Interpreting the Testament:

The Influence of Nietzsche on

Selected Works of German Prose Literature 1900-1914.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the influence of Nietzsche's works on works of German prose between 1900 and 1914. The works studied are Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless by Robert Musil; Der Tod in Venedig by Thomas Mann; Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge by Rainer Maria Rilke; Der Untertan by Heinrich Mann; Der Prozess by Franz Kafka and Der Weg ins Freie by Arthur Schnitzler. Other works are referred to as and when this may be required.

Having noted the historical background, the thesis first establishes a properly differentiated picture of Nietzsche's work itself, using substantial textual reference. In the subsequent chapter, the theoretical issues of 'influence' are examined. Each of the above prose works is then treated individually in its relationship to Nietzsche. In each case the argument is based upon direct comparisons of the author's text with specific passages from Nietzsche's works. Comparisons between the works concerned are made in order to show that Nietzsche provides each author with different material, and that each uses his borrowings in a different manner.

It is concluded in every case that Nietzsche's influence on the author's work has been inadequately acknowledged to varying degrees. It is argued that a recognition of the debts owed by these authors to Nietzsche is an essential part of the process by which they can be placed in their proper historical perspective.
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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Literature and History

There can be few periods more interesting than that of the years leading up to the First World War. The era is perhaps so interesting to us both from a traditional literary and a traditional historical point of view because of the relationship in which it stands to our own, the present, age. It has often been remarked that some centuries live posthumously or are born late: the First World War has often been called the end of the nineteenth century and the start of our own. The statement is in many ways borne out if we look at the world which was changed utterly by that war - the world of the pre-war years.

The image of a society still secure in its traditional values - in for example, the ill-fated dynasties of central Europe - in its assumptions of its own continuation and of its superiority to all other societies, past or present, is witnessed by innumerable historical documents. It has frequently been argued that only such a level of trust in the established social order can explain how the Europeans of 1914-18 endured for so long, and without decisive collapses on either side, a form of warfare which, to us, appears to have consisted largely of blatantly pointless massacre. In this sense of general conviction in itself, then, the period before the war is very far from our own.

But there is about this period a pervasive scent of our own times too: while the characters of, say, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky or Fontane still inhabit a world the day-to-day details of which seem an age removed from ours - an age of liveried servants and candlelight - the characters of Kafka, Mann, Rilke and their contemporaries are driven about in, woken up by or knocked down by cars. They
take electric trams and make telephone calls. When they walk into rooms they
turn on lights with a flick of a switch. They live in (or deliberately out of) cities
which we recognize as like our own. There is no leap of imagination needed to
make the everyday experiences of the characters 'modern'.

It is, I would argue, exactly this ambiguous experience - the clash between
the continued potency of established modes of living and the presence of a
perhaps uniquely qualitative change in the circumstances of that living - which
informs much of the literature of this period.

That strange mix of modern and traditional forms (in our own age it can be
seen in, say, South America) was probably more extreme in Germany in the
period under examination than in any other country. To the discomfort of
liberals raised on the 'Manchester' ideas of free trade and political liberalism as
the twin paths to infallible Progress, Germany achieved enormous (and
threatening) power without the appearance of a concomitantly 'modern' political
system. State-sponsored heavy industry showed itself to be capable of
outstripping Britain in her own backyard of the iron and steel trades, while
state-educated scientists opened out brand new fields in the electrical and
chemical industries. German academic achievements (for example, in the fields
of philology and archaeology) and German music were held up as examples
throughout the world. All the surface forms of modernity - free elections with
a wide franchise, progressive labour laws, freedom of the press and of artistic
expression - accompanied Germany's advance. And yet, following the defeats to
liberal hopes in 1848 and 1862, Bismarck's labyrinthine constitution ensured the
dominance of the Prussian landed aristocracy and permitted (even if it did not
intend) the Kaiser, should he wish, to act as the most genuine autocrat in the
developed world.
The middle classes were thus excluded (to a large extent with their own agreement) from the political power which elsewhere might have reflected their economic status. In consequence of this, the economic drive of the country and its political will were separate and (since the agricultural interests of the Junkers frequently contradicted those of industrialists and merchants) even opposed. The result was a curious sensation that the conscious political direction of the country was not the decisive factor: other, less distinct forces seemed to be at work. Bismarck and his ilk were concerned primarily with their own position within what we might call 'Greater Prussia'. And yet, willy-nilly, such 'Little German' notions were being overtaken. With hindsight, we can identify these opposing forces with the expansionist, 'Greater German' drives of a dynamic industrial economy. At the time, though, expressions like 'Fate' and 'Historical Mission' sprang to mind as 'explanations' for the apparently unwilled growth of German influence.

Vast historical forces seemed, to many, to be at work elsewhere too: for, if the middle-classes acquiesced in their own political impotence, others did not. The all but absolute power of the Kaiser and his officers was challenged not by liberal reformers, but by a Social Democratic party, true (in theory) to revolutionary marxism and growing - along with the trades union movement - at such a rate that some saw in it the apocalypse.

In Austria-Hungary, too, there was a similar conflict between old and new ways, and there too apocalypse took on an identifiable shape. The imperial, culturally germanophone cities of Vienna and Prague grew and industrialized more or less as rapidly as the rest of western Europe. Under the 'Absolutismus gemildert durch Schlamperei' of the 'K.-u-K.' monarchy, the citizens enjoyed even greater day-to-day freedom than in Germany (they often despised the
'Prussian' obsession with order and efficiency) and took even less active a part in the larger affairs of imperial government. These were dominated by the endlessly complex questions of national minorities. The Germans were merely the largest of these - and only just, with (on the basis of first language in 1910) some 12,000,000 citizens compared to some 10,000,000 Magyars. Industrialization of cities led - as always - to a sucking-in of rural labour; but in Austria-Hungary this meant largely Slavic labour. Even in Prague the German-speaking minority could only maintain its cultural dominance thanks to the Jews (there were twice as many Jewish German-speakers as non-Jewish German speakers in Prague by 1914). In the smaller towns of Bohemia (as in East Prussia), Germans felt themselves to be highly vulnerable. Yet they still retained the formal reins of power and cultural supremacy.

The Habsburg empire, then, seemed to be affected by the same disease as the Hohenzollern: conscious political decisions seemed to be more or less inconsequential tinkerings with an incomprehensible, driver-less vehicle. Perhaps it is this which helps explain the extraordinary contrast between the statistical might of Germany and the cultural pessimism which pervaded the country. Thus Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, at the helm of Europe's greatest economic and military power, could refuse shortly before the war to plant trees on his estate on the grounds that the Russians would be there in a few years.1 The national schizophrenia is nowhere so clear as in Bernhardi's infamous phrase 'Weltmacht oder Untergang', and the sense of unavoidable fate nowhere so clear, perhaps, as in Kaiser Franz Josef's untranslatable 'Also doch!' on hearing that war was now inevitable.

Both countries thus present a picture, different in detail, but similar in overall effect, which is rather like that of some great sailing-ship hanging in the wind, caught mid-tack: the conflicting pressures of impelling and conducting forces create a tension-filled stasis.

It is this tension and this stasis which provide the background to the literary works I wish to examine. To put the problem in a nutshell: how representative was the 'artistic' young man in the Odeonsplatz who later described the declaration of war thus:

Die nun kommende Zeit lag wie ein schwerer Alpdruck auf den Menschen, brütend wie fiebrige Tropenglut, so dass das Gefühl der herannahenden Katastrophe endlich zur Sehnsucht wurde: der Himmel möge endlich dem Schicksal, das nicht mehr zu hemmen war, endlich freien Lauf gewähren.²

This, of course, was written with hindsight. More importantly, it was written for a specific political purpose. These two features are those which Woodruff D. Smith identifies as problems in dealing with the 'historical' documents of this period. His analysis, I think, indicates the way in which literature can come to our aid:

In discussing Wilhelmian politics, it is important to distinguish between the actual long-term changes that were occurring in Germany's economic and social structure and the perceptions of these changes registered in the minds of Germans ... [ideologies] are primarily intended to elicit action rather than produce accurate social understanding. They owe their contents to processes of idea and image aggregation over time; thus they incorporate mainly

² Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, Munich 1937, p.173.
perceptions of past social problems and conditions ... In the Wilhelmine era, which followed a period of very rapid and general socioeconomic change and in which modernization was still occurring comparatively quickly, this characteristic of ideology is particularly noticeable. It appears to have been a major cause in the gap that existed between Wilhelmian society as contemporaries perceived it and Wilhelmian society as it can now be understood.³

Most literary documents, however, - and certainly the outstanding ones of the German language in this period - do not appear to have been 'primarily intended to elicit action'. It is, indeed, the absence of such engagement which is most striking:

Kunsttheorie und -produktion, Weltanschauungen und Lebensformen der künstlerischen Intelligenz um 1890-1914 bieten eine Panorama von Möglichkeiten dar, wie man sich vergeblich aus der Affäre zu ziehen versuchte: Flucht aus dem Bürgerlichen 'Betrieb' an die soziale Peripherie, in die Bohème [...] Einrichtung in einer rentnerhaften, parasitären Lebensweise, deren Manifestation nach aussen der Dandy ist; Hingabe an vielfältige Modi einer ästhetischen Revolte ...⁴

This thesis will argue, though, that art cannot withdraw 'aus der Affäre', however much it may wish to; that the lack of evident political polemic does not mean that literature is making no comment. On the contrary: I would suggest that some of the works we shall investigate so well present or embody the problems


of their age as to act as the finest documents of history-in-the-making. They deal not with problems which are essentially of the past, but with those which are essentially of the future-in-waiting.

I shall be looking at such works in the light of their relationship (if any) to the works of a man who was convinced of the prophetic power of his own writings, persuaded that an unparalleled crisis was lying in wait for (or rather, within) western culture and whom history has confirmed on both counts. He has been described, quite simply, as holding 'the key to 20th century German Literature'. He is, of course, Friedrich Nietzsche.

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CHAPTER 2: The Testament

(Nietzsche)

Introduction

This thesis is not about Nietzsche (1844-1900). It is not, that is, intended as an examination of Nietzsche's work in itself but as an investigation into how, if at all, what he wrote affected what was written after him. In looking at these later works I shall regularly be examining what may be specific echoes of specific passages from Nietzsche as well as what may be broader parallels of meaning and intellectual disposition.

This, however, brings us up against a problem which cannot be avoided: that of the 'meaning' of Nietzsche's works themselves.

The contradictory character of Nietzsche's thought is expressed by the contradictory nature of his presentation: his use of aphoristic 'thought bites' means both that his thought is uniquely open to circulation as tags, quotable remarks and so on - but this also means that almost any quotation can be countered with a direct antithesis. It is tempting, then, to take the whole oeuvre as an illustration of Nietzsche's own subjectivist dictum that 'für jede Sache sich etwas geltend machen lässt' (IVii,283).

This reaction would clearly invalidate a thesis like this one. Its value (if any) will derive largely from textual comparisons of Nietzsche's work with that of other writers. Such comparisons will be useless as interpretative aids regarding

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1 References to Nietzsche's works - by volume (Roman) and page (Arabic) numerals - are to Georgio Colli/ Mazzino Montinari (eds.) Kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke, Berlin, 1967ff. Dates given are of publication (in the case of works published during Nietzsche's conscious life) or of writing (in the case of works published after his collapse).
the later texts if we decide from the start that Nietzsche's work forms a self-cancelling or free-playing corpus devoid of identifiable meaning. This thesis must therefore claim that the phenomenon 'Nietzsche's work' does have some intelligible significance - and be prepared to identify it. I cannot here attempt a general interpretation of Nietzsche, of course; it will, however, be necessary to show an awareness of the issues involved, of the themes to which the various materials from Nietzsche refer. Such a presentation has no pretensions to completeness or originality. I wish simply to address certain elements in Nietzsche's work - elements which have mostly already been identified by his commentators and which I see as being relevant to the discussions to follow.

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The Dilemma

One popular history of our era opens with a brief chronology of events leading up to the turn of the century.\(^2\) After listing those in China and Africa, it proceeds to 'elsewhere', with the following list:

1883 Nietzsche publishes *Thus Spake Zarathustra*

1885 Indian National Congress founded

1891 Pope Leo XIII in encyclical *rerum novarum* says states should improve the position of the workers.

In a manner which would undoubtedly have delighted Nietzsche, this work thus accords him the 'world-historical' importance which he claims in *Ecce Homo* (VIii,363).

This heady view of Nietzsche is not the sole preserve of popular historiography. In the rather less popular realms of serious literary criticism, Nietzsche is allowed a status which is, in its way, no less remarkable. To take only a few of the innumerable examples which could be produced here: we can read that as far as music and literature were concerned 'it was Nietzsche who dominated the period leading up to the First World War';³ or that

Throughout this period, the thought of Nietzsche was not only that most acutely responsive to the great cultural dilemmas of European society. It also, bridging the gap between the academies and the artistic culture, between the philosophers and publicists, exerted the most direct influence [...] there is in the whole period scarcely a cultural area unaffected by Nietzsche's doctrines.⁴

All in all, Nietzsche's status as the key to German literature in this period 'will hardly be disputed'.⁵ When a highly respected commentator can go so far as to say that the modern world is 'all part of a story told by Nietzsche', it must be clear that we are dealing with a writer of extraordinary importance for the age which came after him.⁶ The question is: what is it in the relationship between Nietzsche's work and the period following his collapse which enabled his work to have such a 'direct influence', as Pascal puts it above, on those who came after?

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⁴ Roy Pascal, From Naturalism to Expressionism, London 1973, pp.53-56.
⁵ Patrick Bridgwater, Nietzsche in Anglosaxony, Leicester University, 1972, p.9.
I would suggest that Nietzsche's work must in some way have incorporated the essence of his age, or rather the essence of those elements in his age which were to attain dominance in the following period.

I believe, as have many before, that this essence consisted in the sense of existing in a time in which all values were seen to be in a state of flux, when it might often seem as if 'das Alte verloren gienge, das Neue nichts tauge' (IVii,210). But the insight was by no means a common one in Nietzsche's own day: 'it is remarkable that apart from Nietzsche [...] there does not seem to have been much overt realization of what was happening to the twin souls in the human breast about which Goethe had been concerned several generations earlier'.7 In other words, Nietzsche perceived as an immediate and tangible crisis what his contemporaries seem to have perceived only vaguely and intermittently.

Nietzsche holds that scientific, 'liberal' optimism - the heritage of the Enlightenment - is blithely unaware of the implications of its own intellectual creed. The basic thesis which informs his work and his prophetic ire is that man's quest for knowledge has undermined the foundations of man's ability to sustain life - and that the consequences of this are snowballing down upon an unwary world. As Nietzsche already formulates it in Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben (1874):

Überstolzer Europäer des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, du rasest! Dein
Wissen vollendet nicht die Natur, sondern tötet nur deine Eigene.

(IIIi,309)

The antagonism between 'Wissen' and 'Natur' in this excerpt is merely one incarnation of that between 'Erkenntnis' and 'Leben' which appears, in a variety of guises, throughout Nietzsche's work. On the one hand we have 'kritische Historie', 'Wissenschaft', 'Psychologie', 'Gewissen' 'Gerechtigkeit' and the like; that is, analytic, investigative faculties, procedures and categories. Ranged against these stand 'monumentale Historie', 'Mythos', 'Kunst', 'Zeugung', 'Überzeugen', 'Schaffen', and so on; that is, creative, dynamic faculties, procedures and categories. The line is drawn up along the difference between the state of critical reflection (when we feel like something 'Gewordenes') and the state of uncritical unity (when we feel like something 'Seiendes'). Right up to the end - as the Pindar-derived subtitle of the biblically-named Ecce Homo ('Wie man wird, was man ist') tells us - Nietzsche will attempt to unify these two modes of existence. In the end they are, to him, none other than those represented by the two trees of Eden in Genesis (IViii,178).

Though Nietzsche thus relates his quest to classical and biblical depictions - not to mention the clear relationship to Goethe's 'twin souls in the breast' - he gives it a particular urgency by his avowal that the age-old question of knowledge and life has now, in this specific age, become so pressing that a crisis is 'coming suddenly and coming soon'. His analysis of how the crisis has developed runs broadly thus: analytic knowledge is merely another 'life-serving' error which is based on the inaccurate but pragmatically effective premise of the homocentric fallacy (IVii,112); however, this system of thought has advanced as though on an exercise-field (VI,43) - especially under the tutelage of Christian intellectual rigour (Vii,282) - to such a level that it now challenges not only openly 'mythical' thought (like religion) but even its own 'mythical' fundaments,

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which are logic and the belief in 'truth' as a category of value. The highest modern man is thus a battlefield: the mythical 'lies' which have so far sustained his capacity to live and the newly acquired - but now equally powerful - will to truth are joined in battle within him (Vii,149). The dilemma, according to Nietzsche is: can man stand the truth (i.e. that there is no Truth)? Can we really do without 'Verehrungen', without myths of one kind or another?

Entweder schafft eure Verehrungen ab oder - euch selbst! Das Letztere wäre der Nihilismus; aber wäre nicht auch das Erstere - der Nihilismus? (Vii,263).

Nietzsche thus perceives a crisis coming, not from outside, but from the internal logic of western thought:

Niemand - vielleicht Kierkegaard, von dem Nietzsche nichts wusste - sah es, er allein: dass die Entchristlichung die Katastrophe war, der Zusammenbruch einer Weltordnung.9

While all around him appear to see an optimistic, liberal humanism replacing religion as a new 'faith', Nietzsche sees nihilism lurking in the decaying churches of Christianity. Convinced that the confrontation with this fate cannot be avoided, but must be embraced and thus (if man is strong enough) overcome, he 'undertakes to experience this coming nihilism experimentally in himself: to produce an anticipatory account..."10. As to the prophetic nature of Nietzsche's intimations of catastrophe, there can be hardly a doubt: Heidegger, writing very much closer to the deluge, sees that such a threatened nihilism

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zeigt einen solchen Tiefgang, dass ihre Entfaltung nur noch Weltkatastrophen zur Folge haben kann.\textsuperscript{11}

Knowing, as we do, that such a 'Weltkatastrophe' did come to pass, Nietzsche's explanation of why he has to produce such an 'anticipatory account' of nihilism is all the more moving:

Wir verneinen und müssen verneinen, weil Etwas in uns Leben und sich bejahren will, Etwas, das wir vielleicht noch nicht kennen, noch nicht sehen.' (Vii,225)

His greatest power is indeed at such moments - moments when, like his Delphic oracle, Nietzsche himself 'verbirgt nicht und verkündet nicht, sondern zeigt nur hin' (IIIi,329). But here we come to the fundamental watershed between Nietzsche's two voices: Nietzsche is not content merely to show the dilemma, merely to knock down old and (as he sees it) crumbling temples.

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Reaction to the dilemma

The logic of Nietzsche's position, in fact, demands action in and upon the world. If we abolish belief in the possibility of attaining any absolute Truth, then the problem of Truth ceases to be a problem worth consideration and is replaced by the problems of this world:

Nietzsche entschied sich gegen den Wahrheitanspruch jedweder Lehre, sogar seiner eigenen. Dafür ersehnte er Wirkung...\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{11} Martin Heidegger, 'Nietzsches Wort "Gott ist tot"', in Holzwege, Frankfurt, 1950, p.201.

\textsuperscript{12} Ross, p. 7.
Like Marx, then, Nietzsche wants not only to describe the world, but to change it. This, however, involves him in presenting to the world a positive alternative to the dilemma. But the distinction made by J.P. Stern is surely well-founded:

Again and again throughout Nietzsche's work we find the most penetrating critical insights capped by the most dubious 'constructive' proposals.\(^\text{13}\)

Having proved to his own satisfaction that we are emotionally, biologically and epistemologically in the cage of perspectivism and determinism from which no escape into 'Truth' or 'Free Will' is possible, Nietzsche then nevertheless goes on to describe the escape-route. If Nietzsche's dilemma involves the logical development (as he saw it) of the analytic turn of mind, then his proposed escape-route involves that process of rational analysis overcoming itself, ending 'durch einen Akt der Selbstaufhebung' (Vii2,428). The idea of a drive being capable of 'Selbstaufhebung' is highly Schopenhauerian - and, indeed, Nietzsche's later proposals take us back full circle to his early, Schopenhauerian work, \textit{Die Geburt der Tragödie} (1872): back, that is, to the primacy of the aesthetic.

Nietzsche says that the crisis delineated above is 'die Ehrfurcht gebietende Katastrophe einer zweitausendjährigen Zucht zur Wahrheit, welche am Schlusse sich die Lüge im Glauben an Gott verbietet' (Viii,427). Post-Socratic mankind's search for 'truth' has abolished God: but since (says Nietzsche) such naked ('Dionysian') knowledge of things is unbearable to man, man must create new ('Apolline') myths in order to maintain 'die pietätvolle Illusions-Stimmung, in der alles, was lebt, was leben will, allein leben kann' (IIIi,292).

The point is that art, to Nietzsche, is the one area of human activity which can reconcile that contradiction between man's inescapable tendency to reflectivity and his (equally inescapable) longing for unity: 'In der Kunst geniesst sich der Mensch als Vollkommenheit.' (Viiii,111)

Early on (IVii,101) we read exactly how this thesis relates to the 'modern dilemma' as seen by Nietzsche: we have abolished 'Verantwortlichkeit' (i.e. the notion of free will), so what can we worship now? The answer is given as 'Kraft, Schönheit, Fülle'. The things we 'worship' (i.e. those which provide our necessary 'myth') are not moral, says Nietzsche, but aesthetic. Even at this early stage, then, we can see an important theme: 'Mit Nietzsche beginnen grundsätzlich ästhetische Begriffe, die auf einem relativ festen ethischen Boden standen, die ethischen Grundsätze zu ersetzen.'

The point is that 'life-sanctioned' Aesthetics are, to Nietzsche, a replacement for metaphysically-sanctioned Ethics. The old 'Truths' (i.e. the life-serving lies of 'myth' in the broadest sense) are dead; the new truths (i.e. accurate statements about the world) are not true 'Truths' (i.e. life-serving statements). Very well then: if truth is no longer of any use to Life, what of beauty? Is beauty not, as Stendhal says 'une promesse de bonheur' (Viii,365)? What could be more life-enhancing than this? Perhaps Beauty is Truth after all - 'Truth' in the sense of a purely human 'truth', as that which enhances human life here and now?

The meta-investigative stance which Nietzsche proposes in his aesthetic thought is characteristic of his famous formulae and image-systems in general. These represent the attempt to arrive at a new, aesthetic form of 'truth' which will emotionally persuade (or literally 'über-reden') the reader rather than try

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to prove some analytic point. Nietzsche wants to communicate his insights, but without implicating them in the 'Verderbnis, Fälschung, Veröberflächigung und Generalisation' which he considers inevitably to attend the 'Krankheit' of consciousness and language (Vii,275). If he transforms his language into a reality-soaked system of metaphors, can he perhaps communicate his insights while remaining 'der Erde treu'? (Vii,9) Can the aesthetic phenomenon thus attain the longed-for unity between the trees of knowledge and of life?

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Aesthetic Image and Analytic Thought

On closer examination, Nietzsche's claims to have made this synthesis are spurious. I do not mean this as any external judgement on his work: rather, it appears to me that the claimed unity is spurious in terms of Nietzsche's own thought. That is to say, Nietzsche's images and the lapidary formulae which increasingly enshrine them do not represent a progression toward some synthesis of the opposing factions in his thought. Those factions, we recall, represent the 'oscillation in Nietzsche's values between a ruthless unmasking of truth and a resolute defence of life against the unmasking intellect'. Rather than synthesizing his oscillations in a unified whole, Nietzsche comes down progressively (though never completely) on one side of his thought: that of the aestheticism proclaimed in Die Geburt der Tragödie, until he arrives back at that garden gate in Nietzsche contra Wagner.

