment to a scholastically rigid ritual of piety and prayer, this mechanical practice of the daily prayers, are there to lull his conscience to sleep, to suppress the moral power of guilt and sin inside:

Every part of his day, divided by what he regarded now as the duties of his station in life, circled about its own centre of spiritual energy. His life seemed to have drawn near to eternity; every thought, word, and deed, every instance of consciousness could be made to reverberate radiantly in heaven: and at times his sense of such immediate repercussion was so lively that he seemed to feel his soul in devotion pressing like fingers the keyboard of a great cash register and to see the amount of his purchase start forth immediately in heaven, not as a number but as a frail column of incense or as a slender flower.¹⁶³

Through prayers, ‘the rosaries too which he said constantly – for he carried his beads loose in his trousers’¹⁶⁴ pockets that he might tell them as he walked the streets’ Stephen performs a kind of aesthetic *ascesis*, namely the mastering of the spiritual over the natural self. In particular, the imagery of the rosaries, and Stephen’s imagining of them as ‘coronals of flowers of such vague unearthly texture that they seemed to him as hueless and odourless as they were nameless’;¹⁶⁵ and of himself as bearing a wreath invoke somewhat Stephen’s ascetic will to an immaterial and disembodied self. In this ‘unearthly’ crown, in essence an emblem of victory of the spirit over matter, Stephen imagines his self as having become being ‘nameless’ at last, ego-less and feels to be redeemed. The angst of existence becomes transmuted into moral conscience and eventually into a metaphysical craving for a life beyond. In much the same terms as those used to address aesthetic composition, Stephen’s ascetic *apraxia* reveals a practice

¹⁶² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, p. 191.

¹⁶³ *A Portrait*, pp. 124-125.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

that wills of divesting the self of its 'dark' realities, wishing to live '*(i)n vitam eternam*', as if 'in a waking dream [...]. Another life! A life of grace and virtue and happiness!'¹⁶⁶ In a way one might argue, instead of a drama of tragic rebellion, Chapter V prepares as for one of redemption through the ascetic performance of Stephen himself.

Whereas Stephen's reverting to an ascetic selfless aesthetic in Chapter IV may be translated into moral and spiritual angst, nevertheless, paradoxically enough, resistance to the power of the flesh could also be taken to underscore an unbridled yearning for self-empowerment. By renouncing one's own will by means of self-torture, or by employing painful cruelties, the saint, Nietzsche tells us, practices the defiance of the self and symbolically gains control over life (exercising will-to-power). In a paradoxical fashion, asceticism, Nietzsche tells us, is, ultimately, a strategy for the preservation and enhancement of power:

Now the saint practices that defiance of oneself that is a close relation of lust for power and bestows the feeling of power even upon the hermit; now his distended sensibility leaps out of the desire to allow his passions free rein over into the desire to break them like wild horses under the mighty impress of a proud soul; now he desires a complete cessation of sensations of a disturbing, tormenting, stimulating kind, a waking sleep, a lasting repose in the womb of a dull, beast-and plant-like indolence; now he seeks conflict and ignites it in himself, because boredom has shown him its yawning face: he scourges his self-idolatry with self-contempt and cruelty, he rejoices in the wild riots of his desires, in the sharp sting of sin, indeed in the idea that he is lost, he knows how to lay a trap for his affects, for example that of the extremest lust for power, so that he passes over into the extremest abasement and his hunted soul is wrenched utterly out of joint by this contrast.¹⁶⁷

In this respect Stephen's self-denial suggests a parallel emotion, one that yearns to be master, via the symbolic triumph of the spirit over the ego's natural proclivities:

The idea of surrender had a perilous attraction for his mind now that he felt his soul beset once again by the insistent voices of the flesh which began to murmur to him again during his prayers and meditations. It gave him an

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 123.