Nietzsche would have denied this: he himself claimed that 'der Scharfsinn zweier Jahrtausende' would not have been sufficient to discover the author of

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Menschliches, Allzumenschliches in the author of Zarathustra had he not admitted the fact (VI,iii,285). However, a (by no means exhaustive) batch of metaphors from Menschliches, Allzumenschliches (1878) which recur almost unchanged in Also sprach Zarathustra (1883) give the lie to his claim. In the earlier work we have the 'Kobold' of fear who sits on man's back (IVii,339) - just like Zarathustra's 'Geist der Schwere' (VI,i,194). We read that 'ein tapferes Heer überzeugt von der Sache, für welche es kämpft' (IVii,82) - a clear ancestor of Zarathustra's dictum that a good war sanctifies any cause (VIi,55). We read that 'wenn einer zum Helden werden will, so muss die Schlange vorher zum Drachen geworden sein, sonst fehlt ihm sein rechter Feind' (IVii,332) - which is practically the same formulation as that in Zarathustra: 'dass dem Übermenschen sein Drache nicht fehle, der Über-Drache, der seiner würdig ist' (VIi,181).

So even in Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, where the erstwhile prophet of art as the justifier of the world appears 'in his new dress as a scientist',¹⁶ there is a marked tendency to think in metaphors - even in the same metaphors Nietzsche will later use. What is more, we can already detect Nietzsche's tendency to dwell on the garish, disastrous aspect side of the image. Let us take numbers 236 (IVii,202) and 233 (IVii,199). In the first, Nietzsche describes the decline of 'die tropische Cultur': 'we' claim to be glad of the new, steadier world - but the weight of the depiction has been on the flashing lightning and mighty animals of the jungle. In the second the caveat is unwillingly given indeed:

Wer zum Bewusstsein über die Erzeugung des Genius' käme und die Art wie die Natur gewohnlich verfährt, auch praktisch durchführen

wollte, würde gerade so böse und rücksichtslos wie die Natur sein müssen. - Aber vielleicht haben wir uns verhört.

Thus there is definite evidence here for the kind of process which Reed sees regarding the 'blonde Bestie' of the later works: 'We have virtually lost sight of the reason for valuing these aristocratic peoples positively, amid the excitements of an account which concentrates on their destructiveness'.

Hollingdale likewise points out that, though Nietzsche intended merely to describe the dire character of the coming situation, 'the forcefulness and spirit of these depictions is such as to give them the character of an instigation to the kind of behaviour described'. In short, then, Nietzsche's reductive arguments concerning the amoral roots of human behaviour tend to become almost a call for amorality: moral reduction becomes aesthetic-cum-ethical prescription.

Certainly, this process can be associated with Nietzsche's tendency to employ metaphors literally, as Reed's example (above) shows. But this is a very different thing from suggesting that his repudiation of analysis is caused by his use of metaphors. It is Nietzsche himself who lets slip his images: the growing dominance of metaphor in his work is the expression - and not the cause - of a change in his thought. The notion that the ideas of a 'philosophic' Nietzsche fall prey to the dire images of an 'artistic' Nietzsche is simply not borne out by his texts.

As evidence of this, we can see language and images becoming simplified quite independently of one another. In IVii,42 Nietzsche tells us of the potential and the dangers in man's coming 'Gesammtregierung' of the world and says that

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18 Hollingdale, Nietzsche, p.6.
we might need 'vielleicht unter Umständen sogar böse Aufgaben zu stellen' to avoid the dangers. The triple qualification of 'böse Aufgaben' ('vielleicht unter Umständen sogar') is striking and eloquent. It is precisely such verbal qualifications which will be lacking in Nietzsche's later formulations regarding 'das Böse'.

In Vii,158 we find a complex and paradoxical image whereby a man without 'Horizonte' is compared to a bird inside a cage: later (Vili,339) the same image will become simplified so that the more obvious analogy (freedom from limitations = freedom from the cage) is communicated. The 'cage' image is thus simplified and relieved of its paradoxical nature in exactly the same way as was the analytic argument about 'das Böse'.

It is not, then, a question of idea versus image. The thesis that Nietzsche's artistic images and Nietzsche's rational thoughts are the products of fundamentally different modes of cogitation is not adequate. Image and analysis are not in opposition: they are in alliance, obeying the same directives. What we must seek is some intellectual-artistic 'gravitational centre' which produces Nietzsche's particular thought, his particular imagery.

That there is such a centre to find I do not doubt: the 'weightless erudition' of Jenseits von Gut und Böse (1886) and Zur Genealogie der Moral (1887) depends (to extrapolate from Hollingdale's image) on the illusion of weightlessness which can occur in free-fall. But a man in free-fall is, of course, not free at all. He is commanded by a gravity which is drawing him down; his velocity is imperceptible only to himself - and to those who jump with him. Nietzsche's case is just this: the 'freer' he may claim his position to be, the more and more we can observe the gravitational attraction impelling his

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19 Hollingdale, Nietzsche, p.45.
acceleratingly, ecstatically 'free' course. That course may be seen if we look at some of his most famous formulae.

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Sounding Brass (i): 'Ewige Wiederkunft'

This supposedly earth-shaking idea is in fact (quite apart from its classical antecedents) little more than a highly effective new presentation of Nietzsche’s well-established conviction that 'Die stärkste Erkenntnis' is that of our utter lack of Free Will (IViii,37), of our being trapped in the 'Gefängnis' of immanence. In Morgenröte (1881) we read:

Jene eiserne Hände der Notwendigkeit, welche den Würfelbecher des Zufalls schütteln, spielen ihr Spiel unendliche Zeit: da müssen Würfe vorkommen, die der Zweckmäßigkeit und Vernunftigkeit jedes Grades vollkommen ähnlich sehen (Vi,120).

The image of the eternal recurrence of life-as-it-is-now is merely a striking way of declaring once again that human life maintains itself and its illusion of freedom in the teeth of a determinist logic.

Nietzsche intends (initially, at any rate) not that his formulations of unfreedom should stand, but that they should prompt an objection. He tells 'die Plumpen und Böswilligen [...] dass es hier, wie so oft in diesem Buch, den Autor eben auf den Einwand ankommt' (IViii,91). There can be no clearer statement of Nietzsche’s intention to prick his reader into some private reaction. The concept of 'ewige Wiederkunft' fits this pattern: it is introduced (Vii,250) with 'Wie, wenn...'. That is to say, it is conceived originally not as a literal representation of the truth but merely as a challenge, a litmus test. This is made
quite clear in the Nachlass. There, Nietzsche openly says that the idea of 'ewige Wiederkunft' represents the culmination of man's 'idealistic' errors:

Als nothwendige Consequenz der bisherigen Ideale: absolute Werthlosigkeit. Die Lehre von der ewigen Wiederkunft als seine Vollendung, als Krisis. (VIII:3)

This 'teaching' does not tell us what to do - but simply demonstrates the pass to which we have been brought.

The idea of eternal recurrence is thus to be placed firmly in the rows of Nietzsche's dialectical shock-devices. Here, however, it is important to differentiate between what Nietzsche thinks he is doing and what we can see in his work. In theory, Nietzsche intends (at any rate, originally) to prompt an undefined autonomous reaction, an expression of individual revolt against the watertight logic of determinism. In practice, however, Nietzsche's language is, if only subliminally, urging us in a quite specific direction: he insists on the vital and final importance of the challenge of 'ewige Wiederkunft': to say 'yes' to life after this represents the 'letzte, ewige Bestätigung und Besiegelung' of life (Vii,250). The wish for a 'letzte, ewige' solution is eloquent. It is the wish for unity, for an end to contradiction - exactly the sort of wish which Nietzsche himself elsewhere castigates as theology in disguise.

Stern describes the juggling-act by which Nietzsche attempts to avoid metaphysics:

This paradoxical doctrine of the here-and-now is to supply man's need for a metaphysics, but this metaphysics is to be concrete and 'immanant' because in it life, this life is to be made eternal.13

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I do not wish to argue the status of this idea in philosophical terms: but in terms of Nietzsche’s own conflicting thought as expressed in his texts I would suggest that this ‘resolution’ to the problem of immanence and transcendence is thoroughly spurious. However much Nietzsche maintains the newness of ‘ewige Wiederkunft’, it is really no more than the stance he warned against, years before, in Menschliches. Allzumenschliches: any belief at all in any ‘Gesetzmässigkeit in der Natur’ (of which ‘ewige Wiederkunft’ is obviously an example, however unusual) is ‘ein letzter Zufluchtswinkel der mythologischen Träumerei’ (IViii,20). The great ‘new’ thought (or rather, phrase) represents the victory of one side of his contradictory thought: in the formula ‘ewige Wiederkunft’, ‘Sein’ is favoured over ‘Werden’, ‘Mythos’ over ‘Historie’.

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Sounding Brass (ii): ‘Amor Fati’

‘Amor fati’ appears first in Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft (1882) (Vii,201). It is clearly related to the wished-for positive reaction to ‘ewige Wiederkehr’; ‘amor fati: das man nichts anderes haben will, vorwärts nichts, rückwärts nichts, in aller Ewigkeit nichts’ (VIiii,295). However, ‘amor fati’ is, even more clearly than ‘ewige Wiederkunft’, merely a striking new expression of what Nietzsche has long held. In Menschliches. Allzumenschliches (IVii,187) we read that the role of Art in a post-metaphysical world is to cry ‘wie es auch sei, das Leben, es ist gut’: Nietzsche uses the quotation from Goethe in a context which makes it clear that this is ‘amor fati’ bar the name. ‘Amor fati’ rebels directly against Nietzsche’s wish that man should overcome himself, indeed, against any kind of ‘Werden’ at all. Any man who tries to create anything new is inevitably sinning
against 'amor fati' by refusing to accept the world-as-it-is without reserve, since creation demands that man divide the world into 'real' (i.e. how it is now) and 'apparent' (i.e. how it is in his vision).

Nietzsche appears to have recognized the problem. He insists that the artist has some dispensation from the charge of 'decadence': 'dass der Künstler den Schein höher schätzt als die Realität, ist kein Einwand gegen diesen Satz. Denn der 'Schein' bedeutet hier die Realität noch einmal'. This is because the tragic artist 'ist kein Pessimist, er sagt gerade ja zu allem Fragwürdigen und Furchtbaren selbst' (VIII,73). This sounds suspiciously like a circular argument whereby the tragic artist is not decadent because tragic art is defined as the absence of decadence. Whatever the weakness of the defence Nietzsche uses, the fact that he sees he has some explaining to do is important.

The clearest indication that Nietzsche sees a problem here can be found in his attempt to enlist Christ into the ranks of those who uphold 'amor fati'. Nietzsche constructs a picture of Christ which will absolve Him from the great Nietzschean sin of non-acceptance of the world, of being 'in Aufruhr gegen die Ordnung' (VIII,211). In one of the most remarkable sections of any of his works - Der Antichrist (1888) nos. 32-40 - 'amor fati' is revealed as the Will to Power transformed by 'Innerlichkeit' into 'das evangelische Leben' which is so thoroughly of the here-and-now that it 'kann auch nicht widersprechen, sie begreift es gar nicht, dass es andere Lehren gibt, geben kann' (VIII,202).

Once again, this theme can be seen early on: though Christianity serves 'Vernichtung' (IVII,44) Nietzsche exempts Christ personally from his strictures (IVII,140). The 'frohe Botschafter' of Der Antichrist (VIII,205) is already spreading his 'frohe Botschaft' in Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, where we are told to live in such a way that we 'die Bibel fortwährend überflüssig
The difference between the later and earlier texts is (once again) that in these earlier aphorisms Nietzsche admits the paradoxical nature of his argument. He confesses that Christ’s life depends on being ‘unwissenschaftlich’ in some measure: power through belief is an example of an effective ‘Irrthum’ (IViii,51). Here, then, Nietzsche does not deny the contradiction between life and knowledge: the example of Christ’s life is representative of the dilemma rather than an ‘Erlösung’ from it. This representation of the dilemma is typical of the earlier work. It is just as typical of his later work that Nietzsche attempts to make things conform to his quasi-scientific, ‘truths’ such as ‘amor fati’ - even when this requires considerable intellectual gymnastics.

Thus the concept (or phrase) ‘amor fati’ does not seem at all to have overcome the contradictions established in his earlier work: rather, it seems to be a coming-down on one side of Nietzsche’s own fence.

The trouble is that only the sitting-on-the-fence position is uniquely Nietzsche’s: coming down, he must inevitably land in someone else’s territory. In the case of ‘amor fati’ the leap brings Nietzsche down from the icy ‘Distanz’ of his critical dilemma into an area where direct political implication is not far away. Are there not disquieting implications in the equation of ‘Aufruhr gegen die Ordnung’ with a sin against ‘Life’ itself? Nietzsche, in fact, takes up a stance against which he himself has earlier warned us: he conflates metaphysical and earthly imperatives in the phrase ‘Anordnung von Oben’ (IVii,312). The political implications of such ideas are by no means unclear to the earlier Nietzsche: ‘Wer an der Ordnung der Gesellschaft bauen will’ need only propagate a ‘Philosophie der heiteren Tauschablehnung und Neidlosigkeit’ (IViii,167) - which is, of course, exactly what ‘amor fati’ represents.
Once again, then, the splendid formula does not resolve Nietzsche's dilemma in some new way, but comes down in favour of the anti-analytical side which has always been present. And in this case the decision has quasi-political implications which are (as the early Nietzsche realized) clearly conservative.

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Sounding Brass: (iii) 'Wille zur Macht'

This is Nietzsche's response to the question which Marx answers by referring to the development of productive forces and which Freud answers by referring to the pleasure principle: what, if our clouds of glory have been abolished, provides the mainspring and directive force of human history? Again we find that the analytical content of the formula 'Wille zur Macht' is present in Nietzsche's writings from an early stage. One writer considers the first 'Entwurf der späteren Theorie' to be found in Menschliches, Allzumenschliches no.45 (IVii,45-6).14 Certainly, Morgenröte no.189 (Vi,162) states that 'Wenn der Mensch im Gefühle der Macht ist, so fühlt und nennt er sich gut' and Vi,100 tells us that the story of man's 'Streben nach Überwältigung des Nächsten' is tantamount to 'eine Geschichte der Cultur'. However, in the earlier works, Nietzsche (as usual) also contradicts this view. There, for example (IViii,27) he suggests that the wish for 'Macht' has brought benefits to mankind even though it is itself a 'Schwarzwurzel'. Later, of course, he will forget or omit to say that in describing man's power-drive he is describing a phenomenon which must be accepted as important despite its unpleasantness. Just as we saw in Reed's discussions of Nietzsche's 'barbarians', we see Nietzsche becoming drawn more

and more to luxuriate in his dire portrayal of what was originally conceived as an unattractive but undeniable part of man's behaviour.

What is most striking is that Nietzsche early on castigates the obsession with power as 'zeitgemäss':

Und erst kommt es auf Kraft an, dann erst auf Wahrheit, oder auch
denn noch lange nicht, - nicht wahr, meine lieben Zeitgemässen?

(IVii,118).

Within the framework established in considering the other formulations, there seems little need to go into further detail: 'Wille zur Macht' is present as a concept far earlier than as a formula; the creation of that lapidary formula indicates not the resolution of the dilemma, but a decision in favour of one side of Nietzsche's thought. Again, it is a decision in favour of an absolute, given, bedrock of perception, and the bedrock in question - the status accorded to power - is, as Nietzsche himself recognized earlier on, very much of its time.

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Physiology: Reduction as Prescription

The hint in the last section was that Nietzsche's formula 'Wille zur Macht' demonstrates two things: Nietzsche's tendency to accept his own reductive arguments as prescriptive formulae and the possibility that his direction is not so 'unzeitgemäss' after all. These features are not only visible in the rolling formulae, but also in the more diffuse schemata which are characteristic of his later writings. Let us first take his use of physiological images and terms.

Pasley has shown in detail the 'linguistic landslide' which brought more and more of Nietzsche's thinking into the (literal rather than metaphorical) province
of medicine. The reason for Nietzsche's obsession with physiology would appear (again) to be his desire to find some absolute which has retained its validity. Nietzsche reveals this accidentally in IVii,39: he maintains that there are indeed 'alle Zersetzungen überdauernden Wahrheiten' - but the only one he actually names is the 'Diätetik der Gesundheit'. More and more, the physiological imperative becomes conceived of as the one sure bedrock for value-judgements in a world of uncertainty and relativity.

It is difficult to determine the point at which Nietzsche's physiological images cease to be cultural metaphors and enshrine the claim to be accurate representations of reality. Again, the shading-over from one mode to the other seems to be prepared for, at the very least, from early on: there would appear to be very little difference between Nietzsche's extraordinary mixed barrage of sociological, existential and medical pejoratives in Der Wanderer und sein Schatten (1880) and that in Nietzsche contra Wagner (1888): in the first, we are told that artists should work

Niemals auf das Volk! Niemals auf die Unreifen! Niemals auf die Empfindsamkeit! Niemals auf die Krankhaften! Niemals auf die Abgestumpften! (IViii,258).

While in the second Nietzsche castigates that art which works

Auf die Masse! auf die Unreifen! auf die Blasirten! auf die Krankhaften, auf die Idioten! auf Wagnerianer! (VIii,421).

It would seem that the confusion of metaphorical and literal meanings of 'health' is visible early on: once again, it is not a question of development in Nietzsche's position, but of which side he comes down on. The metaphors of

15 Pasley, Nietzsche's Use of Medical Terms, p.145.
'sickness', that is, are there from the start: Nietzsche's increasing use of them is part and parcel - not the cause - of his retreat from the generally investigative stance of his middle works.

Nietzsche's physiological thought, though, is not as simple as the 'physiological imperative' might suggest: just what he means by 'health' is a central problem in his work. His thought on the matter, in fact, is shaped and made paradoxical by yet another incarnation of the running antinomy between 'Sein' and 'Werden' which we have already identified. Pasley characterizes this antinomy as that between 'health in the teeth of sickness' (a developmental, 'critical' process) as against 'pristine health' (a 'natural' state of being). Hollingdale makes a similar point, and indicates the epistemological 'juggling' going on here:

It makes no sense to say of a person that he is at the same time sick and healthy [...] But this is how Nietzsche describes himself throughout Ecce Homo: which is to say that 'health' and 'sickness' do not in this book mean what they usually mean. 'Health' appears to signify not the absence of sickness, but the capacity to resist and exploit sickness: but in that case his 'health' i.e. this capacity is never really undermined, so that he is never really sick...

In the end, then, Nietzsche appears to rely on some conception of essential 'healthiness' even in his apparently paradoxical depictions. It is, we have had cause to suspect, characteristic of Nietzsche's thought that an essential base, an immutable element of 'Sein' rather than of 'Werden' should become progressively dominant in his thought. And indeed, one can provide textual

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16 Hollingdale, Nietzsche, p.158.
evidence for Nietzsche’s growing conviction that health is either possessed as that 'pristine' quality - or not at all.

Let us take two examples of this development. In IVii,364 Nietzsche says that *mankind in general* prefers to make other people, not 'Zufall' guilty of its disasters; in VIii,392, however, *only the sick* think this way. In *Die Geburt der Tragödie* all men need the 'Schutz und Heilmittel' of Art (IIIi,97) - but in *Zur Genealogie der Moral* it is only 'degenerating' types who have 'Schutz -und Heilinstinkte' (VIii,384).

Nietzsche’s idea of 'health' thus appears to lean more and more away from a metaphorical one which concerns all mankind towards a literal one which divides mankind into two camps. 'Health', that is, is conceived more and more in terms not of something which society as a whole can attain by a process of development, but in terms of a pristine condition which is the preserve of those who are ontologically (that is, physiologically) 'healthy'. There is a clearly quietist implication in this thought: Nietzsche seems more and more to consider that nothing can be done for those who are sick - and that for those who are healthy, nothing need be done.

There is nothing coincidental about this change in Nietzsche's presentation, for it can be directly related to his thought on 'amor fati' and 'will to power': a 'healthy' man is happy with things-as-they-are however they are, because his 'healthiness' is willed into things, transforming the (his) entire world into mirror-images of his own essential 'health'. Thus, to a healthy man, the world will always be the object of a joyful acceptance which is rooted in his enjoyment of himself.

This might appear to be the innocuous (even, the moving) subjectivist ideal of a man who was a martyr to ill-health most of his life. However, this scheme
of thought has a very dark obverse: those who are not happy are unhealthy. Anyone who challenges 'die Ordnung' (i.e. the organisation of things as-they-are-now) is not morally wrong - but medically sick. The logical extension of this, which Nietzsche indeed makes, is that the very perception of any imperfection at all in the world is to be treated as an undesirable biological phenomenon. The political implications of such a stance perhaps hardly need pointing out: milder expressions of this idea are characteristic of conservative regimes generally. Thus, whether they be Wilhelmine 'Nörgler', Brezhnev's mental patients or Mrs. Thatcher's 'moaning minnies', those who voice disquiet are pronounced automatically to be somehow ill-found.

Biographically speaking, Nietzsche's attempt to propose that 'health' involves being 'sick' is clearly related to his own physical illness: such a man cannot define 'health' as simply a long life free from incapacitating conditions. So he will have to find some other definition - given, that is, that he is obsessed with the concept of 'health' in the first place. But why be obsessed with 'health' - rather, for example, than with 'fertility', 'success' or somesuch term? The obvious answer is to repeat 'because Nietzsche was ill very often'. But there is another, not contrary but complimentary, answer which might connect Nietzsche's personal-biographical imperatives and the broader themes of his age: as with 'Wille zur Macht', one suspects that the direction of Nietzsche's decision is indeed 'not so unseasonable ('unzeitgemäss') as he fancies'.

The fact is that the preoccupation with the 'health' of society was widespread in Nietzsche's day. Apocalyptic, Malthusian ideas were not the property of cranks, but were and (as Jack London's The People of the Abyss, for example,

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17 Stern, Idylls and Realities, p.207.
shows) were to remain for several decades, the focus of much vaguely 'radical' thought. Gustav Rümelin, for example,

reflected the 'depression psychology' which permeated so much of German social thought after 1873. But like many others, his analysis transcended the particular problems facing the German economy and called into question the basic [i.e. 'progressive'] direction of social change ... [aiming instead] to prevent the growth of a proletariat.18

The manifest physical unhealthiness of city life meant that the poor quarters were often quite literally a risk to 'public (i.e. middle- and upper-class) health'. This easily invited parallels with other problems of industrial society: it was an empirical fact that both social unrest and biological contagion were most likely to flourish among the poorest classes. If the new urban population was (as it was very much in Austria-Hungary and to some extent in eastern Germany) composed of other races, a further and extension was possible: the poor breed infection; immigrants are poor; therefore immigrants breed infection. Nietzsche is not above appealing to just this fatal mixture of social/racial/medical fears, as witness his comments on the Jewish God of 'aller ungesunden Quartiere' (Vliii,182) and his statement 'Wir würden uns "erste Christen" so wenig wie polnische Juden zum Umgang wählen' (Vliii,221). Here we find Nietzsche, canvassing for his campaign against Christianity, appealing to the lowest sort of racial/social snobbery imaginable - one in which anyone could concur merely by virtue of not being Polish and/or Jewish. It is surely hard not to see such outbursts as historically conditioned.

Such conflations of social and racial 'superiority' (and the associated retreat from social change) were often legitimized by the popularization of a half-baked 'Darwinism'. This led to many 'radical' writers worrying about 'the risk of permanent dull social harmony inducing racial senescence'. Many of such depictions (e.g. H.G. Well's 'Morlocks' in The Time Machine) seem to contain that contradictory sense that society is at once too safe and (thus) too dangerous: cultural stagnation is supposed to lead to biological decline and hence to as yet undreamed-of depravities. Here again, Nietzsche is partly of his age and partly trumping it with its own cards; he declares that this state is already upon us. Nietzsche's readings in fields other than philology were by no means always fully-baked, and Pascal has placed the 'Übermensch' idea in this broad sub-Darwinian scenario, pointing out that it appeals to a notion of individual-biological, not social-cultural 'evolution'. This brings us to this next of the striking predilections of the later Nietzsche.

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Supermen and Aristocrats: Assimilation of a Metaphor

Nietzsche's use of 'aristocratic' as a value-category is the element in his work most obviously open to political interpretation. It is notable that the first occurrence of the term 'übermenschlich' (which will later refer to all that is good or potential-filled in humanity) relates the concept directly to that of royalty: the truly just lawgiver would spread about 'die eisige Atmosphäre seiner

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20 Pascal, From Naturalism to Expressionism, p.54.
The second appearance relates the concept to 'fürstlich', and to the means whereby social order can be maintained: subordination depends upon 'die angeerbte Adoration vor dem Fürstlichen wie vor etwas Übermenschlichem' (IVii,298).

This subliminal tendency to associate (spiritual) distinction with 'aristocracy' or 'majesty' is of great importance. Nietzsche does not consciously defend existing conceptions of aristocracy: in Der Griecheische Staat he carefully avoids the word, depicting instead a 'bevorzugte Klasse [...] olympischer Menschen'(IIIi,261). Indeed, he sometimes (e.g. Vi,174) specifically distances his concept of 'Vornehmheit' from the violence of existing forms of aristocracy; in Morgenröte, for example, he proposes an 'Orden der Erkenntnis' as 'höhere Ritterdienste' (Vi,176). But Nietzsche's conscious intentions are no match for his ideologically-loaded choice of language: that language bespeaks his inability fully to break with traditional forms. Werner Ross, having examined Nietzsche's teenage correspondence, notes that "nobel" war und blieb sein Lieblingswort.21

Thus, having proposed this supposedly brand-new chivalric order of 'Erkenntnis' in Vi,176, Nietzsche nevertheless envisages the existing nobility as taking a leading part in it. Subliminally, then, Nietzsche would appear to associate social class with spiritual distinction. I would suggest that this example may stand as a paradigm for Nietzsche's relationship to the concept of 'nobility': the vagueness of his conception of a new 'aristocracy' creates a vacuum by virtue of which the qualities Nietzsche defines as 'aristocratic' seem to approximate themselves more and more closely to the actual attributes of the existing aristocracy. Thus we find him more and more praising military-aristocratic 'virtues' - obsession with caste and genealogy, loyalty to one's own coupled with

21 Ross, p.91.
mercilessness to those outside the caste. Such phenomena, originally claimed by Nietzsche merely to go hand in hand with spiritual distinction, appear more and more themselves almost to constitute his conception of such distinction. His definition of 'aristocracy', in other words, more and more accepts as sufficient the characteristics of the actually existing Junker class. Ross relates this biographically to the blithe antisemitism which is an undeniable feature of Nietzsche's later works: 'selbst der Antisemitismus erschien ihm nicht mehr so schlimm, als er hörte, dass der preussische Adel weitgehend für ihn gewonnen sei.'

Moreover, in taking on board the epithets and attitudes of privilege from his (which is still largely to say: our) established social order, Nietzsche also seems to ship the intellectual baggage which sanctions that order - the idea that the social hierarchy somehow reflects inherent (that is, in the end, biological) qualities. Thus in Jenseits von Gut und Böse the supposed connection between social class and race is not incidental, but is essential to Nietzsche's argument: 'Skepsis' is a result of a too speedy 'Stände- und folglich Rassenmischung' (VIii,142). When Nietzsche proposes mixing Jews and Prussians for 'die Züchtung einer neuen über Europa regierenden Kaste' (VIii,203) there can be no doubt that he is relating race to social dominance in directly biological terms. In his last days of semi-sanity, he is once again obsessed by this twinning:

Ich lege Wert darauf, zunächst die Offiziere und die jüdischen Bankiers für mich zu haben:- beide zusammen verkörpern den Willen zur Macht.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{22} Ross, p.711.

\textsuperscript{23} See Ross, p.747.
Reed's argument concerning the metamorphosis of the 'blonde Bestie' from image to 'reality' reveals just this assimilation of metaphor. He shows how the word 'blonde' (originally from a Latin tag) becomes a reference not to some original, free-floating 'Nietzschean' set of attributes, but to 'the actual (traditionally assumed) Nordic characteristic'. In other words, Nietzsche's image, having broken out of its original confinement, does not roam free at all - but assimilates itself to the received meaning. Here, then, Nietzsche's thought is clearly subject to the 'gravitational attraction' of contemporary assumptions.

Nietzsche's line of reasoning, according to Reed, runs as follows: the lion is the classical blond beast; Germans are blond; therefore Germans have the qualities of lions. The visual analogy is made to carry a value-judgement - a classic example of aesthetic 'truth'.

Here we must note that the structure would appear to be the same as in Nietzsche's reasoning concerning aristocracy and race: the aristocracy is dominant; superior races dominate; therefore the aristocracy have the qualities of a superior race. In both cases the argument consists of an uncontentious first hypothesis (an observation of demonstrable fact) followed by a traditional assumption (an appeal to entrenched belief) presented uncritically as the second hypothesis.

Nietzsche's verbal pleading for 'aristocracy' then, seems polluted by the typical demagogue's trick of proceeding from unexceptionable truism via contemporary prejudice to general statement. The same applies to his metaphorical pleading. His aesthetic images do not by-pass the intellect any more than his analysis does. Both attempt to gain persuasive strength by referring, consciously or not, to the ideas or images of popular contemporary thought.

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* Reed, 'Nietzsche's Animals', p. 166.
'Zeitgeist' as Gravity (i): Individualism

What, then, is the relationship between Nietzsche and his contemporary world? Nietzsche 'will ja dasselbe, was die Zeit will: nur ernst, radical, redlich'.

Certainly, these words represent qualities which Nietzsche demands in man: the 'ganz frommer Mensch' and the 'ganz aufrichtiger Unfrommer' are both accepted by him (MAii 93) because they take their beliefs to their logical conclusions. The one thing he cannot bear is that people see the problem 'und trotzdem bleibt alles beim Alten' (Vliii,209). Nietzsche values 'superman' ideas principally because of their 'Redlichkeit' - their open application of the Will to Power - and their lack of an appeal to (spurious) rationality. Well before he becomes interested in 'decadence', Nietzsche equates a lack of 'Redlichkeit' with 'Entartung'. (Vi,54) Gray has shown how such a valuation of 'Redlichkeit' might apply to Bismarck's 'Realpolitik' in regard of the Polish question:

It is difficult to see on what grounds Nietzsche might have faulted such frankness. The situation is clearly seen, the rights of the enemy acknowledged; there is no spurious appeal to justice, and the religious reference [i.e. that Poles, like wolves, are not responsible for what God has made them] has just the same implications as Nietzsche's atheism had: the claims of self-assertion are overriding. Since it was on the basis of such an attitude that the Empire had

25 Karl Schlechta, Der Fall Nietzsche. Munich 1958, p.63.

been founded, Nietzsche’s objections must often imply that
Germany’s real weakness was the lack of more Bismarcks.27

Here one would have to add that Nietzsche comes very close indeed to saying
this quite explicitly in his final months:

Wohin kam das letzte Gefühl von Anstand, von Achtung vor sich
selbst, wenn unsere Staatsmänner sogar, eine sonst sehr unbefangene
Art von menschen und Antichristen der That durch und durch, sich
heute noch Christen nennen [...] Ein junger Fürst, an der spitze
seiner Regimenter, prachtvoll als Ausdruck der Selbstsucht und
Selbstüberhebung seines Volks - aber ohne jede Scham, sich als
Christen bekennend! (Vliii,209)

The suspicion that such ideas are very 'Zeitgemäss' has been investigated in
broader cultural terms by Stern, who concludes that categories like
'ernst/radical/redlich', which are so vital to Nietzsche, implicate Nietzsche’s
thought in 'one of the chief intellectual superstitions of our age'. We cannot now
accept such categories, because 'the experience which divides us from Nietzsche
makes us reject a penitential ethic which determines "the order of men’s rank"
according to their capacity for suffering'.28

These value-categories, though, are central to Nietzsche’s thought. The ideas
that there is 'eine Rangordnung zwischen Mensch und Mensch' (Vlii,171) and
that a man’s place in this order of spiritual merit is decided by 'wie viel er von
der "Wahrheit" gerade noch aushielte' (Vlii,53) are perhaps the most
fundamental of his assumptions. Nietzsche takes it as self-evident that some men

27 Ronald Gray, The German Tradition in Literature 1871-1914, Cambridge,

are qualitatively better than others. He also takes it as self-evident that truth hurts. Combining these two assumptions, he decides that the more you can take - and then transform - of that hurt the greater you are. In other words, the 'worse' (more challenging, strenuous, serious) things are, the 'better' (more fruitful, noble, interesting) will be the products of the age. It is the same tempting argument given by Harry Lyme atop the Riesenrad in the Prater: war and tyranny gives us the Renaissance, peace and democracy the cuckoo-clock.

Thus it is that Nietzsche objects to democracies: their wrongness consists in their being 'Quarantäne - Anstalten gegen die alte Pest tyrannischer Gelüste: als solche sehr nützlich und sehr langweilig'. (IViii,321) Boredom is Nietzsche's greatest hatred, that 'matte Fortdauer' (IViii,48) of which the paradigm is Zarathustra's ghastly 'letzter Mensch'. But what does 'interestingness' involve?

Ich glaube, dass jeder über jedes Ding, über welches Meinungen möglich sind, eine eigene Meinung haben muss, weil er selber ein eigenes, nur einmaliges Ding ist, das zu allen Dingen eine neue, nie dagewesene Stellung einnimmt (IVii,237).

The prerequisite of interestingness, then, is individualism. This is why the 'Sklavenaufstand in der Moral' is so hated, despite the fact that Nietzsche himself shows how 'Ressentiment selbst schöpferisch wird und Werthe gebiert' (VIii,237). Elsewhere, such creativity is exactly what Nietzsche demands of his New Man: the difference (according to Nietzsche) is that the mass only creates in a 'reactive' manner, not an 'active' manner. As Reed concludes: 'One is left with the feeling that what mattered most to Nietzsche was that the act of creation should be left to the individual's free initiative'. Thus 'Ressentiment' may be creative; it may even be creative in exactly the same way as Nietzsche's

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9 Reed, 'Nietzsche's Animals' p.174-5.
'Übermensch' (i.e. by forging its own values). Nietzsche, though, will never accept that form of creativity because it is a product of the mass, whose value-creation is, according to him, not truly free, not truly individual.

To Nietzsche, then, individualism is not a preparation for anything else, but a sufficient goal in itself. In what is perhaps one of his most personally revealing statements, Nietzsche claims the Byronic right to alter his opinions as he will: 'we' would not die for our opinions, says he, 'Aber vielleicht dafür, dass wir unsere Meinungen haben dürfen und ändern dürfen'. (IViii.336) With this one phrase, Nietzsche sets unbounded individual liberty above and beyond all moral attitudes to knowledge. Simply by being 'individualistic' - by refusing to acknowledge any limit whatsoever on one's individual whim - one is, to Nietzsche, living proof that the longed-for escape from determinacy is, after all, possible.

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'Zeitgeist' as Gravity (ii): The Death of Liberalism

This is where our appreciation of history must come to bear. For if Nietzsche proposes completely untrammelled individual liberty as the proof of man's freedom from determining structures, then it is clear with our hindsight that this conception of liberty is itself nothing if not 'zeitgemäss'.

It is perhaps worth noting that it is his devotion to individualism which is the most striking difference between Nietzsche and that other great writer of 'Lebensphilosophie', Emerson. Emerson, too, is convinced that the 'proud races' embrace fate with 'a loving resignation'; that 'life is a search after power'; that great deeds require 'extraordinary health'; that the masses are 'not yet men [...]


the age of the quadruped is to go out'; that we live in a transition period, when
the old faiths [...] seem to have spent their force'; that we must must 'replace
sentimentalism by realism and dare to uncover those simple and terrible laws
which, be they seen or unseen, pervade and govern'. All these sentiments might
be translated straight into Nietzsche's texts. The great difference is that Emerson
believes in The Better, to which all men, including the as-yet unready masses,
instinctively aspire. Nietzsche does not. Both see the coming era as one of crisis
and transition: but where Emerson prophecies a new dawn of simple, robust
common sense and morality, Nietzsche's dominant vision is of a future in which
only utter individualism and a febrile 'health' which appears anything but robust
in the normal understanding of the word can save mankind from suffocating
conformity and degeneration. Such an absolute devotion to the ideal of the free
individual is not only the irreducible grounding of Nietzsche's thought: it is a
version - extreme but nonetheless recognisable - of high nineteenth century
liberalism.

Several of Nietzsche's (rare) overtly political statements place him firmly in
this frame. He speaks of the unconscious anti-liberal pact between dynastic
regimes and socialism (IViii,142): his words conjure up that well-known
contemporary cartoon of Bismarck allowing the socialist beetles to escape while
crushing the liberal ladybirds. In IViii,319, Nietzsche is the authentic voice of
the 'little man' trapped between proletarian and capitalist power: 'ebenso die
Zuviel- wie die Nichts-Besitzer' are 'gemeingefährliche Wesen'. His formula 'so
wenig Staat wie möglich' (IVii,381), might almost be taken from W.E.

30 Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Conduct of Life/Society and Solitude, London,
1883, pp. 19, 43, 45, 168 & 174.

31 Emerson, p.138.
wenig Staat wie möglich’ (IVii,381), might almost be taken from W.E. Gladstone. He suggests (very much in tune with contemporary ‘National Liberal’ thought) that workers might escape capitalism and the machine age by emigrating and founding colonies (Vi,185). He reflects that democracy might work after all, since the ‘Volk’ hate both socialism and ’Börsenfürstenthum’ (IViii,322).

Such pre-echoes of twentieth-century right-wing populism indicate that one reason for the extraordinary currency achieved by Nietzsche’s writing around the turn of the century is to be found in their relationship to the development (or rather, the decay) of German liberalism. Here, the relationship between Nietzsche and the word ‘aristocratic’ is of some interest.

Nietzsche was anything but alone in his progressive acceptance of categories of ‘aristocracy’ which appear to be very much ‘zeit- und kulturbedingt’. The surrender of German bourgeois liberalism to the attractions of the reserve-lieutenant’s uniform is one of the most notorious symptoms of the way in which the feudal aristocracy reasserted itself after 1848. An interesting comparison might be the way in which Wagner’s attitude to the aristocracy changed so dramatically in his later years.

The middle-class individualist, though, found himself in a paradoxical position. He himself might earlier on have fought personally (as did Wagner, for example) for the rights of the individual and against aristocratic dominance. Thus - and being a non-aristocrat himself - such a man would hardly propose that aristocrats should dominate once again in the traditional, inherited manner. Yet some barrier had to be erected against the masses below, who - ‘ekelhaft uniform’ as they were conceived to be (IIIi,316) - would swamp this individualist’s paradise. But what could constitute such a barrier?
E.J. Hobsbawm sees this hidden logic beneath the apparent irrationalism in later nineteenth century racialism: he finds it rooted in the attempt of liberalism to 'justify and defend those privileges which the democracy implicit in its institutions must inevitably challenge. Liberalism had no logical defence against equality and democracy...' The situation is peculiarly applicable to Nietzsche. His works attempt to defend privilege, yet their characteristic form is 'democratic'. He is uniquely accessible among great thinkers, yet he constantly invites each and every reader to consider himself admitted to an exclusive club ('wir') - an invitation, of course, which no truly exclusive club would make.

It is this conundrum, I suspect, which leads the later Nietzsche (e.g. VIIi,289) to propose the historical existence of groups of 'vornehme Rassen', who operate as merciless ruling castes. His tendency to blur the line between analysis and prescription means that he often appears to be suggesting that things would be better if this were again the case. This idea of a dominant, racially distinct group is a very different proposition indeed from Nietzsche's early idea of the superman-like individual 'lawgiver' (e.g. IIIi,282). Despite all that has been said (and rightly) about the gross misuse of Nietzsche's thought by populist movements, there really is a discernible parallel between his notion of the privileged community and that of Fascist demagogues: they too proposed a sort of 'democratic privilege' for all members of their racial/national group - a privilege which would (of necessity) be defined by their (ultimately martial) superiority to everyone outside that group.

Pascal points out the logic of connecting Nietzsche's thought with the death of German liberalism and its fatal heirs:

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Though he is the most impassioned critic of certain ideals of the French Revolution - equality, fraternity, constitutionalism - he still subscribes to other values of the bourgeoisie, struggle and competition, individualism, the elitism of merit. What he does is to intensify these dynamic elements to the point where they come into startling conflict with the regulative, democratic ideas with which they were uncomfortably combined in normal liberal doctrine, so that they turn into an idealization of power, of authoritarian government within a society and brutal expansionism in respect of rival societies. In this sense he mirrors the transformation of the German bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century.33

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The Battle with Gravity

Yet Nietzsche is far more than simply a product of his age. He is also the product - as he well knew - of two and a half millennia of western thought. His critical faculties are enriched at every turn by the relationship with earlier thinkers. This, and a unique demand for honesty in himself, created what he called his 'intellektuales Gewissen'. It is the experience of Nietzsche's being gradually drawn out from the unbearable cold of that intellectual rigour into the baneful position outlined above which makes reading his work such a desperately exciting business. It is a nice irony that the modern reader, from his historical perspective, may, upon reading Nietzsche's more extreme anti-

33 Pascal, From Naturalism to Expressionism, p.56.
rationalist statements, feel the need to call upon that sympathy for the suffering of his fellow-man to which Nietzsche so vociferously objected:

Few human creatures would consent to be changed into any of the lower animals, for a promise of the fullest allowance of a beast’s pleasures; no intelligent human being would consent to be a fool, no instructed person would be an ignoramus, no person of feeling and conscience would be selfish and base, even though they should be persuaded that the fool, the dunce, or the rascal is better satisfied with his lot [...] If they ever fancy they would, it is only in cases of unhappiness so extreme, that to escape from it they would exchange their lot for almost any other.  

Nietzsche never said he wanted to be an animal, of course, but sometimes his imagery appears to hint strongly at this - and some of his literary descendants (Benn springs to mind) certainly fancied they might rather even be clumps of slime than continue to suffer the pains which sentience is heir to.

Nietzsche’s own particular story, however, remains lit by the flashes of a battle which is fought all the way, both in his life and his works, against the temptation to yield up his critical rationality. We have, for example, the extraordinary story of his relationship with Wagner. Here we see both Nietzsche’s desperate need for an object of uncritical worship (a ‘myth’, in other words) and his equally strong need to investigate and criticise such phenomena:

Jüngerschaft war ihm geläufig [...] freilich war er ein Jünger von sonderbarer Art. Während er Altäre baute, Weihrauch streute,  

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weitere Anhänger warb, wurde im Innersten schon Aufruhr und
Abfall vorbereitet.\textsuperscript{35}

One only has ask oneself how many men would have stood up for themselves
(not to mention, for Brahms!) at the cost of intimacy with the gigantic figure of
Richard Wagner \textit{triumphants}.

The story is characteristic. Again and again Nietzsche's critical thought - that
side which shows 'wie ungerecht die Existenz eines Dings, einer Kaste, einer
Dynastie zum Beispiel ist' (IIIi,265-6) - reasserts its subversive instincts over the
growing desperation to find a foothold in something beyond criticism (e.g.
physiology). In the end, when there is nothing left to mythologize but himself,
Nietzsche subverts even his own self-deification: is he God or is he a
'Hanswurst' telling bad jokes at the table of eternity?

But Nietzsche's critical thought does not consist merely of endlessly self-
reflective subversion. We can see this in his corpus of thought on 'Sittlichkeit
der Sitte'. This is Nietzsche's term for that profound mix of psychology and
materialism by which he attempts to account for the extraordinary 'survivability'
of once-established structures of thought. He does so without proposing (like,
say, Marxism) that the power of such structures resides purely in historical-
environmental circumstances, nor (like, say, Freudianism) that historical-
environmental circumstances are merely backdrops to an unchanging and always
decisive set of relationships. It is my own opinion that his achievement in this
field is greatly underrated - perhaps because, unlike those two rivals for the title
of the most important thinker of the age, he does not propose a tidy,
comprehensive, treatable scheme of things.

\textsuperscript{35} Ross, p.156.
Typically enough, one of the finest expositions of 'Sittlichkeit der Sitte' is given before the formula itself is arrived at: 'alles Gute ist einmal neu, folglich ungewohnt, wider die Sitte, unsittlich gewesen' (IViii,49). As late as Götzen-Dämmerung (1888), where 'antiarisch' (VIiii,95) and 'Jude' (Vliii,142) are used as terms of sufficient objection, we can still read:

Alle neuerer des Geistes haben eine Zeit das fahle und fatalistische Zeichen des Tschandala auf der Stirn: nicht weil sie so empfunden werden, sondern weil sie selbst die furchtbare Kluft fühlen, die sie von allem Herkömmlichen und in Ehren Stehenden trennt. Fast jedes Genie kennt als eine seiner Entwicklungen [...] ein Hass-, Rache- und Aufstandsgefühl gegen alles was schon ist, was nicht mehr wird. (Vliii,142)

Such thought directly contradicts the far better-known ideas of 'ewige Wiederkunft' or 'amor fati'. Similarly, Nietzsche's 'physiologizing' thought is roundly opposed in a vital passage of Der Fall Wagner (1888): Nietzsche is as decadent as Wagner, 'nur dass ich das Begriff' (Vliii,3). This proclaims that self-awareness, self-analysis, can overcome even that 'decadence' which by this stage so often appears to be conceived as medical fact.

The struggle - and the victor - are perhaps clearest in Zur Genealogie der Moral: in Vlii,276-8 there is a measured presentation of philological evidence for Nietzsche's view of the 'aristocratic' significance of the terms 'good' and 'bad'. He follows the development of this terminology to the point at which it becomes 'reif und süß' as the signifier of spiritual 'aristocracy' - a point which is only reached after the 'Niedergang des Adels'. Here, then, is Nietzsche in his full 'developmental' mode of thought, challenging accepted truisms, using social-critical forms of analysis, looking forward to a cultural and spiritual
sublimation of barbarism which will leave existing structures of thought and society behind. Yet the same pages bombard us with some of the worst examples of Nietzsche's amateur 'physiologizing' and racial theorizing. The general effect is unmistakeable: it is the critical intellect giving way in the face of its inability to propose concrete advances. Nietzsche here seeks to treat as a medical-ontological problem what Nietzsche has himself just shown to be a social-epistemological problem. His prescription is, in short 'reactionary' in the truest sense of the word: it represents a regressive recoil from the dilemma he has encountered.

And Nietzsche recoils - back to a final position which is remarkably similar to the ruthlessly aestheticizing, state-building elitism of Der Griechische Staat. The point cannot be overstressed: the countervailing tendencies in Nietzsche's thought do remain visible - but the incipient victor is none the less evident.

It is simply not adequate to state that when Zarathustra fulfils the young Nietzsche's demand for an occasional 'Paean auf den Krieg' (IIIi,268), this is merely a process wherein logic is 'in den Wirbel des Tanzes hineingezogen'.

'Der gute Krieg ist es, der jede Sache heiligt': our own experience of the Falklands war must show that Nietzsche-Zarathustra's dictum is anything but 'bedenkenlos' or illogical. It is a thoroughly accurate description of a lamentable tendency in political life. It also represents a tendency in Nietzsche which, despite a countervailing tendency, is more and more getting the upper hand: the tendency to accept the apocalypses and unpleasantnesses of his reductive arguments as final insights.

Those elemental agencies which Nietzsche called up merely to show how good comes from less good (barbarism, violence, lust for power) become, in the

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absence of a constructive alternative, accepted as the only reliable guides to human behaviour. In exactly parallel fashion, a vertiginous concept like 'ewige Wiederkunft', originally meant only as a spur to (undefined) action, becomes, in the absence of any constructive result, conceived as almost a literal fact. It is, as usual, Nietzsche himself who warns us (and himself) in vain against what is happening to him:

Wer mit Ungeheueren kämpft, mag zusehen, dass er nicht dabei zum Ungeheuer wird. Und wenn du lange in einen Abgrund blickst, blickt der Abgrund auch in dich hinein (VIi,98).