¹⁶⁷ Ivan Soll, 'Nietzsche on Cruelty, Asceticism, and the Failure of Hedonism', in *Nietzsche, Genealogy and Morality*, ed. by Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 168-192 (p. 184).

intense sense of *power* to know that he could by a single act of consent, in a moment of thought, undo all that he had done.¹⁶⁸

In an oxymoronic manner, 'fall' and the journey towards 'redemption', turns into a narrative of empowerment for Stephen via the route of asceticism. In this context Stephen's confessional of the body is expressive of a certain will-to-power that succeeds in taming the natural, that is, the body and its instincts. Stephen fashioning himself to a new ego-less/unegoistic self in order to attain an ideal of higher beauty provides a kind of 'aesthetic resolution' that craves a higher abode, one which would allow him to resist 'merging his life in the common tide of other lives.'¹⁶⁹ Stephen's own performance (mastering of desire) in this part of the novel, one seeking a higher, elevated (god-like) status, seems particularly interesting given Nietzsche's understanding of the ascetic ideal (and in extension of 'bad conscience') as a kind of art form. Allison notes: one hurts oneself, and takes pleasure in it, by fashioning oneself to the new ego ideal of the selfless individual, the morally responsible, self-sacrificing subject.¹⁷⁰ And the critic continues: for Nietzsche this self-transformation is likened to the process of artistic creation, 'whereby the artist imposes an enormous task or burden upon him – or herself – along with the rigid determination and self-discipline this creative task involves – attaining an ideal of beauty'.¹⁷¹

One might argue that Joyce's depiction of the youth as a young repentant given to ascetic resignation provides an interesting psychological case for the loss of faith. In my view, as in the case of the sublime female symbols Stephen evokes in the course of the novel, this parable of sin and redemption proves, however, not absolved from desire and its affects. Ironically the ritual of the 'Blessed Sacrament' fails in consecrating

¹⁶⁸ *A Portrait*, p. 128.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹⁷⁰ Allison, p. 232.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

Stephen's desire which in turn, is internalized and sublimated into a discourse of 'Mariolatry':

A faded world of fervent love and virginal responses seemed to be evoked in his soul by the reading of its pages [...]. An inaudible voice seemed to caress the soul, telling her names and glories, bidding her arise as for espousal and come away, bidding her look forth. A spouse, from Amana and from the mountains of the leopards; and the soul seemed to answer with the same inaudible voice, surrendering herself: *Intern ubera mea commorabitur* [...]. He seemed to feel a flood slowly advancing towards his naked feet and to be waiting for the first faint timid noiseless wavelet to touch his fevered skin. Then almost at the verge of sinful consent, he found himself standing far away from the flood upon a dry shore, saved by a sudden act of the will or a sudden ejaculation.¹⁷²

Not incidentally, Stephen's 'anger' at hearing his mother sneeze' a few pages later is only to be relieved in the immaculate embrace of the symbolic chaste 'Mother'. The former anxiety-driven instinct is soothed by her virginal 'glories', plunging him back into a maternal world of comfort and safety. To some extent, the conflicting association the image of the mother holds here, both as an envoy of nature and all-forgiving sanctuary, conveys the irreconcilable contradictions in Stephen's psyche. And further, more importantly, it suggests Stephen's ultimate failure to annul the instincts – as indicated in a language that cannot resolve the tensions of his flesh and craving for chastity. As mentioned above, Nietzsche's ascetic ideal focuses on contemporary religion, aesthetics and morality, tracing the development of moral codes from the social sphere to the internalised sting of conscience in the individual. For Nietzsche 'internalisation' of instinct is defined as 'all instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inwards* – this is what I call *internalisation* of man: with this there now evolves in man what will later be called his "soul"'.¹⁷³ To some extent in *A Portrait* the language of piety, not unlike that of art, bespeaks of this kind of internalised desire. In the passage where Stephen contemplates the vision of the Virgin Mary as his ideal

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁷³ 'Essay II', Section 16, p. 57.