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Conclusions

From the start, Nietzsche is possessed by various manifestations of one central problem - the relationship of knowledge to life. He longs for the problem to be solved in some new unity. In his earliest and his latest works he tends to propose an aesthetic rather than ethical relationship to truth. In the works of his maturity he concentrates on reductive arguments against that ethical system: even here, though, we can see his marked tendency to use images rather than analytic forms. From the end of Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft onwards he turns again to the delineation of alternatives to what he sees as a discredited (i.e. no longer 'life-enhancing') system of ethics. These are more and more described in brief, striking (and vague) phrases which, as Zarathustra - the eponymous hero of Nietzsche's attempt to turn his theories into artistic-philosophical practice - puts it, can be learnt off by heart. As the grand formulas gel, though, it seems that they are not the wished-for solutions to the dilemma, but victories for the
anti-analytic, aestheticizing side to Nietzsche's thought which has always been in evidence. They represent the slow, never-completed but nevertheless visible ascendancy of the metaphysician in Nietzsche over the phenomenologist in him.\textsuperscript{37} Or, to put it another way, of the 'artist' in him over the 'thinker' - these being terms he himself frequently uses to express the dichotomy he felt in man's soul. It is thoroughly characteristic that this victory was never complete: Nietzsche continues to straddle art and philosophy in a remarkable (and tempting) attempt to synthesize the two modes (which he feels to be in opposition) in some new unity:

What Nietzsche teaches us is not to read philosophy as literature, let alone literature as philosophy, but to read both as closely related forms of life. In challenging, through his mode of writing, the dichotomy of 'scientific' \textit{versus} 'imaginative', or again the antithesis between 'concept' and 'metaphor', 'abstract' and 'concrete', he is at the same time intent on challenging those divisions [...] that fragmentation of knowledge which he [...] saw as one of the chief blights of western civilization.\textsuperscript{38}

I would suggest, though, that the phenomenon which we have seen again and again in this chapter holds true here as well: that when Nietzsche appears to be attempting a synthesis, he is fact simply coming down, openly or not, on the side of one of his two contradictory modes of thought. It appears to me that Nietzsche comes down more and more on the side of a vision of Artistic Philosophising which does not really 'overcome' or subsume the warning voices


\textsuperscript{38} Stern, \textit{Nietzsche}, p.147.
of rational criticism - but is simply shorn of them.

Keith May elucidates Nietzsche's convictions by an example of his own: in Othello, Iago's viciousness feeds and maintains an economy in which the honour of Othello and Desdemona thrives [...] Nietzsche's moral radicalism consists in pointing out that the proclivities of an Iago are as valuable for our species as those of a chaste wife...[my italics]. May's illustration, which involves extrapolating from a piece of theatrical criticism to a recommendation for the actual life of 'our species', is an exact re-enactment of Nietzsche's method. It is a method whose leap out of the orbit of reality Anthony Thorlby has noted:

Nietzsche

is basically not distinguishing between an intuitive or imaginative awareness of a thing and the thing itself, between imagination and reality. A drama about murder and suffering is not the same thing as murder and suffering...40

This brings us to the whole conundrum of Nietzsche's writings: Nietzsche himself never produced anything like 'a drama about murder and suffering', while nevertheless constantly intimating that a grand drama - in the broadest sense - might indeed justify the suffering of mankind in its own eyes. This is the root of his attitude to Greek art in Die Geburt der Tragödie, after all.

The point is that if Nietzsche is too concerned with artistic effect to be taken as a true guide to living (a role to which he often aspires), he is also - and often almost simultaneously - too much concerned with the open proclamation of guides to living for us to take his work, even Zarathustra, as true artistic

creation in his own terms. His attempts to forge a new unity from these two
modes appear to me to have 'failed' (failed, that is, in the terms of their own
declared ambition) with the result that his writings contain a mixture of
penetrating insights which he never forms into tight structure of thought - and
a series of striking images and rhetorical flourishes which he never follows up
as substantial artistic creation. In a sense, this might appear to be represent a
thoroughly self-indulgent position, fully in keeping with Nietzsche's Byronic
demand that he be allowed to change his mind whenever he felt like it.

Except that Nietzsche is never self-indulgent in this way. His mutually
opposing wills to Truth and Myth do not exist in comfortable alternation, but
rather in a state of irreconcilable conflict which permanently 'threatens them
with mutual destruction', leaving Nietzsche irretrievably between two stools.41
However much he is drawn to mythologize (and by Ecce Homo the victory of
myth is almost complete) Nietzsche's 'intellektuelles Gewissen' is finally silenced
only in the comprehensive ruin of his mind itself. It is the danger of Nietzsche's
position, the precariousness of the tight-rope walker (to use his own image) that
makes him infinitely stimulating to read. His solutions to the dilemma may have
been shown by history to be so fraught with (even, so inviting to) possible
misinterpretations as to be unacceptable - but that same history has
demonstrated the terrible reality of the dilemma itself. We may recoil at some
of Nietzsche's excesses but 'such passages would have long ago have rung hollow
[...] had not history rescued them in the most ghastly way'.42 The fact is that 'the
burden of his attack remains unanswered, the problems have become more

41 Peter Pütz, 'Nietzsche: Art and Intellectual Enquiry' in Pasley (ed.) Nietzsche:
Imagery and Thought, p.3.

42 Reed, 'Nietzsche's Animals', p.178.
urgent than they ever were in his time'. Just how modern and how pressing Nietzsche's dilemma is can be easily shown. An eminent astrophysicist questions the value of scientific knowledge in what could almost be taken for a paraphrase of Nietzsche:

It has certainly been true in the past that what we call intelligence and scientific discovery has conveyed a survival advantage. It is not clear that this is still the case ...

An 'alternative' radical declares that 'we are long past the time for pretending that the death of God is not a political fact' and writes of 'the terrible paradox of progress which gives us this world where things get worse as they get better'.

A conservative feuilletonist declaims:

We live, God knows, in a world awash with pygmies [...] Who inspires us now? Who makes our hearts race? Whom can we admire without reserve? Whom would we gladly follow?"

This last is extraordinary confirmation of Nietzsche's prediction that our century would belong to the men of the theatre: the writer's pathetic eulogy is of - an actor. Such (grotesquely cheapened) longing for myth and so strong an awareness that it can no longer be found confirm that this remains 'the tormenting contradiction at once of Nietzsche's thought and of the modern age itself'.

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43 Stern, Idylls and Realities, p.198.


45 Theodor Roszak, Where the Wasteland Ends, New York, 1972, pp.XXI-XXVIII.


47 Pütz, 'Nietzsche: Art and Intellectual Enquiry', p.3.
If Nietzsche is still 'modern', how extraordinary he must have seemed at the start of our era. Himself 'vorausverkundend, für das Wetter, das kommen wird' (IViii,335), Nietzsche provides an inexhaustible source for the artists - 'Wetterpropheten' in their turn of the following generation - who grew up in the full glare of his apotheosis. Just as the taunting incompleteness of Nietzsche's analytic thought led Heidegger to expend vast energy on an attempt to systematize it, so the suggestive power of his undeveloped images led artists - visual, musical and plastic as well as literary - to follow them up:

Nietzsche influenced the entire 'cultural climate' of this century: certain ideas are present in a large number of heads which probably would not have been present, and certain things are taken for granted which would probably not have been taken for granted, if he had never existed and published books.48

The question now will be: what are these 'certain ideas' in later men's heads? From where in Nietzsche's writings - if they do come from Nietzsche's writings in the first place - do they come? How does this 'influence' function? What are the consequences for our interpretations of later works? Before going into these questions, though, some preparatory considerations must be explored.

48 Hollingdale, Nietzsche, p.195.
On Influence, History and Textual (Arti)Fact

The question now must be how we are to examine the relationship between Nietzsche and the writers of the following generation. In the introductions to each section of this thesis I shall be discussing aspects of relevance to the individual cases, but there are several points of a general applicability which should be discussed before going any further.

Much nineteenth-century scholarship is animated by a positivistic inquiry which demonstrates 'influence' in terms of hunting for 'sources' for a text. The argument is advanced very much at the level of authorial 'intentionality' (i.e. which author knew which works of which predecessors and set out to refer to them in a deliberate and conscious process) and in terms of precise textual evidence whereby the critic shows the author to have employed phrases and metaphors manifestly derived from a predecessor.

Recent scholarship, on the other hand, has tended to repudiate intentionality and has, in consequence, disliked the quest for demonstrable 'influence'. New Criticism, for example, espouses the autonomy of the work of art, and thus disparages notions of 'influence' altogether. Of late, however, with the much-proclaimed Barthesian 'death of the author' literary discussion has centred upon another, though far more diffuse, form of 'influencing': the notion of 'intertextuality' which suggests that all texts, by their very nature, are made up of other texts.

Quite how we are to conceive of 'intertextuality' without referring at some level to traditional concepts regarding actual, detailed 'influence' of one kind or
another is a moot point. Raymond Tallis points out that the term 'intertextuality' is sufficiently ill-defined for it to mean all things to all critics. Its infinite elasticity makes possible the conjuring tricks whereby the rabbits of paradox ('texts refer only to other texts', 'there are no poems only interpoems', 'literature is about itself') are pulled out of the hat of common sense ('no one writes in isolation', 'the poet is influenced by other poets as well as by his own experiences'). The reader, acquiescing in a fairly unexceptionable claim about the nature of literature, takes 'intertextuality' on board...

Among deconstructionists, 'intertextuality' is extended to apply to a 'boundless text of society' within which all texts reside: such a presentation, Tallis has noted, is by no means as far as might appear from a (highly traditional) presentation in which 'the text' is influenced by 'the world' in some way or other. Such a re-interpretation of 'intertextuality', though, depends on rehabilitating the notion that there is, indeed, a world outside the text to which, in some way or other, the text refers. De Man, for one, resists any such backsliding: he argues that 'intertextuality' itself inevitably involves interpretation, which reduces its real significance to that of an 'intratextual' process whereby 'influence' boils down to the 'interplay between literal and figurative meanings within a single word or grammatical sign'. Unsurprisingly, de Man asks whether such a concept could still be termed 'influence' at all - but even he still considers the idea of 'influence' to be 'a suggestive line of thought'.

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2 See Tallis, p.47.
The notion of 'influence', then, has displayed a tenacious ability to survive and resurface even in the most unwelcoming ground. Harold Bloom - the object of de Man's strictures above - has gone so far as to raise the ghost of 'intentionality' (albeit unconscious intentionality) by suggesting Freudian mechanisms of repression and supplanting whereby writers write what they write because of what previous writers have written: 'every poem is a misinterpretation of a parent poem'. The important point for us is that Bloom's interpretation involves a mechanism which is not purely intra-literary. He proposes a causal relationship of some kind between extra-linguistic forces and literary language-use. Bloom's thesis is an exciting and attractive one; it is perhaps especially applicable to Nietzsche (a 'daemonic son' of Schopenhauer), whose contradictory modes of thought might indeed be dramatized biographically as Schopenhauer/Wagner vs. Burckhardt/Ree. While (as will become clear) I find it difficult to accept such mechanisms as wholly adequate, Bloom has certainly renewed the debate about the relationships which exist between texts (and between texts and the world) in an urgent and provocative manner; I shall upon occasion refer to his notions in the later chapters of this thesis.

In view of the fact that the waters in this area of scholarship are thus muddied, it might seem foolhardy to retain the notion of 'influence' at all. Many commentators avoid the word. But is to avoid the word to avoid the notion? I would like to glance quickly at the supposed eschewal of 'influence' in two critical works on Nietzsche and other writers.

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5 Bloom, p.106.
6 See Ross, pp.313-20 & 454-5.
May suggests that 'the notion of influence [of Nietzsche on Rilke] is too obscure for sensible discussion'. Clearly, such an attitude would invalidate this thesis from the foundations upwards. But I would ask if it is not merely the word 'influence' which May is rejecting, rather than the notion. For, having denied the value of any study of Nietzsche's 'influence' on Rilke, May nevertheless goes on to say, for example, that 'heady draughts of Nietzsche had long been Rilke's habit'. Well:- was Rilke (if the reader will excuse the extension from May's imagery) 'under the influence' of Nietzsche or not? Once a commentator feels obliged to note a predecessor's intoxicating effect on a later writer, is it sufficient then to dismiss the issue of exactly how such 'heady draughts', and which, affected the later poet as simply 'too obscure'? Either Nietzsche's writing was of importance for Rilke's writing or it was not: if we claim that it was, must we not be prepared to argue in detail which of Nietzsche's many heady brews the later poet may have quaffed and how exactly this affected his writing? I see no reason (other than a critical-historical one) why the word 'influence' should be singled out as particularly excessive or problematic in this context.

Patrick Bridgwater has likewise 'avoided the emotive word "influence" altogether' in discussing Kafka and Nietzsche. Yet he is prepared to state that a certain section of Kafka's work is 'based on' Nietzsche; that Kafka 'must have read' a particular section of Nietzsche's work; or that a certain Kafka-text makes it 'impossible to believe that Kafka did not have Nietzsche's passage in mind'.

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7 Keith May, p.49.
8 Keith May, pp.50.
10 Bridgwater, pp.12, 26 & 83.
Whether one agrees with Bridgwater's statements in their proper context is not the question here: the question is whether such formulae are any less 'emotive' (they are certainly not less positivistically definitive) than suggesting that a text shows Nietzsche's 'influence'.

I would argue, indeed, that there may be cases where that term is the best one to describe a relationship between two phenomena. To take an example from the planetary field which is the original province of the term: how would one describe the effect of the moon on the earth's rotation? The rotation of the earth is not essentially 'based on' the moon, nor is it a 'lunar motion', nor 'indebted to' the moon. It is 'influenced by' the moon. I think that the word 'influence' may be particularly useful in describing a relationship between an author and his predecessor, which, while it 'is never like the printing of words upon an empty space'\textsuperscript{11}, is nonetheless an identifiable factor in the later writer's work.

Colin Milton's recent study of Lawrence and Nietzsche takes the dangerous word 'influence' head-on in its title and proceeds to justify the term thus:

The relationship between Nietzsche's system and what Lawrence sometimes calls his 'pseudo-philosophy' is so intimate and pervasive that even a common origin in a shared cultural climate and intellectual agenda scarcely seems sufficient to account for the resemblance. For what is involved is not so much a matter of several - or even many - particular similarities, themselves part of some general current of 'advanced' or 'post-Christian' speculation of the

\textsuperscript{11} Heller, The Importance of Nietzsche, p.132.
time, but the sharing of a whole organically related structure of ideas and one, furthermore, which is highly individual in character.\footnote{12 Colin Milton, Nietzsche and Lawrence: A Study in Influence, Aberdeen (University Press) 1987, p.1.}

I find Milton's 'Ansatz' admirably differentiated and hope to follow a similar path myself. Like him, I see no reason why the term 'influence' should be placed out of court.

I would not claim that using this word (or any other) can bring clarity and order to the methodological confusion. Quite the reverse: the very untidiness of the processes of textual influencing is germane to what I shall be attempting to show in this thesis. It is by now a truism (as witness the start of the preceding chapter) that Nietzsche was an all-pervasive presence in the cultural life of the early twentieth century. I shall be seeking to demonstrate the whole spectrum of that 'presence' within the works in question.

That spectrum extends from (on the one hand) the positivistic claim that certain formulations, certain images and pictures so precisely recall a particular passage (or passages) in Nietzsche's text that one can argue for direct indebtedness as the best (i.e. most adequate) explanation, to (on the other hand) the assertion that certain thematic or linguistic features of a particular text coalesce to form an interpretative possibility of the work in question which is powerfully reminiscent of Nietzsche's writings. At this level, I shall be talking not of direct indebtedness but of an insistent, all-pervasive concern in the text which appears to be related in some way to Nietzsche's concerns - to such an extent that an interpretative possibility, a 'Nietzschean reading' of the text, is presented. I shall never claim that this is the only interpretation possible, that these later authors are incomprehensible without a knowledge of Nietzsche's
texts; but I shall argue, with May, that 'substantial sections of their work grow clearer when one does refer to [Nietzsche].'

Obviously, the issue of 'proof' is particularly difficult in this latter context. I have argued in the preceding chapter that many of Nietzsche's governing ideas and concepts were of influence on the next generation precisely because they were assimilable to the future-in-waiting - that is, to the emerging parameters of cultural discussion around the turn of the century. It is thus enormously difficult and perhaps impossible to know with any certainty whether a particular preoccupation of a text in this period echoes Nietzsche more than it echoes say, Bourget, Huysmans, Wagner or Emerson. On the other hand, while Nietzsche was not the only spokesperson, nor the only begetter, of cultural debate in this era, he was far and away the most urgent and most widely recognised mediator.

Here, though, we come to another problem with critical terminology. The very extent of Nietzsche's influence on the artistic orbits of the succeeding generation means (though this may appear at first to be a paradox) that we must be particularly careful in the use of general terms like 'Nietzschean'. Let me illustrate the nature of the problem by taking two examples of such usage from studies of English writers' relationships to Nietzsche.

'Mildly Nietzschean' is an epithet which May applies (not in parenthesis) to Yeats's first volume of poetry (1889). Now, May has already told us that even seven years later (i.e. by 1896, when Nietzsche's fame was inestimably greater than in 1889) 'the chances are that [Yeats] would have been aware of [Nietzsche] only as a name and a misleading reputation'. Is May, then,

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13 Keith May, p.4.
14 Keith May, p.22.
15 Keith May, p.18.
suggesting that the epithet 'Nietzschean' (however mildly) can be legitimately applied to a work whose author, at the time of writing, probably did not even know of Nietzsche or (by May's own admission) knew him at very most only as 'a name and a misleading reputation'? He would seem to be suggesting this. But what, then, does May mean by the term 'Nietzschean' as a description of this text? The suspicion must be: very little that is anything to do with Nietzsche. Of course, there were people (though not as early as 1889) who called themselves 'Nietzscheans' without ever having read Nietzsche - but this does not mean that the commentator should legitimise such usage of the term. I would suggest that, when used in the above manner, the term 'Nietzschean' can no longer be treated as an epithet connected to Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche's life or work. In other words, May's argument posits, at the points mentioned, no necessary relationship between Nietzsche and 'Nietzschean': Nietzsche himself is merely another broadly 'Nietzschean' writer. The effect would seem to be for the term 'Nietzschean' to become simply a cover-all tag for an era - which, by rendering Nietzsche's influence axiomatic and omnipresent, robs it of any particular and demonstrable significance.

Kathryne V. Lindberg is quick to deny that she is working on Pound and Nietzsche within 'a traditional conception of influence'. She nevertheless goes on to tell us that 'Pound employs what must be called Nietzschean (or 'Neo-Nietzschean') strategies'. Well: if Pound's strategies are of so clear a genealogy that they 'must' (not 'might') be called 'Nietzschean' or 'Neo-Nietzschean', is Lindberg not, after all, partly concerned with that positivistic 'mapping of

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17 Lindberg, p.31.
influence' which she is at pains to deny pursuing?" If she is not, ought she not perhaps to be thus concerned - in order to clarify what she means us to understand by the terms 'Nietzschean (or "Neo-Nietzschean")'?

It is clarification which I am primarily concerned with. There is little gain indeed in 'proving' a positivistic relationship in itself: what is important is the possibility that a positivistic approach may, by suggesting a particular and specific (rather than vague and generalised) influence on a text, help us to find new interpretative vistas. At this level, then, I would claim only that, in trying to account for the workings of the particular texts that concern me, I have often found an acquaintance with Nietzsche's texts (rather than with some 'Zeitgeist') to be revelatory - in the simple sense that a knowledge of Nietzsche's texts can illuminate these later texts for the reader. To put it another way: locating a text within its cultural-historical 'space' does not exclude the possibility of interpretations made from a different standpoint - but may illuminate the text such as to extend the range of possible interpretations.

I would stress again that I consider this type of illumination to be far more important, if more difficult to demonstrate in detail, than the mere fact that certain images and formulations call Nietzsche to mind in a direct way. If I show (as I hope to do) that Musil's Törless (for example) contains many and sometimes specific allusions to Nietzsche's actual texts, this in itself is only of interpretative (as opposed to purely literary-antiquarian) value if I can then suggest convincingly that - and how - such allusions are of importance in the general construction and (thus) in the effect of the work. That is, I must not only show that Nietzsche is an 'influence' on each text, but that this 'influence' functions in such a manner (whatever that may be in each case) that the

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\(^{18}\) Lindberg, p.viii.
recognition of this 'influence', and of the particular way in which it may have functioned in each particular text, may offer the route to a possible interpretation of the whole. To take a very obvious parallel from English literature: any modern novel which opened by describing a fog-bound London would certainly recall Bleak House to many readers. On the one hand, this observation would certainly not, in itself, entitle us to call that work 'Dickensian' or 'influenced by Dickens' in any meaningful sense. On the other hand it might reasonably encourage us to watch out for and closely examine other, perhaps less overt, features of our hypothetical text which might be illuminated by a knowledge of Dicken's texts in such a way that we could recommend a 'Dickensian reading' as fruitful.

Hence, my understanding of 'influence' extends from (I hope, in the sense of 'leads on from') a precise and demonstrable indebtedness to broader, if inevitably less distinct, notions of creative kinship with specific parts of Nietzsche's thought. Reed has set out just such an understanding of Nietzsche's 'influence' and its significance with regard to the young Thomas Mann:

The young writer clearly knows about Nietzsche and his message: he may have read and partly understood him, he may not have actually read him at all, but he is conscious where, and by whom, the walls of convention have recently been breached and what the weapons are with which to assault the parts left standing. This is unmistakeably Nietzsche's influence whether direct or diffused - the difference at this early stage is less important than the direction in which the young writer is influenced.19

19 Reed, Thomas Mann, p.16.
Reed here points out that a writer may influence a later writer without being directly known to him, while noting that the lack of evidence for a directly positivistic 'influencing' from text to text does not relegate the earlier writer to an 'ism': 'Nietzsche's influence', in Reed's depiction, is not 'a Nietzschean' influence, for all the complexity or even obscurity of how it was transmitted, but remains identifiable as Nietzsche's influence.

Thus, in the later chapters of this thesis, I shall use the terms 'a Nietzschean formulation', 'Nietzschean imagery', 'a Nietzschean reading' and so on only when I consider that specific and identifiable sections of or themes from Nietzsche's texts underlie the text and/or may be of interpretative value to the reader.

The question of interpretation brings us to a further methodological consideration: that of the interrelationship between philosophy and literature. Here the field becomes even more murky, for this discussion involves the considerable problems inherent in the attempt to trace the interplay of different modes of writing - of philosophical and literary discourses.

To take an example of the difficulties let us glance at Jaques Derrida, currently one of the central figures of this debate. Derrida - who often refers to Nietzsche's texts 'as a paradigm of undecidability'²⁰ - finds that Kafka's Vor dem Gesetz 'semble d'abord nous rapeller Kant' and feels the temptation (his word) 'de reconstituer ce récit sans récit dans l'enveloppe elliptique de la Critique de la Raison Praktique, par exemple ...'. The shade of 'influence', then, would appear to be rising again. Resisting his own temptations, though, Derrida goes on to insist that 'nous n'expliquerions pas la parabole d'un récit dit "littéraire" by reference to possible philosophical models: literature would thus seem to be

²⁰ Alan D. Schrift, 'Foucault and Derrida on Nietzsche and the End(s) of Man' in David F. Knell and David Woods (eds.) Exceedingly Nietzsche, London, 1988, p.137.
saved from the threat of a positivistic 'influence' from philosophy. However, Derrida then proceeds to ask whether Kafka's text, after all, is really literature any more, rather than a quasi-philosophical literary discourse on literature itself: 'l'ellipse puissante qu'il nous livre n'appartient pas totalement à la littérature'.

Evidently, this is a field in which interrelationships are not clear-cut, and in which a clear-cut set of definitions is not expected or (in the case of Derrida) even felt desirable.

Nietzsche, as I suggested in the previous chapter, is particularly involved in this problematic, since his texts exhibit a great degree of volatility of genre and discourse - a volatility which in part explains the far-reaching impact he had on philosophy, on literature and particularly on literary philosophy (e.g. Heidegger) and philosophic literature (e.g. Musil). As Stern says:

Nietzsche's undertaking is seen as exemplary precisely because, being pitched on the philosophical side of the boundary between philosophy and literature, his writings and the very forms in which he cast them give the writers of the modern age the freedom to challenge that division (which, in German literature, had in any event never been very sharp) and to place their writings in some proximity to his, on the literary side of the divide. The shift in literary register towards philosophical speculation which now takes place - the immense intellectualizing of literature we now witness - is something quite new.

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22 J.P. Stern, "Reality" in Early Twentieth-century German Literature' in A. Phillips Griffiths (ed.) Philosophy and Literature, p.47.
'Something quite new': that is, a *historical phenomenon without precedent*. And it is to 'writers of the modern age' whom Stern refers: to writers, that is, of our age - which still takes its most widely-held paradigms of 'modern art' from works or movements originating in the pre-1914 years. As the end of the previous chapter suggested, then, I would argue that the acute cultural crisis diagnosed by Nietzsche is a living part of our own historical condition. If I insist on the historicity of Nietzsche's work and of the works that, in my view, constantly remind us of him, this is not historicity in the precise sense of commentary on specific political events, nor is it a historicity that registers a detailed shift in ideas and values: I mean historicity in the sense that all these texts are somehow involved in what even Derrida admits are 'conditions historiques qui ne sont pas simplement linguistiques'.

It is this recognition that the conditions of a text's production are not simply linguistic (that is, text-internal) conditions which has informed the process I have tried to follow so far and which I will try to follow in subsequent chapters. I have tried to construct a two-stage process which examines Nietzsche first as a literary phenomenon - first, that is, by noting the internal dynamic peculiar to Nietzsche's work - and then have tried to suggest ways in which his work, including its contradictory impulses, might be placed as a whole in some relation to its cultural-historical environment.

I think that this process takes note of the warning (a warning which is also an implicit demand) voiced by one recent historian:

> movements like formalism, linguistics, new criticism, structuralism, poststructuralism, hermeneutics, semiotics and deconstruction have all but pulled the rug out from under traditional intellectual

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historians who have relied on literature as a simple window into the past [...] Before exploring the highly problematic relation between and its various contexts (e.g., the author's life, the authors' intention, the 'society', other modes of discourse) intellectual historians must first learn to see literary texts not as 'documents' but as 'works' or 'texts': they must learn to de-emphasize the author's supposed intent and pay more attention to such textual features as the work's linguistic dimensions, its narrative structure, and its rhetorical strategies - in short, how it functions as discourse.24

These things, then, 'intellectual historians' must learn - before proceeding. For just as the historian must recognize the proven claims of literary criticism before making historical judgements involving literary works, so literary criticism must, I would suggest, recognize in turn the legitimate claims of a historical perspective before making literary judgements involving historical epochs. To the writers of the later texts with which we shall be dealing, are Nietzsche's texts only literary texts-as-texts? Or are they not also texts-within-history?

Of course, it is a truism that the very act of reading makes the read text part of one's personal history: one is a different person after every act of reading and one's next act of reading (even of the same text) will be different. Nevertheless, this is more decisively true of some texts than of others: there are texts which affect us more than others. It seems to me that Nietzsche's texts become part of the historical dynamic of the following age in a particularly powerful manner - while nevertheless retaining, to the careful reader, the internal dialectic which is their striking feature as literary texts. His texts become history without ceasing.

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to be texts. This dual quality is one which any text will possess to a degree, but Nietzsche’s case is an extreme one because his texts are of the highest (and of a distinctly ‘modern’) literary quality and yet are partly characterized by a high degree of assimilation to the rising currents of contemporary thought.

It is this, I would suggest, which leads to Nietzsche’s ‘influence’ being felt on two quite distinct levels in the years after his attainment of fame. His texts continue to exist, are well known to do so and are now mostly widely available to be read in their textual complexity by anyone with eyes to read; meanwhile he has also become a ‘Feuilletonstar’, a ‘name’ which can have vague connotations to people who have never read a word of his work. He is in the forefront of ‘modernity’ both in his perception and analysis of a crisis of valuelessness and - the structural counterpart to this - as the creator of elusive texts with built-in systems of paradox and subversion: it is perhaps this which means that ‘his problems were the problems of almost every later writer who matters’. Yet he could also function to a broader swathe of his contemporaries as an easily (it has often been said: too easily) quotable résumé of the cultural possibilities of contemporary German life.

It is for this reason that the question of whether and how Nietzsche’s texts in particular (rather than vaguely ‘Nietzschean’ ideas) influenced the writers of the succeeding generation is of such interest. The point is that to examine the effect of Nietzsche on a later text is (to borrow Musil’s happy phrase) to examine a

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25 See, for example, John Buchan The Four Adventures of Richard Hannay, London, 1930, p.341. Even Hannay - whose inclinations are distinctly anti-intellectual - has (in a story written in 1916) heard of ‘a sportsman named Nietzsche’. Buchan, interestingly enough, has Sandy Arbuthnot qualify Hannay’s received notions of Nietzsche’s ideas and exculpate Nietzsche from warmongering.

'besonders deutlicher Fall' of how a later text can be influenced by a predecessor which is both text-as-text and text-within-history.

To start at the simplest level: we have already seen how Nietzsche can be said to have 'dominated' this period as far as artists were concerned, leaving 'scarcely a cultural area' unaffected. Very well then: a text of this period which betrays signs (whatever signs and in whatever way) of Nietzsche's having existed and/or written will indicate thereby that its internal dynamic (whatever else its characteristics) is engaged with a presence (i.e. Nietzsche's writings and/or example) which informed some of the sharpest debate in both literary and broader contemporary discussion. Conversely, a text which betrays no signs whatever of Nietzsche's having written and/or existed will indicate thereby that it is insulated to a high degree from those themes.

There then follows a second stage: if a work does indeed indicate that it is aware of Nietzsche's having written and/or existed, how does it do so? Which of Nietzsche's (often contradictory) images, styles or thoughts does it register? Does the later work (for example) recognize such contradictions or does it simply take from Nietzsche (if anything) only one element or certain elements of his depictions?

Then comes literary interpretation: how do Nietzschean elements (if any) in the later text contribute to the effect of that text as a whole? This stage demands that we treat not only those parts of the text where we may have reason to suspect a Nietzschean influence, but those parts which help place that influence (if any) in perspective.

Finally comes literature-in-history: how (if at all) are we to interpret the way (if any) in which Nietzsche's influence has operated in each work? For, as I have

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27 See footnotes 3 & 4 to the previous chapter.
argued, what is in question here is not simply how a text was affected by an earlier text, but how one text-in-history was affected by a predecessor. Hence it is vital to decide just how Nietzsche's influence may have operated (if indeed it did): the nature of any such influence will be significant in cultural-historical as well as in purely literary terms.

This, of course, has still not answered the question: why seek a historical significance in these texts? Is not each a sufficient, a vastly rewarding object of discussion in itself? The answer which this study would make (and here a personal stance is impossible to avoid) will perhaps already have become clear from the discussions in the last chapter of the 'historical gravity' which, I believe, affects Nietzsche's supposedly free-wheeling metaphoric play. I would ask whether Nietzsche's, or anyone else's, metaphors are really to be conceived of as being in a state of Derridan 'decentred play', as textual atoms obeying only a language-inherent imperative to resist ultimate concretion into a text-externally referenced meaning. I find this proposition hard to accept because I find it drastically limits the importance of the writer's work. But if a writer's metaphors (which, in the broadest sense, means his acts of writing as a whole) are not free, then what is compelling them?

We have seen how Bloom answers this question (thus clearly implying that he has registered the need to answer it) by positing a Freudian 'family relationship' between writers and earlier writers. I agree wholeheartedly with Bloom's search for 'influence', which de Man (quite correctly) sees as a version of the notion (denied by himself) that 'language is a tool manipulated by extralingual impulses'. I would ask, though, whether it is sufficient to see artists as

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28 Schrift, p.144.
29 De Man, p.276.
inhabiting a world of daemons and sublimes derived primarily and decisively from their reactions to other undead artists - inhabiting, that is, a world whose imperatives are quite different from the world of 'non-artists'. How different is this from the (Romantic) conception of The Artist as pathological outsider? (Or perhaps, as pathological insider of a world of Art?) I would suggest, for example, that one might ask Bloom the following question in relation to Nietzsche: was it really Schopenhauer as such, Schopenhauer's texts-as-texts that Nietzsche saw forever looming over his shoulder? Or was it not rather the statue in Schopenhauer's honour which German culture had erected - the graven image of Schopenhauer's texts-within-history?

Might we not, then, seek to involve Bloom's 'hidden roads that go from poem to poem'\(^3\) with the broader highways that connect epoch and epoch of human history?

A glance at the concluding lines of this thesis will, I think, show that my intention is anything but to disparage literature or the study of literature. On the contrary. To say that literature is inescapably involved in history is to say that literature is created under - and is of significance to - broader socio-cultural conditions of human living. I see no reason why anyone who truly respects literature should wish to claim that literature is somehow free of historical grounding. Is not the obverse of the claim that literature is free of history the argument that literature cannot operate on history? Nietzsche, in my view, is the perfect counter-example. He does not float, however much he may have longed to dance free: he was affected by, and affected, history.

Matisse, at least, was anything but insulted at the idea that art might be deeply involved in history, declaring that 'all art bears the imprint of its

\(^3\) Bloom, p.96.
historical epoch, and that the greatest art is that in which this imprint is most clearly marked'.

Nietzsche, I have suggested, clearly bears the imprint of his age: the interconnectedness of his era and our own, though, means that the imprint he bears is in some ways that of our own age too. He appears to us not as a writer of the past but of the present-in-the-making. A certain teleology of valuation is perhaps inescapable here: Nietzsche's age self-evidently did precede and proceed into ours in one way or another. I would thus suggest that Nietzsche remains of such interest and relevance to us because he registered, depicted or represented the nascent elements within his own age - the elements, that is, which were to lead from his age into the following age, which is the age both of the later writers we shall examine and, in many ways, of our own lives. To make a paradigm: only because he dwells to some extent within his own age (that is, in history) is any writer of significance for a later (historical) age.

It is Nietzsche's status as a battlefield of the currents in his age which explains the historical perspective of Hollingdale's conclusion:

In Nietzsche's own day his writings were ignored - not because his contemporaries were so much denser than we are, but because events had not yet demonstrated their relevance.\(^\text{32}\)

We are not concerned with Nietzsche's contemporaries, however, but with the age that followed. And indeed, it would appear that events by the end of the century had begun to demonstrate Nietzsche's relevance to a wide circle:

\[^{31}\text{Quoted in Terry Eagleton,} \textit{Marxism and Literary Criticism}, \text{London, 1976, p.3.}\]

\[^{32}\text{Hollingdale,} \textit{Nietzsche: The Man and his Philosophy}, \text{p.197.}\]
To the thinking central European of the 1890's, Nietzsche offered an interpretation of [...] the chaos in which the aspiring intellectuals of the monarchy found themselves.\textsuperscript{33}

This brings us to the crux of the problem regarding art and history: if we resist seeing artists as somehow insulated from other 'thinking men', from doctors, say, or insurance experts, then we must be prepared to acknowledge their having being influenced by the same forces which influenced such other 'thinking men' in their historical period. And indeed, we have seen ample critical agreement that 'Nietzsche's influence was dominant on almost all the major writers of the ensuing decades'.\textsuperscript{34}

In examining the 'influence of Nietzsche', then, the terms of literary criticism are not in themselves sufficient. As one distinguished Germanist has put it, this question demands in a singularly urgent manner that we proceed ultimately 'from the relatively low court of literary criticism to a higher one with broader jurisdiction'.\textsuperscript{35} It is within such terms that Reed goes on to strike the admirable balance between history and text shown in his depiction of the significance of Nietzsche for a group of writers which includes some of the men with whom we shall be dealing. Writing of the influence of Nietzsche's animal-imagery on Benn, Kafka, Thomas Mann and Rilke, he concludes that

we see each in his own way transforming derived material into artistic texture: and we see, in this variety, the underlying unity of artistic


\textsuperscript{34} Gray, p.27.

\textsuperscript{35} Reed, 'Nietzsche's Animals', p.179.
effects and intellectual postulates which help to give the period its character. Reed recognizes an element of direct, positivistic influence by virtue of which creative writers indeed 'derived material' from Nietzsche, while recognizing also the existence of creative processes by which these artists transform that material, 'each in his own way' into substantial and autonomously valid 'artistic texture'. Moreover, he recognizes both the different ways in which this creative process operates from writer to writer and the fact that there is nevertheless an 'underlying unity' within the range of effects they thereby produce - a unity which is historically grounded.

Because their historical grounding is so clearly related to our own there is a paradoxical sense in which the works of this era which have retained or even increased their resonance (here one inevitably thinks of Kafka) have done so precisely because they so firmly inhabit their (that is, in many ways: our) historical period - because, that is, they have something of the character of historical (arti)facts. The term is borrowed from a recent survey of modern critical movements which concludes with the suggestion that a move (on, rather than back) into some kind of historicism may indeed be necessary as a corrective to an interpretative 'freedom' so excessive (and sometimes, paradoxically, so insisted upon) that it is in danger of forming a new prison of unmeaning and of critical impotence:

Accustomed to the everyday humdrum of infinite regress, yet awed by the proliferation of intertextuality to which the post-structuralist liberation of the text has given rise, future critics will recover, on the far side of irony's absolute freedom, the charm of simple historical

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(arti)fact. At this point our writing will regain its power through the loss of its privilege.\(^{37}\)

I would agree with this view, seeing in such a process a means whereby the commentator can present literature as something other, and something far more important to the reader, than 'the tiresome series of word games which some critics would make it'.\(^{38}\)

The suggestion that an awareness of texts not only as texts but also as texts-within-history might increase the importance of literary studies would, indeed, appear to be gaining ground even in the erstwhile bastions of deconstruction: a publisher currently announces Warwick University's latest study in literature and philosophy with the note that

> this unique book addresses the key question of what it is to exist, to live and write in time. In an age shadowed by the threat of nuclear annihilation...\(^{39}\)

I would certainly agree that the issue of the interconnectedness of historical environment and artistic production is a key one, though I wonder whether the critical strategy is quite as unique as this publisher appears to believe. We need, after all, go no further than Nietzsche to read of that

> geheimnisvoller Zusammenhang, den wir hier zwischen Staat und Kunst, politische Gier und künstlerische Zeugung, Schlachtfeld und Kunstwerk ahnen. (IIIii,261)

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Recognising, then, the salutary lessons which modern criticism has taught in terms of our awareness of a text's internal dynamics - I hope that the following chapters will demonstrate this awareness - one can still reserve a place in literary discussion for textual (artifacts) which are neither purely the products of intra-textual forces nor purely reflections of something extra-textual but arise out of Nietzsche's 'geheimnisvoller Zusammenhang' between art and world, out of the interaction of literary text and external reality. I would argue that such textual artifacts are 'simple' only in the philosophical sense of 'complete': like the rock in Kafka's parable of Prometheus, each remains a 'Wahrheitsgrund' which can be interpreted almost any way - except away.

Before concluding this last introduction to the business proper of this thesis, I must declare now that the investigations which follow are not and cannot be free of intention. These are not newly-discovered literary 'sites', after all: legions of artifacts and layers have been discovered and triangulated in to the general plans, almost countless interpretations have been advanced. It would be quite literally impossible for one explorer to follow up without distinction all the lines of investigation which have been entered upon. I therefore choose, as I must, consciously to follow the directions of those previous 'excavators' whose findings appear most interesting to me. Many of them (as we have seen) have suggested that Nietzsche is an informing presence of enormous significance. Digging, I am therefore consciously looking out for certain textual features (which, in a study of this scale, must sadly involve the conscious non-registering of others): for the 'finds' which suggest that the 'site' does contain specific elements which can be traced back to Nietzsche in some way or other. If we do discover these, we can then proceed: are such textual artifacts isolated phenomena, or are they found

*See Tallis, p.247.
in association with broader layers of the textual scheme such as to be of
significance for our interpretation of the whole? Are they peculiar to this site,
or can they be linked to artifacts found elsewhere? If so, why are certain types
of these artifacts found at one site and different types at another, contemporary
site? Might it even be possible that such contextualized finds help reveal the
processes by which, the reasons for which, the textual edifices were raised?

What, finally, of the choice of texts, of 'sites' for investigation? Certainly, one
could find works by several of these authors which are more openly or even
(like Rilke's Florenzer Tagebuch) derivatively 'Nietzschean' works. But that is
not the point: I am not primarily concerned to document in itself a high degree
of borrowing from Nietzsche. The point is to see whether and how a knowledge
of Nietzsche's texts can illuminate - that is, can provide the means for new
interpretations of - works chosen not on the basis of overtly 'Nietzschean'
features, but on the basis of their undiminished resonance to us. These texts
appear to me to constitute such a group: this, after all, is presumably why we
have made them canonical. It is possible that they may not all be considered
canonical in ten years' time; works may be added to the canon, others removed.
Since I do not consider myself a prophet of the future I have decided not to
attempt such alteration. I have, rather, chosen the works simply on the basis of
their being the texts which, as far as I can tell, are felt at this time to represent
the most thoroughly telling contribution of each author to substantial prose
literature in the period under investigation. I may very well be thought wrong,
but it seems to me that Tonio Kröger, for example, simply cannot compete with
Der Tod in Venedig in these terms; that Vereinigungen cannot compete with
Törless, nor Die Göttinnen with Der Untertan. Die Verwandlung and Das
Urteil are extraordinary works, but in the sheer breadth of their resonance to
us they are, I feel, scarcely comparable with Der Prozess. ¹ Is there anything in
the prose works of Rilke or Schnitzler in this period to compare with the
substantiality of Malte Laurids Brigge or Der Weg ins Freie? I do not claim that
the list is exhaustive, but would argue that the most important prose authors are
here represented by what are currently held to be their most important works
of the period.

In conclusion, I must stress again that in any archaeological excavation, real
or allegorical, the process of investigation is unlikely to be a tidy and clean-cut
one: the layer marked on our textual plan 'direct textual influence of Nietzsche'
is likely to shade into, rather than be clearly distinguished from, the layer
marked 'indirect influence of Nietzsche': these layers, after all, are
contemporaneous. There may be other layers which we shall have to label:
'possible parallels with Nietzsche's texts' or 'perhaps fruitfully to be examined
in the light of Nietzsche's texts'. Any interpretations I make will be made in the
full awareness that all interpretations are merely suggestions. Since this textual
'dig' will be investigating literary sites which have all been the objects of so
many previous expeditions, it will count itself essentially successful if it can
locate, contextualize and display a few new textual artifacts of demonstrable
provenance.

¹ I am, of course, aware that Der Prozess was begun almost exactly at the time
the war broke out. However, Kafka's diaries for the months preceding make it
clear that central figures - Josef K., the Landlady, the 'Türhüter'- as well as the
images of arrest, guilt, and 'Gericht' were already established. In any case, the
war did not really 'become what it was' - The Great War in the apocalyptic
sense in which European culture came to see it - until well after August 1914.
CHAPTER 4: The Artist in The Becoming
(Musil: Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless)

Introduction

The statement 'Robert Musil was influenced by Nietzsche' would cause little initial stir. Helmut Arntzen (for example) writes:

Musils Nietzsche-Aufnahme kann zunächst ohne Schwierigkeiten in die allgemeine Wirkungsgeschichte Nietzsches eingefügt werden, die um die Jahrhundertwende einen ersten Höhepunkt erreicht.¹

Musil himself - in one of his earliest preserved diary entries - describes his youthful coming into contact with Nietzsche as a 'Schicksal' (TB1,19). Roger Willemsen tells us that there is 'kaum eine Schrift Nietzsches, die ihm nicht nachweislich bekannt geworden wäre',² while Ingo Seidler states 'dass sich Musil auf alle Hauptwerke Nietzsches ausser Morgenröte, Zur Genealogie der Moral und [...] Antichrist direkt bezieht'.³ Towards the end of his life, Musil famously asks whether he really took in more than a third of Nietzsche in his youth - 'Und doch entscheidender Einfluss'. His youthful distance from Nietzsche (whom he accused of showing us all the possible paths but himself taking none) is later retracted and called 'jugendliche Anmassung'.⁴

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² Roger Willemsen, Robert Musil: Vom intellectuellen Eros, Munich, 1985, p.46.
⁴ Seidler, p.165.
The above critical and autobiographical statements might well suggest that the reader could expect to find a direct, demonstrable influence of Nietzsche on Musil. In terms of Musil’s texts, however, such influence does not seem to have been widely discovered. Or is it rather a case of its not having been acknowledged?

This is the question Seidler asks. He shows how Kaiser/Wilkins often refer to elements in Musil’s work which seem clearly to presuppose Nietzsche’s 'Gedankengut' - without mentioning Nietzsche by name. He goes on to make a polemical appeal for a greater and more accurate appreciation of Nietzsche’s influence on Musil:

Ein grosser Teil der vorhandenen Musilliteratur muss der Unterlassungssünde beschuldigt werden, Nietzsche überhaupt nicht zu erwähnen, ein kleiner Teil der Begehungssünde, Nietzsches Bedeutung für Musil und sein Werk zu verkennen, zu missdeuten und vor allem zu unterschätzen.  

Seidler presents his case with a selection of quotations from Musil’s Mann ohne Eigenschaften corpus. He claims that his material shows that Musil, despite calling himself 'einen der besten Schüler Nietzsches', is more of an echo (and an imperfect one) than a true student, providing evidence ‘dass er, im Glauben, Nietzsche zu verbessern, Nietzsche in Wahrheit nur wiederholt’ and, at that, ‘unter Vernachlässigung bedeutender Aspekte’. Seidler concludes that Musil has

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5 Seidler, p.162.
6 Seidler, p.161
7 Seidler, pp.175-8.
8 Seidler, p.165.
nothing new to offer in the field to which Musil himself publicly wished to contribute:

Der Raum, den Nietzsches Denken durchdringt, enthält und umschliesst auch die Beiträge zur geistigen Bewältigung der Welt von Robert Musil.

Seidler’s charge is serious indeed in respect of a writer whose status as a 'man of ideas' constitutes a large part of his reputation: it suggests that the 'entscheidender Einfluss' which Musil himself admits to having gained from Nietzsche was obtained through a reading which was at least selective (and possibly defective) - and that Musil added nothing of intellectual consequence to what he gleaned from Nietzsche.

In investigating this question of Musil's debt to Nietzsche, we must concern ourselves not with what Musil did or did not intend, or claim, but with the one area on which his reputation must ultimately rest: his literary production. Here, my choice of text - Die Verwirrungen des Zögling Torless (1906) - may seem curious. For obvious reasons, most Musil criticism is largely devoted to the published or unpublished material of Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften. Simply in terms of chronology, though, this massive work must be excluded from the present study. Despite the fact that its conception clearly dates back to 1913 and, if we take Musil's later claim as writ, to diary entries of 1904-5, the long (indeed, infinite) gestation of the work means that Musil's view of the era under investigation here is essentially that of hindsight: Musil's great work is

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9 Seidler, p.185.

consciously historical in relation to the pre-war period. In this (however much
Musil would have disliked the comparison) its contribution to our understanding
of the era is like the contribution of *Der Zauberberg*. To put it most simply: this
thesis is not concerned with works which treat the period, but in works which
are of the period. For this reason, just as the discussion of Thomas Mann will
be in terms of *Der Tod in Venedig*, not of *Der Zauberberg*, the discussion of
Musil and Nietzsche will concern itself not with *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*,
but with the earlier work.

Seidler's case - that Musil's debt to Nietzsche has been inadequately
investigated - might well be tested in any case by looking first at *Törless*. This
novel stands, after all, in close biographical proximity to Musil's self-
proclaimedly 'decisive' contact with Nietzsche's thought and to his largest-scale
annotations of Nietzsche's works. It would thus seem natural to assume that the
possibility of Nietzsche's having influenced this work has been thoroughly
investigated.

This, however, does not appear to be the case. Certainly it was not so in 1974:
Robert L. Roseberry\(^{11}\) refers us to Karl Corino, who has noted Musil's
'ästhetische Behandlung ethischer Fragen' in *Törless*\(^{12}\) and to Elizabeth Stopp,
whose findings he summarizes as showing how the 'Abgrund' between ethics and
aesthetics is bridged 'durch eine kunstlerische Vorstellung, durch eine natürliche
Affinität zu Symbolen und Bildern.'\(^{13}\) Yet neither of these commentators writers

\(^{11}\) Robert L. Roseberry, *Robert Musil: Ein Forschungsbericht*, Frankfurt/Main,
1974.

\(^{12}\) Karl Corino, 'Törless Ignotus' in *Text und Kritik* (1968) no. 21/22, pp.18-25,
quoted in Roseberry, *Forschungsbericht*.