spouse describing as well as the passages of Stephen's self-fashioning as a ascetic forger of will-lessness, one that seeks to 'be held captive'¹⁷⁴ via a chaste ideal union, the narrative draws attention to the ambiguous language employed by Stephen, one in which mysticism is interwoven with images of sexuality and desire. Paradoxically, one might argue, piety in Stephen's case is but desire turned around, a language of chastity mischievously expressing desire through its very contradiction. In effect, the conflicting feelings of morality and desire linger in Stephen's consciousness and come frustratingly to the surface as to parody Stephen's plea for redemption. His religious vision expresses something perpetually left unsaid, figuring Stephen's now unconscious sexual impulses in the very conflation of religious and sexual discourse. In this respect, the text's slippery discourse indicates a connection between his desire and piety. And while as very poignantly Gerald Doherty notices, 'strictly speaking *A Portrait* has no language for masturbation beyond the highly judgmental one of the moralists'¹⁷⁵ – nevertheless, in this passage, spiritual piety is drawn into a discourse closely associated with the pleasures of sexual desire. Almost unconsciously, in the very discourse and ascetic paradigm offered here one reads Stephen's unwilling confession of an internalized desire where sexual energy finds itself eventually sublimated. In my view, Stephen's discourse projects a repressed and inverted will, one simultaneously seeking to escape the eternal cycle of suffering of the moral body, while mourning for the loss of 'truth' and permanence. A powerful testimony of Stephen's failure to truly outgrow both the sting of life and that of morality, Stephen's sexual sin is written into a body (and a language) that bears the markings of 'bad conscience'.

The same drive that seems to direct his earlier oath of chastity could be applied to the notion of aesthetics. Stephen's recollection of Emma suggests further parallels with

¹⁷⁴ *A Portrait*, p. 88.

¹⁷⁵ Gerald Doherty, *Pathologies of Desire: The Vicissitudes of the Self in James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: Peter Lang 2008), p. xiii.

his performing of himself as an ascetic, a 'monk'. Not incidentally, Stephen's remembrance of her brings to mind the collected poems of Lord Byron suggesting perhaps his identification of her with an ideal yet unattainable conception of love, a symbolic incestuous imaginary, suitably placed in an ideal beyond. He turns her into an ideal soul-sister, making her possession impossible, both as a means to 'protect' himself from the actual fulfilment of his yearning, as well as for safeguarding his ideal of beauty from what he perceives as a worldliness too vulgar to receive it. Stephen's will to overpower, tame and ultimately possess the female form, the truest symbol or Life Force for Nietzsche, can only occur through re-inventing the female body into a holy, pure and eternal artefact that promises no threat to his puerile notions of selfhood.

It is Stephen brooding over the memory of E.C, consuming himself in her romantic contemplation, when suddenly he sees another woman forming before his eyes. It looks like he involuntarily transfers the image of her to that figure, dissolving Emma's reality to the unreality of poetic creation. Sexual guilt is transfigured into a kind of aesthetic that Stephen can only gaze at a distance, the girl in the sea may not no less another 'Emma' transfigured and deprived of her bodily self. The notion of guilt and redemption can be brought to bear in the way in which Stephen experiences the joyful purification and sentiment of liberation evoked by this epiphanic vision. In the image of the lady at the sea, an amalgam of the Christian and mythological aspects that determine Stephen's *psychosynthesis* one may see projected various otherwise disjoint elements fused together. As formerly with religion Stephen seems capable of 'taming' the feminine (life) only in contemplation. The image of the girl is stripped of its physical attributes; its corporeality is sublimated into ethereal beauty, indicating further that what Stephen cannot emotionally and morally fathom is eventually sublimated, chastened, and disensualised. As Bonnie Kime Scott maintains, the bird-girl Stephen

views at the close of Chapter IV is 'a suspiciously religious icon' and the effect of such a vision on him, Stephen's plunging into 'a nurturing mother earth', a sleep-like state, this 'fall into a flushed womb.'¹⁷⁶ In reality, one might add, this aesthetic vision is placed in direct contradistinction to the structural progression of the novel towards an individualistic sense of selfhood, marking the dissolution, rather than the making of Stephen's creative ego.