\(^{13}\) Elizabeth Stopp, 'Musil's Törless: Content and Form' in *Modern Languages
in neither case does the author refer to Nietzsche. Roseberry, indeed, reports not a single mention of Nietzsche in relation to Törless.\textsuperscript{14} David Turner recognizes that Törless 'judges by aesthetic rather moral categories' and that 'This is one of the features typical of the aesthetic movements of the later nineteenth century'\textsuperscript{15} - but he feels no need to mention the name which immediately springs to mind as the presiding deity of German aestheticism in this epoch. Seidler's polemic demand for more Nietzsche to be seen in Musil does not appear to apply to Törless. Thomas Pekar précies the spiritual landscape of Törless by saying that 'aus Dionysus wird Narziss' - but he never refers to Nietzsche's seminal use of the term 'Dionysus'.\textsuperscript{16} The lopsided weighting of Musil-Nietzsche research may perhaps best be illustrated by noting that Gerd Müller devotes fifteen pages of his study to Nietzschean elements in Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften, but mentions Nietzsche not once in relation to Törless.\textsuperscript{17}

Even where Nietzsche is mentioned in connection with Törless, things are not necessarily much better: Eckhard Heftrich tells us economically that we are dealing with a 'Mischprodukt aus Nietzsche und Fin de Siècle' - and declines to go into any further detail.\textsuperscript{18} Such statements are most unhelpful: they perpetuate the idea of some nebulous, 'well-known' importance of Nietzsche.

\textsuperscript{14} Roseberry, Forschungsbericht pp.148-50.
\textsuperscript{17} Gerd Müller, Dichtung und Wissenschaft: Studien zu Robert Musils Romanen 'Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless' und 'Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften. Uppsala, 1971.
\textsuperscript{18} Eckhart Heftrich, Musil: Eine Einführung, Munich, 1986, p.33.
Undifferentiated reference of this kind would scarcely be permitted (even in an introductory guide) in respect of any other major thinker.

So far, then, the reader who undertakes a survey of the secondary literature on *Törless* would be likely to decide either that there is no evidence at all for the influence of Nietzsche's thought on this text, or that vaguely 'Nietzschean' attitudes might be present as part of a general 'fin de siècle' atmosphere (whatever that may mean).

Hannah Hickman has indeed suggested that Musil's imagery in *Törless* of growth and pregnancy as well as his use of birds as symbols of freedom may be connected to Nietzsche's specific usages in *Morgenröte* and *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*. She does not, however, extend her investigation of this imagery to the point where it has much interpretative significance.¹⁹

Most recently, though, Phillip Payne does indeed suggest that certain specific elements of Nietzsche's thought are made use of in *Törless*. I consider that Payne has broken important new ground here and would agree with his general interpretation of the work. I think, though, that his textual juxtapositions are neither as numerous nor, where they are made, as telling as they could be. For example: Payne draws our attention to Musil's lurid depiction of how a thought becomes 'lebendig' only when

\[
\text{wir seine Wahrheit fühlen, jenseits von aller Rechtfertigung, wie einen Anker, der von ihm aus ins durchblutete, lebendige Fleisch riss.}
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(pp.136-7)

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He tells us that there 'can be little doubt that Musil, in explaining this painful but necessary process, was borrowing from Nietzsche'. But what was he borrowing from Nietzsche? Payne refers us to the following passage from Der Fall Wagner which Musil wrote down (TB 1,28) at around this time:

Die Krankheit selbst kann ein Stimulans des Lebens sein, nur muss man gesund genug für dieses Stimulans sein. (VIii,16)

This passage is in no sense specifically reminiscent of Musil's image of the bloody anchor.

But there is, in fact, a very close parallel in Nietzsche to Musil's image of truth biting into bloody flesh. There is also a very close parallel in Musil to the above passage from Nietzsche concerning health and sickness. We shall examine these in their proper places. For now, let us simply say that Payne's juxtapositions are perhaps not as persuasive as they might have been - but that his work gives an indication of how fruitful a Nietzschean examination of Törless might be.

The basic question this chapter will attempt to answer will therefore be as follows: does Nietzsche's influence (if any) on this work function in the manner described by Seidler - that is, such that Musil's own 'Beitrag zur geistigen Bewältigung der Welt' is deeply indebted to Nietzsche's? Or is Musil's relationship to Nietzsche, on the contrary, 'nicht gekennzeichnet durch irgendeine Form der Abhängigkeit, sondern [...] durch den von Musil selbst gebrauchten Begriff der "Neugestaltung"'? In other words: is the later writer (Musil) merely exploiting the earlier writer (Nietzsche) in the service of his own...

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autonomous vision - or is the later author's vision one that, consciously or not, operates under the decisive influence of his predecessor's?

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The Aesthete's Progress

Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless is a book about certain experiences of a youth. Or rather, it is about certain experiences of a man in his youth. This apparently obvious statement makes an important distinction between the work and the large number of contemporary 'Pübertätromanen' (Strauss's Freund Hein and Hesse's Unterm Rad are well-known examples). Roy Pascal points out some of the differences between Musil's book and the genre:

It hardly fits into the pattern of books dealing with the complex boys-school-parents, since there is no criticism of the parents, no rebellion against parental authority and no true criticism of school and teachers [...] The rules are broken with no rebellious intent, and at the end the assertion of authority is beneficent [...] The theme of the book is not the power of institutions to make boys bestial, but the character of a community of boys [...] the questions the book raises are not questions of sexuality, but questions of power, the psychological sources of power, its capacity to dehumanize.22

While Pascal's comparison is illuminating, it in fact points up a crucial contrast: Törless concerns itself only tangentially with questions of group psychology. Of course, there are depictions of how boys can be influenced (by Reiting, for example), but these are not the principal concern of the book. The principal

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22 Pascal From Naturalism to Expressionism, pp.223-225.
concern of Törless is with Törless the individual. And more importantly, with Törless the (as yet) undeveloped individual.

This 'as yet', and our awareness of it as readers, is of vital importance. Payne has noted that 'the narrative is designed to throw light on a process taking place within Törless'. He refers us to Martin Swales, who has set out the significance of the fact that the narrator of the story 'is clearly and securely in possession of the outcome of the tale' from the start. Swales traces the progression whereby this assured dwelling in some developmental future is gradually transferred to Törless himself: first 'the reader is buttonholed into conceding the cognitive importance of the protagonist's seemingly squalid confusions'; then 'the formulations that were characteristic of the narrators analysis - the 'etwas' that goes beyond mere ('blosse') understanding - are imputed to Törless' own self-understanding'; finally, we reach a point at which 'the overlap between the experiencing mind and the narrative statement is well-nigh total'.

Törless's 'present' is thus made history by the narrator's 'damals', while his 'future' is occupied by the narrator's 'später'. The relationship between author and reader becomes like that which Rilke praised Thomas Mann for avoiding in Buddenbrooks: in Törless, the narrator is very much Rilke's 'überlegener Schriftsteller, [der] sich zu dem überlegenen Leser neigt, um ihn zu überreden und mitzureissen'. Technically, it is the same effect as we find at the start of Garcia Marquez's Cien Años de Soledad: there, the first sentence refers us forward from Buendia's childhood idyll to the firing squad he will face as a man.

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Payne, p.31.


Rilke, quoted in Reed, Thomas Mann, p.59.
The content, however, is the reverse, for in Törless we are constantly reminded that the confusions of the present will be brought out into clarity. In Marquez we wait for the disaster we know must come, in Musil for the enlightenment which we know awaits Törless (and us).

This enlightenment consists in Törless's becoming an artist-figure. By the end of the book, Törless has attained that superiority of insight which has, according to Swales, characterized the narrative voice throughout:

> When the mature Törless is presented to us as someone who is 'schönegeistig' and 'ästhetisch-intellektuel' this is not merely a convenient way of excusing the writer from having to think up an appropriate profession for his protagonist: it is the only possible solution, one that has been present as a consistent intimation throughout the book.26

Musil's belief in the superiority of the artistic type had, as he confirms, a quite specific source: Nietzsche. 'Meine Formel des Schöpferischen als letzter Wert kommt von N.'27 What I want now to argue is that Törless's progress to the desired state of aesthetic-cum-intellectual contemplation of the world is accompanied by many images and terms which can be traced to that same source.

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26Swales, 'Narrator and Hero', p.8.

27See Willemsen, p.48.
Törless's Zarathustrian Dilemma

In the early pages of the book Musil supplies a couple of architectural hints as to the general terms - and the wider significance - of the dilemma facing Törless. The school was built in the previous century 'auf dem Boden einer frommen Stiftung' (p.8) and Bozena's 'verrufenes Wirtshaus' was formerly a 'Badhaus' used by townspeople and countrymen as a 'Heilstätte' (p.27). Bozena's name, according to Kaiser/Wilkins, means something like 'kleine Göttin'. These hints refer us to the death of religious devotion and true 'health' (the word 'Heilstätte' has overtones of a more than physiological 'health'): these have been replaced by secular education which still wishes to preserve its pupils 'vor den verderblichen Einflüssen einer Grossstadt' (p.8) and to a modern sexuality which is no longer 'healthy' but 'verrufen', furtive and guilt-ridden, worshipping a 'kleine Göttin' in the cellar of an old 'Heilstätte'. To an Austro-Hungarian German, the setting of the story on the line to Russia (p.7), 'weitab von der Residenz, im Osten des Reiches' (p.8) would doubtless be a further touch of colour suggesting the nearness to a threatening, primitive, absolute 'Other Reality' on the edge of everyday thought.

The general mood of cultural/religious decline and fall in these early pages might call Nietzsche to mind in a very broad sense, but only as the most urgent among many commentators; it is certainly nothing like evidence for any direct or even indirect influence on this text. Soon, though, we come across a landscape, a 'setting', which is worth noting in more detail.

As the youths walk from the station back towards school, Törless feels as his path to be 'als ob es so sein müsste: als einen steinernen Zwang, der sein ganzes Leben in diese Bewegung - Schritt für Schritt - auf dieser einen Linie, auf diesem einen schmalen Streifen, der sich durch den Staub zog, einfing und zusammenpresste' (p.16). Payne has noted that the passage 'bristles with references to the influence of some kind of necessity on Törless'. It is in this mood, then, that the book takes us into a distinctive landscape. This landscape does not occur again, and is not located in any of the 'real space' of the novel: it occurs and then is gone. We are, I think, entitled see it as a symbolic landscape:

Als sie an einer Kreuzung stehen blieben, wo ein zweiter Weg mit dem ihren in einen runden, ausgetretenen Fleck zusammenfloss, und als dort ein morschgewordener Wegweiser schief in die Luft hineinragte, wirkte dieser, zu ihrer Umgebung in Widerspruch stehende, Linie wie ein verzweifelter Schrei auf Törless (p.16).

Within the novel, the imagery refers to that moment when we realize that the borderline between the 'normal' world and the 'other' world of dark emotions is 'heimlich und nahe und jeden Augenblick überschreitbar' (p.47). This moment is associated with the 'Wegweiser-Schrei' of p.16: 'Was geschieht in solchem Augenblick? Was schiesst da schreiend in die Höhe...?' (p.47). This 'Augenblick', then, is the moment when that mystic 'Etwas' that cannot be put into words is made manifest.

I would suggest that the build-up of 'Notwendigkeit' as Törless approaches this landscape, the image of the two roads meeting, the sign pointing upwards in 'Widerspruch' to the opposing paths, the imagery of primal scream and

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Payne, p.62.
'Augenblick' - all point to the motifs of one seminal item of German literature. They point, that is, to the central episode of Also Sprach Zarathustra in which the terror and transfiguring acceptance of 'ewige Wiederkunft' is enshrined. There (Vli, 195-6) we find the 'zwei Wege' (all past and all future events) which meet at the quasi-mystical 'Torweg' called 'Augenblick'; a dog howls and Zarathustra slips into interior monologue in just the way Törless does. Musil's imagery refers, in the scheme of the novel, to the 'Augenblick' when the familiar, rational world and the 'other', irrational reality collide. I would suggest that both the broader meaning (the individual's confrontation with 'Notwendigkeit') and the imagery of Musil's symbolic landscape may be related to this episode from Nietzsche in enough detail to suggest that the relationship might be a direct one.

A later section of the book perhaps supports the case: when Beineberg wants an example of the inflated claims of Kantian 'science', he chooses the image of a stone falling under the (according to 'them') immutable laws of gravity. Why, he asks, could someone not escape this force? (p.82). Beineberg is, in fact, objecting to exactly the same image of necessity used by the dwarf in the section of Zarathustra referred to above: 'Du warfst dich hoch, aber jeder geworfene Stein muss - fallen' (Vii, 194).

Törless - who is the actual instigator of this debate - agrees that the problem is beyond 'science' (which depends on 'belief' in things like the square root of minus one), but finds Beineberg's mystic excitements 'peinlich' (p.82). His outburst is in general agreement with Zarathustra's dictum to avoid the 'Hinterweltler': 'bleibt der Erde treu und glaubt denen nicht, welche euch von überirdischen Hoffnungen reden' (Vii, 9). In Törless's mouth, a similar idea is formulated thus: 'gar nichts Übernatürliches, gerade das Natürliche suche ich'
(p.83). Törless, then, seeks something beyond mathematical logic and yet not metaphysical. He wants, that is, to make the transcendent immanent by experiencing the fullness of Nature 'in mir' (p.83): this, as we saw in our discussion of Nietzsche, is just what Nietzsche-Zarathustra preaches. Again, the evidence here is not sufficient to speak of a direct influence of Nietzsche's writings, but is sufficiently parallel to Nietzsche's thought to add weight to the idea that Musil is thinking in 'Nietzschean' terms - in terms, that is, which owe their parameters, if not their exact formulations, specifically to Nietzsche. This, in turn, would strengthen the suggestion that closer parallels between Nietzsche's and Musil's writings are not fortuitous.

Musil's images of Törless confronting 'necessity' and rational thought would thus seem both to be parallel to Nietzsche's idiosyncratic imagery in certain details, and to inhabit a realm that, in conceptual terms, overlaps with Nietzsche's attitudes as expressed in Zarathustra.

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Törless and Musil’s Early View of Nietzsche

A different relationship to Nietzsche may be present in Musil’s depiction of the central point where the problem of the ‘two worlds’ is made flesh in Basini. Törless is waiting to hear proof of Basini’s guilt; after a lengthy exposition on the relations between Reiting the demagogic ‘politician’ and Beineberg the mystic, Musil moves on to Törless himself. At this vital stage in the book (it is our last look at Törless before the main crisis unfolds) Musil depicts his hero thus:

Es vermochte auch keiner so genau wie er die verschiedenen, von dem Verhalten eines Menschen in einer gegebenen Lage zu erwartenden Möglichkeiten vorauszusagen. Nur wo es sich darum handelte, einen Entschluss zu fassen, von den vorhandenen psychologischen Möglichkeiten eine auf eigene Gefahr als bestimmt anzunehmen und danach zu handeln, versagte er...(p.41)

Now, Musil’s portrayal of Törless in this passage is remarkably similar to his well-known depiction of Nietzsche a couple of years before. In his diary of 15/5/02 he writes as follows:

Das Charakteristische liegt darin, dass [Nietzsche] sagt: Dies könnte so sein und jenes so. Und darauf könnte man dies und darauf jenes bauen.

Kurz: er spricht von lauter Möglichkeiten, lauter Kombinationen, ohne eine einzige uns wirklich ausgeführt zu zeigen [...] Er zeigt uns alle Wege, auf denen unser Gehirn arbeiten kann, aber er betritt keinen.
Törless, then, is beset with the same plague of indecision that Musil criticized in Nietzsche. What is more, the novel explicitly articulates Törless’s wish for the decisiveness which, in his diary entry, Musil so missed in Nietzsche:

Dann sehnte er sich danach, endlich etwas Bestimmtes in sich zu fühlen; feste Bedürfnisse, die zwischen Gutem und Schlechtem, Brauchbarem und Unbrauchbarem schieden; sich wählen zu wissen, wenn auch falsch - besser doch, als überempfindlich alles in sich aufzunehmen (p.42).

The terms of this articulation are, however, straight out of Nietzsche. The opposition 'Gutes und Schlechtes' (as opposed to 'Gutes und Böses') is surely a formulation which Musil has borrowed from Nietzsche's work: it is there in the subheading of Zur Genealogie der Moral part 1 (where the problem is treated in detail), as well as being implicit in the title of Jenseits von Gut und Böse. The distinction between things on the basis of whether they are 'brauchbar' to the individual (rather, for example, than 'nützlich') echoes a closely related strand of Nietzsche's thought: the idea of the individual appropriating and actively using things in his own service. This idea is to be found in the above-mentioned section of Zur Genealogie der Moral as well as elsewhere. Lastly, the whole idea that it is better to 'Wählen/Scheiden' wrongly than not at all (i.e. that 'Life' values decisiveness above logical 'rightness') is thoroughly and distinctively Nietzschean: 'Life' demands that we learn 'lieber zu urteilen, als gerecht zu sein' (Vii,150).

The character and ambitions of Törless as expounded in this section of the novel would seem to be highly revealing in terms of Musil's relationship to Nietzsche. Firstly, Törless's inability to decide between the options his quick mind detects would appear to be something very like a fictional recreation of
Musil's personal view of Nietzsche, as expressed in that youthful diary entry. Secondly, Törless's longing to find a basis 'in sich' for decisiveness is expressed in terms which are themselves very reminiscent of Nietzsche's intellectual property. Musil would thus seem to be very much au fait with Nietzsche's dilemma - but to have no time for the irresolute 'weder-noch' which he sees in Nietzsche. The young Musil is impatient with Nietzsche's 'weder-noch' because he sees Nietzsche as unable to take the path which, to Musil, he seems so clearly and correctly to have indicated. Having made a very similar depiction of irresolution in the person of Törless, Musil then goes on to show him indeed taking a path marked out - but not decisively taken - by Nietzsche: that path is the aesthetic one.

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Törless's Aesthetic Solution

Törless's dilemma, then, would seem both to refer to Nietzsche's work as text (in the Zarathustrian imagery of 'necessity' and 'Augenblick') and to be related to Musil's own view of Nietzsche as a phenomenon (in that longing for decisiveness in taking the way he has shown). This supports Swales's general conclusion that Törless's explorations are very much 'in the wake of Nietzsche'.

Törless experiences (in the examples of mathematics and Kant) 'die fundamentale Fiktionalität wissenschaftlicher Axiome.' Here he is at one with Beineberg the mystic in the latter's (highly Nietzschean) formulation: 'Ich

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30 Swales, 'Narrator and Hero', p.9.
31 Willemsen, p.60.
glaube, wenn man allzu gewissenhaft wäre, so gäbe es keine Mathematik’ (p.73). Instead of mysticism, however, (with which Musil always retained a certain sympathy) Törless turns to aestheticism:

Weil die Mathematik den absoluten Wert nicht festlegen kann, verlagert Törless sein Erkenntnisinteresse auf das Ästhetische. In diesem nun wird der moralische Wert gesucht..."³²

This rejection of 'rational' thought in favour of aesthetics is related to a crisis of language.

Törless finds words consistently inadequate to express the feelings he has at this and similar 'moments' of insight. The narrator tells us exactly what the significance of this is: 'Es war ein Versagen der Worte, das ihn da quälte, ein halbes Bewusstsein, dass die Worte nur zufällige Ausflüchte für das Empfundene waren' (p.65). Törless’s dilemma is familiar to readers of Nietzsche: a word is merely 'die Abbildung eines Nervenreizes in Lauten', and all we have are 'Metaphern der Dinge, die den ursprünglichen Wesenheiten ganz und gar nicht entsprechen' (IIIii,373).

Of course, Nietzsche is not the only one to have seen this: quite apart from the classical antecedents of such formulations, the quotation from Maeterlinck which introduces Törless refers precisely to this dilemma. Musil’s diaries, however, indicate that he was specifically aware of Nietzsche’s particular contribution to this debate: we find him, around the time of the genesis of Törless, taking down a passage from Götzen-Dämmerung (Viii,70) on the limitations of 'Zeichensprachen' like logic and maths: 'In ihnen kommmt die Wirklichkeit gar nicht vor, nicht einmal als Problem' (TB1,33).

³² Willemsen, p.60.
Both Nietzsche and Musil (among others) are determined to get a plastic 'Wirklichkeit' back into language. It is, indeed, this which appears to constitute one of Nietzsche’s great attractions for the younger artists of the period under discussion. In a letter of 1906, Musil states plainly that he intends to make the reader feel, not comprehend. Torless, claims Musil, is 'einer neuen Weise zu schreiben zustrebend'.

That new way involves the use of metaphor: according to Stopp, there are 240 fully-fledged individual metaphors in Torless - two for every three pages of writing. Here Musil’s analysis of the dilemma facing the artist would appear to be broadly in accordance with Nietzsche’s depictions: his way 'zur geistigen Bewältigung der Welt' seems to involve an attempt to command language (which Nietzsche called a 'bewegliches Heer der Metaphern') in terms of metaphor. According to Nietzsche, the 'Sprachbildner' is a man who 'bezeichnet nur die Relationen der Dinge zu den Menschen und nimmt zu deren Ausdrücke die kühnsten Metaphern zu Hilfe' (IIIii,373).

If the methods Musil uses to revitalize language are thus broadly in accordance with Nietzsche’s, then his valuation of the artist’s mission also bespeaks an agreement with another of Nietzsche’s most influential attitudes as far as this generation of artists was concerned: both Nietzsche and Musil provide textual evidence that they ascribe to the artist a quasi-religious status. When Torless feels like a 'Heiliger', the narrator informs us that this is because he did not (yet) know about the 'Intuitionen grösser Künstler' (p.92): Torless, in other words, felt like a saint because he did not yet realize he was an artist. One is

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33 Letter to Paul Wegler, TB2, pp.1217-18.
35 Stopp, quoted in Roseberry, Forschungsbericht, p.34.
reminded of Nietzsche's seminal depiction of his quasi-religious inspiration when writing *Zarathustra* (VIII, 337): the artist is to be the new prophet/lawgiver of the world, its mythmaking saviour.

Again, then, we find Musil in general agreement with Nietzsche, but again we have not enough evidence to claim a direct, one-to-one relationship of the kind seen by Seidler. However, in the particular nature of the 'myth' to which he appeals, I would argue that Musil's novel clearly shows Nietzsche's specific influence.

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Art, Animals and Dionysos

As Törless sniffs greedily at the animalistic atmosphere coming from the peasants' houses - 'nackte Kinder' and 'eine schwere Brust' or two - he suddenly thinks of

alte Malerien, die er in Museen gesehen hatte, ohne sie recht zu verstehen. Er wartete auf etwas, so wie er vor diesen Bildern immer auf etwas gewartet hatte, das sich nie ereignete. Worauf...? [...] auf etwas von fürchterlicher, tierischer Sinnlichkeit (pp. 17-18).

The effect of art on Törless, then, is anything but unrelated to sensuality. Art previously awakened his sensuality into a state of heightened expectation in just the same way as the peasants' houses do now. This is the same scenario as Nietzsche presents. He takes up Stendhal's idea that beauty is 'une promesse de bonheur', setting it up as the antithesis to the claims of Kant and Schopenhauer regarding art. They argue that art is a palliative, that it calms the will; Stendhal ('ein wirklicher "Zuschauer" und Artist') says that it leads to 'die Erregung des
Willens ("des Interesses"): 'Wer hat recht, Kant oder Stendhal?' (VIII,365). Here we might note that Musil has Törless specifically reject Kant, Nietzsche's bête noire, in the novel. Musil suggests that art is a spur to the will, not some sort of aesthetic bromide. His depiction of what Törless feels when confronted by art is in accordance with Nietzsche's depiction of what the true artist feels: the 'Rausch'.