Ultimately, only by turning himself into an aesthetic priest of the ethereal and eternal form 'a priest of the eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into a radiant body of everlasting life'¹⁷⁷, Stephen may finally embrace his idealized 'woman' in a chaste union of souls. This knowledge intensifies his aesthetic tendencies into a more or less absolute will-less aestheticism that seeks beauty in an art of distance and permanence. Religious and aesthetic practice, namely, ascetic self-abnegation and Apollonian chaste art forms, work to some degree synergistically to provide a sort of psychic remedy. The aesthetic chaste art underscores Stephen's will to tame, master and ultimately overcome existence as circumscribed by reality and life. The binary structures to which Stephen resolves, both his ethic of self-denial, as well as his model of aesthetic experience as disinterested contemplation, serve as deliverance from the tyranny and pathos of sexuality. However, inasmuch as Stephen remains divided by a moralizing conscience that equates sexual desire with suffering and subsequently life with the horror of existence, he runs the danger of becoming nauseated by his own deepest instincts. In the end, Stephen's metaphoric ascent into an aesthetic heaven, like his former ascent into Heaven through ascetic self-abnegation, signify one and the same origin. Ultimately, as Deborah Pope suggests, 'both visions (religious/aesthetic) are traps, each something more and something less than Stephen

¹⁷⁶ Bonnie Kime Scott, *James Joyce* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1987), p. 88.

¹⁷⁷ *A Portrait*, p. 186.

would have them [...] the bird-girl perhaps more the Virgin of the nets he so desperately longs to fly by-setting the stage for the deflected, bedevilled artist of *Ulysses*.¹⁷⁸ Ironically, Stephen's aesthetic reveals its susceptibility to a morality of custom which he considers surpassed. Stephen's reverie is led by the divinely aesthetic contemplation to comfort him with its plasticity, its static character. What is more, Stephen's aesthetic calling is no less a kind of trading of his former religiosity for a new one, and one which seems more to retain much of the former sensual guilt than he consciously admits. Understood in these terms, Stephen's change of heart in the last chapter of *A Portrait* might come to be read as a variation of the earlier theme, with the earlier religious asceticism giving way to an aesthetic one: an aesthetic also acting as prison. Ultimately Stephen emerges no less redeemed than before, his art serves as a means of internalizing and desensualising desire, a caged will, which, rather than becoming transfigured, remains perpetually caught in the binary opposition and repeats what it is meant to overcome.

¹⁷⁸ Deborah Pope, 'The Misprision of Vision: A Comparison of Stephen's Heaven and Hell in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 17 (1980), 263-270 (p. 269).

Conclusion

This thesis attempted to determine how one might go about placing the question of Friedrich Nietzsche within the context of an emerging literary tradition of early modernism and modernity. The thesis has two main lines of thrust: the relationship between the reception of Nietzsche's ideas and the little magazine culture in general, and the role of individual writers and intellectuals, looking at how they chose to respond to this phenomenon and how this is presented in their work from the period. More specifically, Chapters One and Three supplied information about the cultural and intellectual context within which Nietzsche's literary reception occurred, focusing particularly on the culture of little periodicals. The study of some of the most representative and fascinating sites of Nietzschean activity in pre-war and wartime England (*The Eagle and the Serpent*; the Leeds Arts Club; *The New Age*; *The Freewoman*; *The New Freewoman*; and *The Egoist*), helps considerably to illuminate the character of this phenomenon, and to demonstrate how Nietzsche was integrated into the cultural and literary discourses of the day (and for what purposes). Chapters Two, Four and Five, in turn, situated particular authors within this context of literary and cultural production, and suggested new ways of approaching their texts, as viewed through the lens of this particular tradition.

As is shown in these periodicals, 'radical Nietzscheanism' appears to have developed in tandem with an interest in philosophic egoism/individualism. This study has made it its primary concern to examine this relationship in depth. The selection and arrangement of the material, not only thematically, but also chronologically, have allowed a more nuanced understanding of the kinship between Nietzsche's literary legacy and individualistic currents within a wider avant-garde milieu, shedding light on

the origins, shifts, and different branchings and crossovers taking place in the course of this development. Overall, the articles and literature examined show evidence of a persistent discourse of ‘radical Nietzscheanism’, one deeply critical of the social and cultural dynamics of the period. In the broadest sense, radical Nietzscheanism served as a kind of cultural *pharmakon*, an emerging intellectual trend attentive to new perspectives, new sciences (such as psychology), and new experimental approaches to literature and aesthetics. Assimilated into the individualistic discourses of the periodicals in question, it served as a tool of critique and resistance, working at several levels at once: attacking traditional systems of thought (philosophical, aesthetic, social) and demanding the erection of new ones more in tune with the modern temper.

Its early phase can be traced back to the turn of the nineteenth century. It is characterised by such terms as: heretic, iconoclastic, boisterous, and untraditional. The earliest example in periodical form was *The Eagle and the Serpent*, and in chapter One we saw how Barnhill’s main purpose was to shake up old ideas via provocation: his Nietzschean aphorisms were explosives meant to demolish social conventions, public opinion, moral codes, ideals, duties – all, according to him, institutional efforts to put the ‘self’ under restraint.

The later phase is quite different in style and tone, more critical and increasingly more preoccupied with the emerging science of psychoanalysis. This preoccupation is one of its most salient characteristics. Chapter Three demonstrated how, while Marsden’s Nietzscheanism has similar ideological roots and purposes to Barnhill’s, it is radically different in choice of expression. In the particular case of Marsden, I identified radical Nietzscheanism’s transition from being a general anarchist avant-garde trend to one with a more systematic orientation towards aesthetics and psychology. In her early articles, for instance, we saw her arguing about the materiality of truth, that all values

have a historical genealogy and constitute mere human constructs, stemming from socio-political and psychological needs and desires. In *The New Freewoman* and *The Egoist*, like Nietzsche in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, she seems to argue that there can be no free-standing truth or purely objective knowledge, only the perspectives taken by the different instances of the Life-Force (another name for the Nietzschean will-to-power). But hers is a self-critical and introspective type of individualism, which posits that social and cultural change should first stem from the individual's realization of his self, his psychological and ethical bondage to values and norms. Her editorial statements from 1913 aptly capture this new philosophy. On different occasions we read how:

We prefer to say we 'stand' for nothing, since the 'selves', to whose power and satisfaction this effort administers, are too changeful for anything which 'stands' to keep up with; their satisfactions must move forward.¹⁷⁹

And how:

[*The New Freewoman*] is not to bring new thoughts to individuals, but to set the thinking mechanism to the task of destroying thoughts [...] to set free life impulses. Its effect will be as though it has created new life-force.¹⁸⁰

Having outlined the individualistic debates in such a way, the rest of the study aimed to focus on individual writers and the Nietzschean undercurrent that is present in some of their key texts. As shown already, an immediate contextualization of G. B. Shaw, Wyndham Lewis, and James Joyce within the little magazines reveals a thorough and persistent preoccupation of these writers with Nietzsche on a far deeper and more interesting level than typically assumed. After setting the cultural and intellectual background in such a way, a reconsideration of these writers' kinship with Nietzsche seems a necessary and promising avenue of analysis, which sets their writing within the

¹⁷⁹ Dora Marsden, 'Views and Comments', *The New Freewoman*, 15th December 1913, pp. 222-225 (p. 224).