The hard edge to this coupling of High Art ('alte Malerien') and 'tierische Sinnlichkeit' makes Musil's depiction distinctively Nietzschean rather than generally 'aesthetic' or 'fin de siècle': there is nothing languid or world-weary about Musil's hero. Rather, there is quite literally no difference in the effects produced in him by the peasants' houses, by high art and, later, by the torture of Basini. The suggestion of a direct relationship between such ideas and Nietzsche's thought again finds support in Musil's diaries: around this period (TB1,33) we find him taking down verbatim Nietzsche's account of how the Dionysian 'Rausch' is a precondition of artistic creation (VIIIi,110) - and of how this is 'vor allem der Rausch der Geschlechtserregung'. Man in this state 'verwandelt die Dinge, bis sie seine Macht widerspiegeln'. The process is thus as follows: Art creates that sensual 'Rausch' which heightens Life and thus, in its turn, creates more Art. Art thus becomes co-valent with Life, that 'dunkle, treibende, unersättlich sich selbst begehrende Macht' (IIIi,265). This, then, is Musil's Nietzschean aesthetic myth in its essence: Art is not an alternative to Life, but its total, self-fuelling re-enactment.

Given this, the aesthete embraces all types of 'Rausch' without moral distinction: as the moral horizons collapse, so to do the safe conceptual limitations placed by 'moral' thought such as mathematical logic. Törless sees 'das Unendliche' as
Musil's metaphor may very well be directly drawn from *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* no.229. There, Nietzsche imagines the truth about the world as a wild animal, and tells us how

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\text{selbst handgreifliche Wahrheiten wie auf Verabredung Jahrhunderte lang unausgesprochen bleiben, weil sie den Anschein haben, jenem wilden, endlich abgetödeten Thier wieder zum Leben zu helfen. (VIIi, 171)}
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The particular 'truth' which Nietzsche proceeds to let slip concerns 'Grausamkeit': 'Fast alles, was wir 'höhere Cultur' nennen, beruht auf der Vergeistigung und Vertiefung der Grausamkeit [...] schon in jedem Erkennen-Wollen ist ein Tropfen Grausamkeit' (VIIi, 172). Given that Törless is about to engage in just such a bout of 'Grausamkeit' as a means to knowledge, it would seem legitimate to suggest that this section of Nietzsche may be a direct source for Musil's argument.

Once again, the suggestion of a direct indebtedness to Nietzsche's imagery co-exists with a general congruence between Musil's text and Nietzsche's thought: the details of how that 'Grausamkeit' affects our hero seem to be very much those proposed by Nietzsche. Payne points out that 'Törless experiences the tug-of-war between the strong forces within his psyche, namely Dionysian abandon and a visionary quality which reaches out toward the realm of the metaphysical'.\(^{36}\) We can be more specific about a possible relationship to Nietzsche, though: let us look again at one of the sections of *Götzen-

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\(^{36}\) Payne, p.59.
Dammerung which Musil took down word for word. There, Nietzsche describes the Dionysian state as one in which we find the 'gesammtes Affekt-system erregt', and experience 'die Leichtigkeit der Metamorphose, die Unfähigkeit nicht zu reagieren' (VIII,111). The novel enacts this in programme in detail: Törless, in an explicit state of sexual arousal, feels irresistibly drawn to roll in the dirt in imitation of what is happening to Basini. He is in a state of 'Dionysian' mimicry. Then, however, he becomes drawn by the light which is 'wie ein Auge' (pp.70-71), as he tries to find a way of explaining what he felt. The movement from the state of helpless intoxication to that of a feeling that he is about to 'erraten' something (Musil uses the imagery of an eye here) is again reminiscent of this same section of Götzen-Dämmerung (VIII,111), where Nietzsche describes the 'apollinischer Rausch', with its emphasis on 'sehen'. Törless is thus seen struggling up from a state of powerless, unindividuated 'Dionysian' emotional chaos to that 'Apolline' visionary state, in which form is given by the individual to chaos. Musil's depiction is here surely very close to being a programmatic enactment of Nietzsche's formula for true artistic creation - a formula which we know him to have noted down verbatim from Nietzsche's texts at around the time of Törless.

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The Aesthetics of Health

At this stage, Törless is still unable to give that 'Apolline' form, that polished surface, to his chaotic experiences. What is in no doubt is the strength of those experiences. 'Sinnlich' Törless certainly is: he was 'von wirklicher Schamlosigkeit gepeitscht' while his comrades were 'shameless' 'mehr um "fesch" zu sein, als aus
Begierde’ (p.17): he was more sensual than they, that is. This extra sensuality is surely paralleled by his feeling 'dass er diese Ereignisse mit einem Sinne mehr in sich aufnahm als seine Gefährten' (p.71). Musil, then, seems to be proposing a theory of human rank in which Törless’s superiority in terms of insight is part and parcel of his more powerful sensual drives: 'Sinnlichkeit' to experience the world fully and the 'Sinne' to give form to experience go hand in hand. Just as his spirit is 'der beweglichste' (p.41) so is his sensuality. He is simply more 'alive' than everyone else.

It is this which allows Törless to 'überwinden' (Musil uses one of Nietzsche’s favourite concepts) the Basini-episode as well as Kant. Of his degradation there will remain only

jener kleine Tropfen Giftes, der nötig ist, um der Seele die allzu sichere und beruhigte Gesundheit zu nehmen und ihr dafür eine feinere, zugescharfte, verstehende zu Geben. (p.112)

This is powerfully reminiscent of the section taken down by Musil from Der Fall Wagner (and, as we have seen, quoted by Payne), where we read that

Die Krankheit selbst kann ein Stimulans des Lebens sein, nur muss man gesund genug für dieses Stimulans sein' (VIiii,16).

Musil’s analysis, that a stable, unproblematic 'allzu sichere und beruhigte Gesundheit' is not true 'healthiness' is surely based on Nietzsche’s thought and no-one else’s. Musil would appear here to refer to Nietzsche’s 'fundamental idea that health cannot do without sickness, that it actually resides in the power to respond positively to the challenge offered by sickness'.

37 He also seems to share Nietzsche’s assumption of 'a direct, rather than an inverse relation between the

37 Pasley, ‘Nietzsche’s Use of Medical Terms’, p.149.
health of his body and the health of his mind', and the associated idea that the 'strong' man allows and sublimates his drives whereas the 'weak' man resists and represses them.

The results of Törless's capacity to react successfully to dangerous stimulants are depicted in the most extended and important of the narrator's prefigurations of Törless's future. Here again we will find Musil's depictions imbued with ideas which are, I would suggest, distinctively Nietzsche's property rather than derived from some general Lebensphilosophie'.

In pp.112-113, we find that the sense of shame at his own lust (p.18) will have entirely disappeared from the adult Törless. In fact, the explanation of why Törless does not feel shame at his youthful excesses is the whole burden of this passage. Törless, we are assured, is to become fully what he was in embryo before the peasants houses: not a morality-preaching distruster of the flesh, but a 'healthy' embracer of sensual experience who has overcome his shame. The result, we are informed by the narrator, is an adult who judges his fellow men not on moral grounds but purely on the aesthetic grounds of whether they present an 'attractive' spectacle, an argument for 'Life'. If confronted with the 'Ausschweifungen eines Wiistlings', the mature Törless will despise such a man

immediately also only because of the sad, robbed, enfeebled appearance, he offers. And he would have despised him equally, whether his excess be in sexual excess or in morbidly degenerate cigarette smoking or alcohol indulgence (p.112).

Törless, then, will despise the man who gives visual evidence of his subjection to 'Zwang' and 'Entartung': not because he disapproves morally, but because

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38 Pasley, 'Nietzsche's Use of Medical Terms', p.135.
such a man offers a sad, debilitated (and thus debilitating) spectacle ('Anblick') to the observer. This process of aesthetic value-judgment is, I would suggest, unthinkable without Nietzsche's thought as expressed, once again, in Götzen-Dämmerung. This passage is not among those which Musil noted verbatim - but it is only a very few pages removed from passages which he did take down:

Das Hässliche wird verstanden als ein Wink und Symptom der Degenerescenz [...] Jedes Anzeichen von Erschöpfung, von Schwere, von Alter, von Müdigkeit, jede Art Unfreiheit als Krampf, Lähmung [...] das alles ruft die gleiche Reaktion hervor, das Werthurtheil 'hässlich' (VIii,118).

Törless, that is, will be no longer 'verwirrt', but will have arrived at Nietzsche's amoral, aesthetic rejection of such a man: 'Der Anblick des Menschen macht nunmehr müde' (VIii,292). He will, in fact, agree in general terms with the later Nietzsche that 'Ästhetik ist ja nichts als eine angewandte Physiologie' (VIIIi,416).

Now Musil - having informed us that Törless will reach this state in later life - goes on to show this incipient 'healthy' attitude in action when Basini comes begging for help, having been beaten half to death. His body, so the narrator informs us, is 'von Striemen überzogen - widerwärtig' (p.124). Here we must note a striking feature of the narration: Musil allows the narrator to interpolate a straight value-judgement without distancing himself. This clearly weights the narrative towards unquestioning agreement with Törless: Basini would seem to be 'widerwärtig' not only to Törless but to the (usually distanced) narrator. Musil's narrative thus clearly invites us to applaud Törless for showing no more sympathy with such unfreeness and ugliness than the omniscient and pedagogic narrator shows. There is no suggestion that Törless should investigate why
Basini is so ugly now (i.e. because he has been beaten half to death by a group of boys, partly as a result of Törless's own behaviour): all that matters to Törless and the narrator is that he looks awful now. 'Ekelnd wandte sich Törless ab': one can almost hear the Nietzsche of Götzen-Dämmerung encouraging the aesthetic youth.

I would thus argue that Musil's portrayals of the mechanisms by which Art is created and of the aesthetic value-judgements of the mature Törless are so close to Nietzsche's depictions in terms of imagery - and so thoroughly in agreement in terms of general analysis - that a direct influence of Nietzsche's texts on Musil is highly likely.

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The Writer of the Unendangered World

One question we must ask is how different the above, 'aesthetic' reaction really is from Törless's 'inauthentic' first reaction to Basini's crime: this is an important question, because Musil clearly intends that we perceive a process of development in Törless from such 'inauthenticity' to the 'authentic' reaction of the later Törless.

What, then, is Törless's early reaction to Basini?

Er sagte: 'Basini ist ein Dieb.' Und der bestimmte, harte Klang dieses Wortes tat ihm so wohl, dass er zweimal wiederholte.[...] 'Er muss angezeigt, aus dem Institute entfernt werden! Mag er sich draussen bessern, zu uns passt er nicht mehr' (p.47).

Even here, in what appears to be an appeal to traditional moral 'Entrüstung' of the type Törless will later abandon, it is the 'harte Klang' of his words which
give pleasure to Törless, not their content. As for that content, the narrator tells us of Törless's awareness 'dass er nur Uneigentliches hervorzubringen habe, dass seine Worte ohne inneren Rückhalt seien und gar nicht seine wirkliche Meinung' (p.47).

But here is the rub: Törless's later, supposedly 'authentic' action is... that he turns away, disgusted, and wants nothing more to do with Basini. Which, in terms of practical measures, is, of course, just what he said in the earlier case: the appeal to group morality - 'zu uns passt er nicht' (p.47) - has, we might say, become the individual decision 'zu mir passt er nicht'. One is entitled to ask whether there is any great practical difference between Törless's Nietzschean 'aesthetic' morality and the established morality of the school and its rules.

The importance of this point for our interpretation of this text is that it suggests that the quietism implicit in Törless's conclusion is not so free of ideology as it might at first seem to be. Like Nietzsche in aesthetic mode, Musil depicts a purely one-way relationship between man and 'die Dinge': 'Ich weiss: die Dinge sind die Dinge und werden es wohl immer bleiben; und ich werde sie wohl immer bald so, bald so ansehen...' (p.138). This clearly implies that there is no point wasting our time trying to improve things: in his notebooks (c.1920) Musil specifically rejects 'das Verbessern' as bound to arouse the 'Widerwille' of 'schöpferischen Menschen'. As Esslin sees, this would seem to imply that the 'geistige Bewältigung der Welt' is purely a matter of allowing such individuals to 'live their lives at a peak of emotional intensity and reject the fossilized values of the philistines'.

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39 Martin Esslin, 'Musil's Plays' in Huber/White (eds.), Musil in Focus, p.29.
40 Esslin, p.29.
But just how far those prevailing values are truly rejected we may have cause to doubt: a 'gelangweilte Unempfindlichkeit' or an 'ironische Korrektheit' towards public morality and law (p.112) is, I would suggest, unlikely to be felt by that law, by that morality, as a damaging rejection. The fact is that to Musil, consciousness takes precedence over being, not the other way round: the individual who rejects society intellectually or artistically is, simply by virtue of that decision, free of it.

Such a position recalls C.E. Williams's depiction of how many liberals escaped into the Idealist tradition [...] they repudiated Realpolitik but allowed Bismarck to pursue it unhindered, provided the state did not interfere with their ability to cultivate the inner life... 

Musil's school-world, indeed, does not impinge on Törless: our hero is freed the moment he reaches his artistic maturity. In a moment of 'beinahe dichterischer Inspiration' (p.138) he finds 'Gleichnisse, die weit über [sein] Alter hinausgingen' (pp.137-8). Having found the metaphors aesthetically to justify his own life, he is released.

This handy way in which society acknowledges Törless's requirements for personal and artistic growth is characteristic of the sense of security which curiously pervades the book. The parents and school will understand their son's dilemma, and save him from the social consequences of his 'Wagnis' (i.e. a beating from his classmates). His 'healthiness' (both spiritual and physical) will permit him what Nietzsche calls 'jene geistig-leibliche licentia morum' (Viii,120), while ensuring that he comes to no lasting harm.

The episode of the torture-session shows how this sense of security comes about by an appeal to that most Germanic of concepts, 'Innerlichkeit': Törless

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tries (and is allowed) to maintain a distance from the highly physical reality of
the vileness in which he co-operates. His contribution to the torture (praised by
the physical torturers) is mental - yet we are clearly supposed to accept that
Törless has genuinely experienced something. When Törless first hears the
suggestion that Basini will be tortured, he feels that this 'kam, wie es für ihn -
innerlich - kommen musste' (p.58). The idea is exactly the same one as Thorlby
pointed to in Nietzsche: that of 'not distinguishing between an intuitive or
imaginative awareness of a thing and the thing itself'. To experience something
'innerlich' is presented, in this novel, as the quite literal equivalent of
experiencing that something in the flesh. This perspective allows Musil to evade
the vicariousness of Törless's experiment with nastiness.

Here another textual comparison may prove illuminating. Musil describes the
new, quasi-physical experience of 'truth' for which Törless is searching: a thought
becomes 'lebendig' only when (in the phrase quoted by Payne)

wir seine Wahrheit fühlen, jenseits von aller rechtfertigung, wie einen
Anker, der von [dem Gedanken] aus ins durchblutete, lebendige
Fleisch riss. (pp.136-7)

One reader suggests that this is vaguely reminiscent of Bergson, of a general
'Stellung, die man als Lebensphilosophie bezeichnen kann'. I think, though, that
one might be more precise about the antecedents of Musil's image: it would
appear to be a close parallel to Nietzsche's claim that we always treat
'Erkenntnis' with a 'Vorbehalt der Geringschätzung [...] solange die Wahrheiten
nicht mit messern ins Fleisch schneiden'. (Vi.281)

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43 Katalin Neumann, 'Die Verwirrungen im Labyrinth der Sprache', in Musil-
The difference, though, is that in Musil the truth does not have to bite into Törless's bloody flesh at all. Bite it does - but into someone else. Törless himself is preserved by 'Innerlichkeit'. Musil thus permits his hero to inhabit a universe fundamentally different from that of Basini, for whom the torture is real indeed.

It is all very well for Willemsen to write about the existential 'Wagnis' of Törless's sadistic experiments, which 'besteht in der Auslieferung an die sittliche Indifferenz der eigenen Phantasie, die hier mit dem Geist der Forschung identisch ist':4 but is there really no significance in the fact that this bold 'Auslieferung an die sittliche Indifferenz der eigenen Phantasie' involves not the 'Auslieferung' to torture of the fantasist himself, but of another human being? Willemsen claims that the torture symbolizes 'den Gang der Erkenntnis selbst':4 but what sort of 'Erkenntnis' are we likely to get if the pain involved in it is inflicted on someone else, not on the searcher?

The answer to this problem is given by Musil himself - by accident, I suspect. Törless attempts to find out from Basini whether 'Das Bild, das du dir von dir gemacht hast' (p.104) is destroyed in that 'Augenblick' of the fall from 'einer soliden, bürgerlichen' world (p.41) into the 'other', darker world. But Basini is able only to tell him that

\[ \text{es geschieht im Augenblicke; es kann denn gar nicht anders} \]
\[ \text{geschehen; du würdest ebenso handeln wie ich. (p.104)} \]

And when Törless presents us with his final insight into things, it turns out to be simply a polished version of Basini's words:

\[ \text{\footnotesize \cite{Willemsen}, p.43.} \]
\[ \text{\footnotesize \cite{Seidler}, p.41.} \]
Törless's attempts at investigation through torture of another person seem to have come up against the fact of personal isolation. The only way he will ever know Basini's state of mind at that 'Augenblick' will be to undergo it himself. He never does undergo it. Instead, he accepts Basini's inability to communicate as the 'ganze Wahrheit'. Törless, in fact, abandons investigation before knowledge is arrived at. One is reminded powerfully of yet another section of Götzen-Dämmerung (VIiii,53) which Musil quotes verbatim in his diary (TB1,31): 'Ich will, ein für alle Mal, Vieles nicht wissen. - Die Weisheit zieht auch der Erkenntnis Grenzen'

Investigation is thus rejected on the (quite understandable) grounds that it might be dangerous. But this implies that investigation may be dropped without evil consequences: investigation, that is, is an option, not an obligation. The simple fact is that Törless can indeed abandon investigation - because the world he lives in is quite secure. To Törless, 'public legality and morality provide a way of escape from the ugly and disturbing aspects of life, an occasional prop which can be discarded at will'.46 Investigation, too, is to Törless a mode which can be indulged in or abandoned without disastrous results to himself: if things get too hot (as they do) he can simply call a halt (as he does).

I would suggest that the narrative sovereignty, and the 'educative' fashion in which it is transferred to the character (and the reader) are related to this aspect of the novel. The constant presence of that wise, reassuring narrative voice is surely the formal parallel to Musil's depiction of authority as ultimately

46 Turner, p.34.
beneficent - a depiction which, as Pascal noted, is a particular and unusual feature of this work.

One element of Musil's depictions gives striking support for this view: the lurid, dangerous worlds of Bozena's house and the secret den both involve complex and deliberately-undertaken journeys away from the 'normal' world. That 'normal' world itself remains undarkened. It is, of course, one of the main themes of the book that Törless discovers how much closer these worlds are than he thought: but to say that the barriers are 'jeden Augenblick überschreitbar' (p.47) is a very different thing indeed from saying that the barriers are down. Wilhelm Braun shows that Törless 'hat gelernt, zwischen Vernunft, Logik und den oberflächigen Gedanken einerseits und dem ungeschwächten Gefühls- und Phantasieleben anderseits zu unterscheiden'.47 One only has to think how E.T.A. Hoffman (for example) treats such themes to see the difference: the world according to Musil remains compartmentalised and secure enough for Törless 'zwischen Tag und Nacht zu scheiden' (p.140). He can go, that is, into the 'other', dangerous worlds, but at the same time can remain sure that they will not come to him unbidden.

The security of Musil's (textually privileged) narrator is thus paralleled by the security of Törless's (socially privileged) world: both protagonist and reader make their voyages of discovery within a system of things whose 'narrative voice' is essentially unendangered.

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There can be little doubt that in tracing Törless's progression, Musil is very much drawing on autobiographical material. At around the turn of the century we find him tracing his own way along that path to accepting sensuality which we see in Törless:

Eigentlich bin ich derzeit von grossem Leichtsinn gegen jede Art von Sinnlichkeit, indem ich alles was sinnlicher Herkunft ist ohne jede weitere Controlle hinnehme und geniesse.
Dies war seinerzeit umgekehrt [...] Ich hätte damals vieles mit Missstrauen zurückgewiesen, dem ich heute bedenkenlos mich hingebe. (TB1,19)

Here, Musil also writes of his 'Abkehr vom Verstande' (TB1,20). The progress of Törless as noted by Swales and Payne is thus a progress to the position occupied by the author himself. This may account for that remarkable security of the narrative voice. At any rate, such security removes all tension and insists that we focus not on events, but on ideas, images and insights. Musil's narrative technique thus tries to guide the reader into an aesthetic position similar to that which Törless occupies at the end. Even where he arouses our expectation and interest - for example, between the announcement of Basini's guilt and the meeting in the 'den' (pp.39-42) - Musil stops the plot dead in order to give us some more informative insights.

There is no doubt that some of these are of great interest, but it could be argued that they distract from the novel's principal strengths. Musil's hothouse of metaphoric language captures the unfocused, associative atmosphere of adolescent eroticism in a quite remarkable way. In its depiction of adolescence
as a period to which morality simply does not apply, when any experiment is permissible in the service of the individual's brief, headlong rush to personal development, this work is, perhaps, the very first radical treatment of the modern 'teenage' theme. If, then, the book presented itself purely as a portrait (for better or worse) of adolescent sensibility, one would applaud the artistic mirror for doing its job with extraordinary clarity, provocative force and, maybe, prescience. Likewise, the disparaging of moral responses, and Musil's bold claim that Törless's moral nastiness is simply not the important thing when compared to his aesthetic development, might be calculated to provoke us into considering such issues anew.

But Musil's novel is not intended to be read - and cannot be read, thanks to the constant interpolations of the narrator - purely as a portrait of adolescence. It proposes, both explicitly and in its narrative structure, that we view it as an aesthetic 'Bildungsroman', wherein we follow with approval the progress of the character to (a kind of) enlightenment.

The nature of that 'enlightenment', however, makes the attempt highly paradoxical: Musil wants us to understand the problem of understanding, to empathize with ineluctable individualism, to sympathize with a lack of sympathy. Musil's contradictory rage to have his aesthetic thoughts understood analytically is so intrusive that Martin Esslin's comments on Die Schwärmer might apply to Törless as well:

The relentless explicitness of the characters' heart-searchings and philosophical, psychological reflections [is such that] the positive characters lack [the] dimension of unawareness of themselves almost completely. They know who they are, what they want, what their
failings are and as such become mere spokesmen for the author's insights and philosophical sophistication.  

Musil's own narrative technique ensures that it is by those insights and sophistications - rather than by his powerful depiction of adolescence - that the work as a whole stands or falls. The question of those insights and sophistications brings us back full-circle to Seidler's rough judgement on the originality of Musil's thought.

Törless's aesthetic progress involves distinctively Nietzschean elements. Such elements are not scattered at random around the work, but occur at nodal points in the text; they are, in fact, props on which the intellectual structure of the novel rests at almost every vital stage. We find them when Musil delineates the crisis of 'Augenblick' and 'Notwendigkeit'; when he writes of the effects of art; when he shows us the mind of Törless waiting in the attic room or bemoans the inadequacy of words; when he depicts the effects of the torture on Törless; when he explains how concepts break free and become wild, zoomorphically dangerous reality; when he argues that poison can be beneficial to the 'healthy' and when he describes the aesthetic attitudes of the mature Törless. The cumulative effect is such that a direct and, more importantly, thoroughgoing debt to Nietzsche seems highly probable. In several cases one can even posit with some confidence a specific textual source in Nietzsche for Musil's ideas and images.

Musil, then, appears here to accept both Nietzsche's depiction of the dilemma, and the aesthetic solution which Nietzsche often provides. In Nietzsche's cult of the true artist as saviour and 'justifier' of the world, Musil finds room for his 'conviction that, unlike other writers, he was capable of

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48 Esslin, p.39.
showing the right way through his work'.\(^4\) In Nietzsche's concept of 'healthy' aestheticism he finds an authority to legitimize the abandoning of investigation and human sympathy. What Musil most emphatically does not see in Nietzsche - that is, what he may or may not have actually seen in Nietzsche but did not approve of and thus, apparently, did not take up - was Nietzsche's doubting, constantly self-critical voice.