¹⁸⁰ Dora Marsden, "Views and Comments", *The New Freewoman*, 1st July 1913, pp. 23-25 (p. 25).

context from which it originated and was in dialogue with. For instance, as we saw in Chapters One and Two, early Nietzschean periodicals, such as *The Eagle of the Serpent*, can provide a useful and relevant framework for situating the frequent references to radical egoism/individualism invoked in the early works of Shaw and Joyce, confirming thereby an ongoing concern of these authors with the then avant-garde discourses surrounding Nietzsche's legacy. This study demonstrates that it is necessary to understand works such as *Stephen Hero*, *The Horses of Diomedes*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *The Philanderer*, *The Devil's Disciple*, and *Man and Superman*, not as edifices within a vacuum, but as works existing within this frame of reference to appreciate them as alternative discourses contributing to, and, equally, drawing from a common pool of ideas. Tarr, in reflecting on intellectual and aesthetic debates over Wagnerism and Symbolism, which were current at the time of the novel's inception, while being simultaneously conversant with the strain of aesthetic individualism in *The Egoist*, constitutes a representative example, which allows us to examine many of the literary aspects of this wider tradition. Marsden's case is also worthy of note. Placed vis-a-vis Joyce, her editorials from the period when *A Portrait* was published are truly revealing – especially in the way they address and compliment issues raised in Joyce's novel. 'Why we are Moral'¹⁸¹, 'Authority: Conscience and the Offences'¹⁸², for instance, address issues relevant to the analysis of Joyce and Nietzsche in Chapter Five of the thesis. They point at correspondences between her and Joyce not sufficiently treated by scholars.

As discussed earlier in the introduction, Nietzsche's ideas permeated the culture of early modernism and modernism extensively. My dwelling on the little periodical culture grew out of a desire to understand the breadth of this phenomenon, which feeds

¹⁸¹ Dora Marsden, 'Why are we Moral', *The Egoist*, 1st December 1914, pp. 433-436.

¹⁸² Dora Marsden, 'Authority: Conscience and the Offences', *The Egoist*, 1st August 1914, pp. 281-284.

into surprisingly many areas of literary inquiry. I particularly wished to focus on some of the most representative sites of Nietzschean activity, to begin exploring the phenomenon of reception. Although, I feel, the periodicals examined here as key disseminators of Nietzsche's ideas among the avant-garde present us with a good handle on the phenomenon, there are still sites of interest which, for reasons of space and structure were not included in this study. For instance, Nietzschean ideas spread across the Atlantic. Periodical sites such as *M'lle New York* (New York, 1895-1899) demonstrate the early incorporation of Nietzsche into aesthetic debates (i.e. James Huneker's series of articles later published in book form as *Egoists: A Book for Supermen*, [1909]). Margaret Anderson's *The Little Review* (Chicago, New York, Paris, 1914-1919) is another important site of Nietzschean activity. Back in London, such periodicals as *The Signature* (London, 1915), the short lived little periodical that D. H. Lawrence edited with the help of K. Mansfield and J. Middleton Murry, as well as *London Aphrodite* (London, 1928-1929), both warrant deeper study as sites of Nietzsche's initial intellectual reception. In *The Signature* one can glance through the first three parts of 'The Crown' (4th and 18th October, and 1st November 1915 issues), where we have Lawrence reinterpreting the Nietzschean notions of will-to-power and the Dionysian-Apollonian duality in an early effort to develop his own philosophical system and personal worldview.¹⁸³ *London Aphrodite* also deserves attention. Started by two Australians in London, Jack Lindsay and P. R. Stephensen, it is quite unique in its character and convictions, and very important in terms of the later phase of Nietzsche's literary reception. This publication offers an alternative to modernist literary aesthetics.

¹⁸³ As Michael Herbert informs us, 'The Crown' is a very important text in terms of Lawrence's philosophical development and literary production for at least a decade, from 1915 to 1925. It marks an intermediate state between *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, between the 'Study of Thomas Hardy' and Lawrence's later philosophy. Michael Herbert, *The Cambridge Edition of the Letters and Works of D. H. Lawrence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), xix.

Interestingly enough, it reconciled its Nietzscheanism with an anti-modernist stance. In its editorial manifesto we read:

We stand for a point of view which equally outrages the modernist and the reactionary. It is certain that J. C. Squire and T.S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis and Dean Inge, Humbert Wolfe and Robert Graves, E. E. Cummings and Alfred Noyes, Maritain and James Douglas, Roger Fry and William Orpen would, if compelled by physical force to read our magazine, heartily (or at least irritatedly) dislike it [...]. We affirm Life, and for the definition quote Nietzsche: Spirit is that life which itself cuts into life. We affirm Beauty, and by that term understand a sensual harmony, a homogeneous ecstasy, which constructing intellectually, yet hates nothing so much as the dry cogs of the objectified and objectifying intellect.¹⁸⁴

It is my strong belief that, while they remain beyond the scope of the present study, these periodicals certainly stand to contribute much to our understanding of Nietzsche's impact on literary modernism. In fact, not only may they open up new links, but they are also viable objects of study in their own right.

The same can be said about the authors selected for this study. They are writers who form an important link within the literary tradition under investigation. There is, however, a substantial list of lesser-known writers and intellectuals, men and women, who made noteworthy contributions to the discourse around Nietzsche. Popular Nietzschean literature by authors who are currently little-studied and in many cases little-known, such as *The Warstock: A Tale of To-Morrow* (1898)¹⁸⁵ by Gerrare Wirt [William O. Greener's pseudonym]; Upton Sinclair's *The Overman* (1907)¹⁸⁶; *A Superman in Being* by Litchfield Woods¹⁸⁷. Superman-inspired short stories, like 'A Superman', by Ruffy Hall in *Rhythm*¹⁸⁸; articles on Nietzsche, Freud, Jung, drama and literary aesthetics by intellectuals such as C. E. Bechhöfer, 'Tales of To-day:

¹⁸⁴ 'Editorial Manifestos', *The London Aphrodite*, 1 August 1928, p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ William O. Greener, *The Warstock: A Tale of To-Morrow* (London: W. W. Greener, 1898).

¹⁸⁶ Upton Sinclair, *The Overman* (New York; London: Doubleday, 1907).

¹⁸⁷ Litchfield Woods, *A Superman in Being* (London: Stephen Swift, 1912).

¹⁸⁸ Ruffy Hall, 'A Superman', *Rhythm*, Winter 1911, pp. 11-16.

Dostoevsky in Nysa'¹⁸⁹; J. A. M., Alcock, 'Nietzsche and the Mahabharata'¹⁹⁰; Paul V. Cohn, 'An Echo from Hades'¹⁹¹, reflect yet another chapter in the history of Nietzsche's reception. So do the works of Margaret Anderson, Dorothy West, and Storm Jameson, who also need to be studied as examples of women writers responding to this tradition of Nietzscheanism in a positive yet critical way. Not unlike Marsden, these women were 'freewomen' and 'Nietzscheans' in their own right, contributing challenging and original interpretations of Nietzsche's ideas on aesthetics as well as the wider social and cultural issues of their day. These women authored articles, essays and published studies. In the case of Jameson in particular, her Nietzschean credentials can be sought in *Modern Drama in Europe* (1920),¹⁹² a revised thesis submitted for an MA at the University of Leeds. The treatise opens with a foreword titled 'Nietzsche in Modern Drama', discussing his significance and place in the dramatic thought of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Margaret Anderson's own blend of Nietzschean thought and anarchist ideals is also of interest, as it links up with the overall concerns of the *The Little Review* (of which she was the founding editor), and its broader aesthetic and cultural vision. In the first issue Nietzsche figures prominently, becoming the main frame of reference in discussions of the new journal's direction and purpose. We read in 'The Prophet of a New Culture':

Why, then, should not a magazine of the Future interpret Nietzsche the prophet of a new culture? Man as the goal, beauty as the form, life as the law, eternity as the content of our new day – this is Nietzsche's message to the modern man.¹⁹³

Overall, I hoped that I have managed to demonstrate how Nietzsche's reception by the literary modernist milieu was a far less marginal phenomenon than many

¹⁸⁹ C. E. Bechhöfer, 'Tales of To-day: Dostoevsky in Nysa', *The New Age*, 3 August 1916, pp. 330-331.

¹⁹⁰ J. A. M. Alcock, 'Nietzsche and the Mahabharata', *The New Age*, 13 May 1920, pp. 27-28.

¹⁹¹ Paul V. Cohn, 'An Echo from Hades', *The New Age*, 3 April 1913, pp. 525-526.

¹⁹² Storm Jameson, *Modern Drama in Europe* (London: W. Collins, 1920).

¹⁹³ G. B. Foster, 'The Prophet of a New Culture', *The Little Review*, March 1914, pp. 14-17 (p.17).

established scholars like Thatcher and Bridgwater tend to suggest. To understand it properly, we have to look at the wider picture and consider in detail the many communication pathways within the bohemian circles of the period. I aimed to select material which would demonstrate how radical Nietzscheanism connects to a critique of modernity itself and how it originates in the turn-of-the-century social, cultural, and aesthetic discourses of self-creation and re-evaluation. There was, I believe, a close connection between literary modernism and wider radical thought. In the portraits of free individuals and artists envisioned by the writers and intellectuals in question, we can discern a pattern of self-reflection and self-examination through creativity and regeneration, self-perfection through 'Becoming'. Of course, the story of Nietzsche's impact on the modernists still has many relatively uncharted areas. The initial response to Nietzsche's legacy deserves to be explored further; this study is but a starting point for further exploration. Nietzsche certainly deserves to be a full member of the modernist canon. He has done so much to shape it.

Bibliography

[Due to the need to account for the specifics of Nietzsche's Anglophone reception, two different types of translation of Nietzsche's works have been used in the course of this thesis. The contemporary standard translations of Nietzsche, as well as selected then-contemporary/initial translations as we see them reproduced in *The Eagle and the Serpent*.]

Contemporary standard translations of Nietzsche's works:

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, ed. by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

_____, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (Michigan: Vintage Books, 1967)

_____, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, trans., by R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Classic Series, 1992)

_____, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974)

_____, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. by Keith Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

_____, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

_____, *The Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 2003)

_____, *The Will to Power*, ed. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968)

First translations of Nietzsche's works as found in *The Eagle and the Serpent*:

Common, Thomas, trans., 'Nietzsche on Atheism, Pessimism, Schopenhauer, & c.; The Subjugation of a Shadow; The Progress of Freedom of Spirit; Schopenhauer; The Sea Again Lies Open Before Us', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1 September 1900, pp. 6-7 [These are excerpts from Nietzsche's *Miscellaneous Opinions and Maxims* and *The Gay Science* (or *Joyful Wisdom*). The authorized English translations for these two works were published in 1909 and 1910 respectively].

Hausmann, William A., trans., 'Extracts from Nietzsche: The Origin of the Sense of Sin; Should Philosophers Marry? The Value of "Virtue"; A Sexual Appreciation of Luther, Goethe, Kant and Schopenhauer', 1 October 1900, *The*

Eagle and the Serpent, pp. 15-16 [These are excerpts from Haussmann's 1899 translation of *On the Genealogy of Morals*].

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Auvergne, Edmund B., 'The Case of Penelope', *The Freewoman*, 22 August 1912, pp. 265-266

Badcock, John Jr., *Slaves to Duty* (London: Reeves, 1894; repr. Colorado Springs: Ralph Myles, 1972)

Barnhill, John B., [Pseudonyms: Erwin McCall; 'Volcano'], 'Altruism – That is the Enemy', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 February 1898, pp. 3-5

_____, 'Benedictions and Maledictions', *The Eagle and the Serpent*, 15 June 1898, p. 47

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