While engaged on *Vereinigungen*, Musil makes the claim that 'hier liegt also eine persönliche Narretei vor oder eine Episode von mehr als persönlicher Wichtigkeit'.\(^5\) This is a paraphrase of Törless's ponderings: 'ich bin daher ein Seher oder ein Halluzinierter? (p.89). Musil sees no middle way: his work is either an important revelation or ravings. Given this, it is little wonder that he castigates Nietzsche for not being more confident in his path towards an aesthetic world-view - particularly since history has, by 1905, proved that Nietzsche's works really are of 'mehr als persönliche Bedeutung'. Musil's youthful impatience with Nietzsche is that of a beardless zealot (handily in possession of the historical outcome) being forced to acknowledge that the prophet he and others now regard so highly was, in truth, plagued by doubts.

Nietzsche's embracing of aestheticism is often frustrated by his drive to investigate even the psychology of aestheticism. The Nietzsche whom Musil chooses (for the choice is there to be made) is he who describes the conscience-less aesthetic creator, to whom more and more 'life' (whatever that may mean) is the only moral there is; if this involves inhumanity, so be it. The attitudes of Törless are thus ones which can be and, I would argue, indeed were,

\(^4\) Hans Reiss, 'Musil and the Writer's Task in the Age of Science and Technology' in Huber/White (eds.), *Musil in Focus*, p.41.

\(^5\) Quoted in Kaiser/Wilkins, p.43.
drawn directly from Nietzsche's formulae. But Törless lacks one attitude which Nietzsche, of all people, would insist on: endangeredness.

A clear demonstration of the difference between Nietzsche's risk-taking and Törless's safe distance can be made by comparing Nietzsche's image of philosophers as their own 'Versuchs-Thiere' (Vii,231) with Musil's portrayal of the aesthetic intellectual using Basini as his guinea-pig in the search for knowledge.

This transferring of the experimenter's suffering (a suffering which Nietzsche assumed to be a necessary precursor of insight) onto another character is most revealing. It seems to me that, as a result of this central twist (or, to speak with Bloom, this 'swerve') in the narrative, Törless is not so much analyzing the relationship between brutality and aestheticism as implicated in it. Musil has embraced the goals of Nietzsche's aestheticism but has excised the fundamentally self-endangering methods which Nietzsche proposed and, it could be argued, genuinely applied.

Pascal 'cannot help suspecting either a pathological inhibition or an ideological stance in Törless's unwillingness for so long to carry out a simple human action to help a victim'.\(^{51}\) I would agree with Pascal. Bloom, on the other hand, would no doubt reject Pascal's critique out of hand on the grounds that 'all moralizing about poetry is pernicious'.\(^{52}\) Yet surely Pascal is right; he expresses as moral disquiet the perception that, somewhere along the line, there is a fundamental evasiveness in this novel.

It is here, perhaps, that the recognition and analysis of the influence of Nietzsche on this work can have a powerful clarifying effect on our

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\(^{51}\) Pascal, From Naturalism to Expressionism, p.225.

\(^{52}\) Bloom, p.23.
interpretation. I would suggest that the idea of some fundamental bad faith in this novel may be illustrated in the terms of the Musil-Nietzsche relationship: Musil takes the essence of his aestheticizing viewpoint largely from Nietzsche, but supresses the complexity of the issues by the transference of suffering away from his (partly autobiographical) hero. Thereby Musil has the best of both investigative and aesthetic worlds: he has his aestheticizing hero gain insights which we are clearly supposed to accept as 'true' by a process which ensures that he himself remains both emotionally and physically secure.

There can be no doubt that Musil's reading of Nietzsche is easily subtle enough to note the 'weder-noch' in Nietzsche's thought. The uncompromising aestheticism of Torless indicates, though, what the diary entries confirm: that Musil (at this stage at least) rejects the psychologizing, doubting, critical aspect of Nietzsche. The elements in Nietzsche which do not fit Musil's ideas, that is, are rejected.

Mae's thesis that Musil treats Nietzsche to a process of 'Neugestaltung' would thus have to be qualified by the suggestion that the process (in Bloom's terminology, Musil's 'clinamen' with regard to Nietzsche)\(^3\) involves, at this stage, not so much the re-forming as the emasculation of Nietzsche's views. One can only conclude that Seidler is justified in his charge that Musil used Nietzsche very widely, but 'unter Vernachlässigung bedeutender Aspekte' and that Pascal was right in suspecting 'either a pathological inhibition or an ideological stance' in Musil's depictions.

An example of Musil's ideological stance - and of the difference between him and Nietzsche - can be found by looking at the quotation from Maeterlinck which Musil places at the start of Torless. This tells us (in several different

\(^3\) Bloom, p.14 et al..
images): 'Sobald wir etwas aussprechen, entwerten wir es seltsam...' (p.7). Such a view had been put forward many times by Nietzsche. He puts it forward in the very book (Götzen-Dämmerung) which Musil annotated so thoroughly around the time of Törless: 'Wir schätzen uns nicht mehr genug, wenn wir uns mittheilen [..] mit der Sprache vulgarisiert sich bereits der Sprechende' (VIIIi,122). Splendid confirmation for Musil's leitmotif, one might think? Surely Nietzsche's argument is virtually a prescription for the elitist, individualistic attitudes of young Törless? But Nietzsche ends, typically, by undercutting all he has said with a sudden flash of that ironic perspectivism which is entirely lacking in Törless: 'Aus einer Moral für Taubstumme und andere Philosophen' (VIIIi,122). Even at this very late stage, then, Nietzsche doubts on - but the young aesthete Musil has already gleaned what he wants, and does not listen.
CHAPTER 5: The Artist Going Under
(Thomas Mann: Der Tod in Venedig)

Introduction

One reader of Musil's novel has noted that 'it is difficult not to be reminded of Thomas Mann in Musil's depiction of the adult Törless'. And we might well introduce our investigation of Thomas Mann's novella with a last point from Törless.

When Törless hears about the nameless practices between Reiting and Basini, he has a visionary foretaste of the compulsion which will overtake him during the torture-scene: 'Törless vermochte nichts zu denken; er sah...Er sah hinter seinen geschlossenen Augen wie mit einem Schlage einen tollen Wirbel von Vorgängen' (Törless p.55). At the start of Der Tod in Venedig' (1913), Aschenbach is assaulted 'bis zur Sinnestäuschung' in a manner which is distinctly similar:

Er sah, sah eine Landschaft, ein tropisches Sumpfgebiet unter dickdunstigem Himmel, feucht, üppig und ungeheuer, eine Art Urweltwildnis aus Inseln, Morasten und Schlamm führenden Wasserarmen, - sah aus geilem Farren gewucher, aus Gründen von fettem, gequollenem und abenteuerlich blühendem Pflanzenwerk haarige Palmenschäfte nah und fern emporstreben [...] sah zwischen den knotigen Rohrstämmen des Bambus dickichts die Lichter eines

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1 Furness, The Literary History of Germany, p.119.
kauernden Tigers funkeln - und fühlte sein Herz pochen von
Ensetzen und rätselhaftem Verlangen'(p.447).²

These pre-visitations, breaking into the rational minds of the protagonists with
(as both texts doubly stress) the force of visual experience, are thus depicted in
a rather similar manner.

We have already seen how Törless's visionary state can helpfully be compared
to Nietzsche's depictions of the 'Dionysian' experience: what, then, of Mann's
depiction of the vision which so decisively subverts Aschenbach's world? Here,
the similarity between the texts need not be asked to stand as evidence in any
way whatever, for we are, of course, well aware that Thomas Mann, even more
than Musil, was familiar with Nietzsche's 'Dionysian' ideas.

This source for the depiction of Aschenbach's vision has already been noted:
Reed writes that Mann's 'Wortlaut deutet bereits auf dionysische Wirkung
voraus' and that the description of the landscape is (typically for this novella) at
once a naturalistic depiction (of the Ganges delta), 'klingt aber gleichzeitig
emblematisch an das Geile und Wilde des Dionysischen an'.³ This vision is
directly preceded by a 'seltsame Ausweitung' in Aschenbach's spirit. Reed also
tells us that this is 'taken from the same description of the Thracian Dionysus'
orgies which yielded such graphic details for Aschenbach's later dream'.⁴ In that
dream we see the 'fremde Gott' as well as the sexual excess which Nietzsche

² References to Der Tod in Venedig and to Tonio Kröger are given as page
numbers in Thomas Mann Gesammelte Werke in dreizehn Bänden, Frankfurt
1960, vol. VIII.
References to 'Leiden und Grösse Richard Wagners', to 'Richard Wagner und
der Ring des Nibelungen' and to 'Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer
Erfahrung' are given as page numbers in vol. IX of this edition.


⁴ Reed, Thomas Mann, p.155.
(III,28) describes as central to the rites of Dionysus. This is a clear hint that the vision of the swamp is rooted in some form of Dionysian feeling. Furness has also associated Aschenbach's vision with the 'Dionysian jungle' of Rilke's third Duino elegy. The force behind Aschenbach's vision is, then, 'nothing less than Nietzsche's Dionysian spirit'.

Such confident naming of Mann's source indicates the level of agreement which exists concerning Nietzsche's importance for this writer. The external and internal evidence is, according to Reed 'overwhelming'. It is indeed so weighty (and so easily available) that a thesis like this need hardly use up its allocated words in reiterating the well-established evidence for Nietzsche's 'all-pervasive influence' on Mann. We might here content ourselves with citing Pütz's argument:

Thomas Mann's tiefe Vertrautheit mit den Schriften Nietzsches, sein ständiger Umgang mit ihm und seine Zitierfreudigkeit verraten [...] ein ähnliches Verhältnis wie zwischen einem Frommen und seinen heiligen Büchern und Personen. [...] Fast ebenso wie der Christ die Bibel zitiert, beruft sich Thomas Mann auf Nietzsche.

Pütz's biblical analogy suggests that Nietzsche functions to Mann as an authority to be referred to at almost any point of interest.

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5 Furness, The Literary History of Germany p.155.
6 Reed, Thomas Mann, p.155.
The obvious question is: with so broad an agreement already established, what is the point of yet another study into Nietzsche and Thomas Mann?

I would answer this with a question: if Mann is to be seen as a writer who alludes to Nietzsche almost as a Christian to his bible, how on earth can it be that the figure who sets off Aschenbach's 'Dionysian' vision appears mysteriously from the cemetery (p.446) with overtones of the Hermes figure which Reed has shown to occur throughout the book, and seems to allude to barbarism and death? Is it not plain that Mann is here relating his distinctly Nietzschean 'Dionysian spirit' to death itself in some way or another? But how can the 'Dionysian' burgeoning of untrammelled, prolific Life be associated with Death? Nietzsche would never have admitted the connection. Does the coupling of Dionysos and Hermes Psychagogos not therefore militate against the idea of a writer who refers to Nietzsche as a Christian might to the bible?

The clue, I would suggest, is that we are again faced with that confusing phenomenon of the 'two Nietzsches'. Thomas Mann, as Pütz stresses, seeks for 'Beglaubigung eigener Gedanken und Meinungen' in his references to Nietzsche. We saw in Törless how Musil chooses the aestheticizing side of Nietzsche as his 'authority': we shall see that Thomas Mann does indeed use that side of Nietzsche's thought in his depictions - but that he also appeals to a very different Nietzsche, one whom Musil chose to ignore in his early work. It is, I hope, in tracing two different, indeed opposing - but equally Nietzschean - voices in this novella that a contribution may still be made: not, indeed, to a radically new interpretation of the work, but perhaps to our view of the processes involved therein. I think that Manfred Dierks has given a pregnant

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10 Reed, *Thomas Mann* p.173.

hint, one which might stand as a leitmotif for this present reading, when he writes that Mann sees the categories of 'Dionysian' and 'Apolline' 'nicht nur mit Nietzsche, sondern auch durch dessen gelebtes Beispiel hindurch.'

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Aschenbach (i): Wagner and Nietzsche

What, then, is the logic whereby this vision of burgeoning Life triggers Aschenbach's downfall? We must note first that Mann (unlike Musil) is not dealing simply with one man's private destiny. As Hinton Thomas puts it: 'In this work, Mann writes, as it were, in advance the epitaph of a Germany still at the height of power.' Here I must disagree with Reed, for I consider Mann's text to be clear that Aschenbach's fate is not a 'Privatsache' at all. We are told that there is a 'geheime Verwandtschaft' (p.452) between Aschenbach and his society as a whole. It is precisely this secret relationship, we are informed, which has enabled Aschenbach's works to have a wide appeal. Thus, in following the downfall of this particular artist, Mann is quite explicitly doing more, having ascribed a somehow representative status to his hero: Aschenbach is clearly portrayed as 'the spokesman of a generation'.

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12 Manfred Dierks, Studien zu Mythos und Psychologie bei Thomas Mann, (Thomas Mann-Studien II), Bern, 1972, p.231.


14 Reed, Der Tod in Venedig, p.170.

15 Swales, Thomas Mann, p.43.
But what, then, is the nature of Aschenbach's representative status? It resides, we read, in Aschenbach's being 'der Dichter all derer, die am Rande der Erschöpfung arbeiten' (p.453). The phrase bears closer examination.

'Am Rande der Erschöpfung' is a formula which Mann had already developed: his letter of 7/10/08 to Heinrich, Thomas Mann writes (referring to Hofmannsthal) that 'gerade die Besten am Rande der Erschöpfung arbeiten'.\(^{16}\) He was to use this formula later, too, of Wagner in 'Leiden und Grösse Richard Wagners' (1933): Wagner's nature was one which always felt 'am Rande der Erschöpfung' (p.387). In the same essay we read that Wagner did his work in two hours early each day 'im Kampf mit einer jedesmal rasch erschöpften Kraft' (p.388). This is very much like Mann's depiction of Aschenbach at work. According to Mann in 1937 ('Richard Wagner und der Ring des Nibelungen'): Wagner's illness was 'die Flucht in die Krankheit, die Flucht vor dem Werke' (p.517). This recalls Aschenbach's 'Drang hinweg vom Werke' - and ominously suggests the hidden depths in that desire. Finally, of course, Wagner, too, used Venice as a source of inspiration and died there.

The point that these Aschenbach-Wagner echoes are not merely verbal can be clearly made. In the 1933 essay, Mann ascribes to Wagner a representative status in what could surely be called a paraphrase of his depiction (above) of Aschenbach's status: Wagner is 'der glorreichster Bündner und Genosse all dieser am Leben leidenden' (p.424).

What significance is there in the fact that Aschenbach should thus appear to be in some ways related to Mann's later view of Wagner? Here, it is important to note that Mann's view of Wagner did not change in essence over the years.\(^{17}\)

\(^{16}\) Reed, \textit{Der Tod in Venedig}, p.133.

\(^{17}\) See Hamburger, \textit{From Prophecy to Exorcism}, p.82.
By 1912, that view of Wagner is much as it was to remain: it is the view of a man who knew himself to be a 'Kind der Nietzscheschen Dekadenz'. Wagner and 'decadence', that is, are practically one and the same: in *Buddenbrooks* Wagner's music appears to be somehow analogous to the disease which kills off the last of the declining family; in *Tristan* the connection is again so intimate that it is by no means clear whether Wagner causes disease or vice-versa. The echoes of Nietzsche's question are quite clear: 'Ist Wagner überhaupt ein Mensch? Ist er nicht eher eine Krankheit?' (VIII,15) Aschenbach, then, is clearly marked by the verbal association with Mann's view of Wagner as a 'decadent'.

But if Aschenbach's character both echoes and prefigures Mann's statements on Wagner, it also anticipates his later view of another figure.

When Mann describes Aschenbach as 'nur berufen, nicht eigentlich geboren' to his way of life (p.451) he is again using a formula which has appeared, and will appear, elsewhere in his work. In *Tonio Kröger* we read that Hamlet (as a 'typical aesthete') was 'zum Wissen berufen, ohne dazu geboren zu sein' (p.300). Reed has argued: 'Sowohl der Hamlet-Vergleich als auch der Begriff des Erkenntnisekels selbst gehen auf Nietzsche zurück'. In 1947 Mann, in 'Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung', writes that Nietzsche was 'zum Wissen nur berufen, nicht eigentlich dazu geboren' (p.676). Just as with his 1933 portrait of Wagner, we find Mann's 1947 characterization of Nietzsche using a tag which he had developed early on and which he used in his depiction of Aschenbach. Again in 1947, the comparison is with Hamlet. The problem of Nietzsche is thus equated with that of 'the artist' as such.

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18 Reed, *Der Tod in Venedig*, p.131.

19 Reed, *Der Tod in Venedig*, p.132.
The important thing to note is that by 1947 Mann has thus placed Nietzsche not where Nietzsche saw himself - as the antithesis of Wagner - but as a phenomenon allied to that of Wagner. This is clear if we remember Mann's description of Wagner's 'Flucht vor dem Werke' above: in 1947 he writes that Nietzsche's flight (from Basel) was due to 'eine Mischung von zunehmender Kranklichkeit und Freiheitsdrang, die im Grunde dasselbe sind' (p.680). By 1947 Mann evidently considers the same psychological-physiological model to fit both Wagner's and Nietzsche's cases: that model is the very one he uses for Aschenbach in Der Tod in Venedig.

It is well known that Mann's view of Wagner found its starting point (indeed, a permanent reference point) in Nietzsche's writings: Mann speaks, for example, of the 'durch Nietzsches Kritik hindurchgegangene Wagnerpassion' of his youth (p.405). That view - Wagner as almost coterminous with 'decadence' - was, as we have seen, well-established by 1912. Mann's characterization of Aschenbach is thus partly a reprise of his established, Nietzschean view of the 'decadent' artist-figure typified by Wagner. So far, Mann follows Nietzsche directly. But Aschenbach also prefigures Mann's later view of Nietzsche himself.

I would suggest that this excursion into the relationship between Mann's depiction of Aschenbach and Mann's depiction of Wagner and Nietzsche can be taken as a paradigm of Mann's use of Nietzschean strategies in Der Tod in Venedig: Mann has constructed a character, Aschenbach, who is redolent of his Nietzschean Wagner-picture - but who is also redolent of his later picture of Nietzsche himself. There are, then, two levels present: a first level where Mann follows Nietzsche's suggestions and a second level where such strategies are then focused on certain Nietzschean concepts themselves.
This idea and the hint in the swamp-image of a confrontation with Nietzsche’s ‘Dionysian’ thought provide the starting point for a possible interpretation of this novella. It is one in which Aschenbach’s career and fate can be read almost as a programmatic reckoning with Nietzsche’s aesthetic thought - in the light of Nietzsche’s psychological-critical thought.

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Aschenbach (ii): From Balance to Form

In investigating the detail of Mann’s debt to Nietzsche in his portrait of Aschenbach we are going over ground which is well-ploughed. Reed has covered much of what I will say in his Uses of Tradition and his edition of Der Tod in Venedig. I think, however, that there might still be some further clarification to be made in the light of a differentiated picture of Nietzsche and regarding the specific use of individual parts of Nietzsche’s thought by Mann.

Reed has pointed out that Mann’s psychology of art in this work derives partly from his own experience, partly from his view of Flaubert’s work-processes and partly from Nietzsche. Reed invokes

Nietzsches Theorien (Geburt der Tragödie) des schöpferischen Zusammengehens von Grundimpuls und zügelnder Bildkraft, die sich in den - ausgerechnet im Tod in Venedig stark einschlägigen - mythischen Begriffen des Dionysischen und Apollinischen verkörpern.20

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20 Reed, Der Tod in Venedig, p.129.
I would thoroughly agree with this. Dierks would too: he writes that Aschenbach encounters Dionysos at the cemetery, and that '[es] wird der mythische Bedeutungsstrang von hier an aus der Geburt der Tragödie motiviert.'

I would suggest that this interpretative light can be usefully applied to Mann's depiction of Aschenbach's career as a writer. This is clearly a most important section of the work, and is, to my mind, one whose possible relationship to the Nietzschean 'Bedeutungsstrang' (above) has not yet been exhausted by its commentators. I suggest that we follow on from Reed's and Dierks's hints regarding the source of Mann's psychology of art.

Aschenbach starts as a young artist committed to 'Erkenntnis', that is, to the discovery of the true nature of the world. The logical conclusion to this pursuit is, according to Nietzsche, pessimistic in the extreme: 'Das Allerbeste ist für dich gänzlich unerreichbar: nicht geboren zu sein' (III.i,31). And indeed, Aschenbach's early work has 'Geheimnisse preisgegeben'; it has made young people hold their breath with its merciless investigations 'über das fragwürdige Wesen der Kunst, des Künstlertums selbst' (p.454). The young Aschenbach's art is thus dangerous, profane, investigative; it opens up abysses of knowledge to the public (and, as it turns out) to the explorer himself. At the same time, however, these early works created 'Bildwerke' which uplifted and revived 'die gläubig Geniessenden'(p.454).

Is not this balance between awareness of the world's abysses ('Dionysian' knowledge) and the ability to create life-enhancing 'Bildwerke' out of such knowledge ('Apolline', visually-conceived form-giving) precisely the balance proposed by Nietzsche as the root of great art in Die Geburt der Tragödie? And, given that this was a work which 'in Thomas Mann's Denken und Schaffen

\[a\] Dierks, p.26.
Can we not also assume that Mann would have been well aware of this correspondence - assume, that is, that the parallel is a deliberate one?

I would thus argue that Mann consciously depicts Aschenbach’s earlier writings as having attained the desired balance between content and form as defined by Nietzsche. It is a balance, to support the textual point and its likely derivation, which Mann referred to concerning himself in *Bilse und ich* (1906). Reed notes how Mann argues that the appearance of [coldness and hostility towards the world] in his work is the product of a dual impulse found in any artist who has been through the school of Nietzsche; not just towards beauty of form, but also toward depth of knowledge.23 It would appear justifiable, then, to suggest that the balance in Aschenbach’s early work is deliberately portrayed by Mann as one expressive of Nietzsche’s particular definition of successful art. The vital point, however, is that this is not the Aschenbach of the tale’s present: the Nietzschean balance has not been maintained.

The change from the art of Aschenbach’s youth to that of his maturity (i.e. to that art in which he is presumably engaged on the day we are first introduced to him) may well be related to his previous flight from Venice, of which (and the significance of which) we learn only later. What has happened would appear to the following: Aschenbach has committed himself to one of the two elements in Nietzschean creation. Instead of maintaining the balancing-act between

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22 Reed, *Der Tod in Venedig*, p.154.

23 See Reed, *Thomas Mann*, p.15.
chaotic energy and the mastery of it by form, Aschenbach has gone for mastery alone.

This has resulted in his 'Wunder der wiedergeborenen Unbefangenheit' (p.455). I suspect that here, again, Mann is using Nietzsche's analysis. Nietzsche speaks of Homeric 'naivety', and says that such a state can only be indicative of the total victory of the Apolline (III.33). This might explain why Aschenbach has, in gaining his new mastery, lost that (distinctly Dionysian) 'feurig spielende Laune' which he so misses. Aschenbach’s trip to Venice thus appears as the wish to 'go south' in Nietzsche's terminology: not quite to the tigers which, as Reed notes, pulled Dionysos’s carriage but to somewhere nearer to them. The hope that such a journey will restore his lost balance, though, is vain: the 'tigers' come to him.

Why do the tigers come to Aschenbach? What connection has this with his new literary style? In interpreting this chain of events we must first ask why it is that Aschenbach made that change to the worship of Form.

Here again, I would suggest that an awareness of Nietzsche’s texts can shed light on the import of Mann's delicate hints. Mann tells us (p.456) that Aschenbach, like Louis XIV, banished every vulgar word. But given Mann's concern with Nietzsche, it seems highly probable that he was aware that this cultural-historical anecdote had already been used by Nietzsche in Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft (VII,86) to show how the suppression of language represents the incipient suppression of the emotions expressed by language. Thus Aschenbach's banishment of vulgarity from his Art clearly implies, to the reader familiar with Nietzsche, the suppression (and not the accommodation) of his own 'vulgar'

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* Reed, Der Tod in Venedig, p.127.
emotions. Here, then, the Nietzsche-educated reader has access to a level of ominous meaning in Mann's text which might, as yet, escape other readers.

Aschenbach's attack on such emotions is not unconnected with his new respectability: there is the clear suggestion that his 'moralische Entschlossenheit jenseits des Wissens' (p.455) is highly agreeable to existing authority. 25 Again, a phrase from Mann's 1933 essay on Wagner might apply exactly to Aschenbach: Wagner was 'als nationale Angelegenheit installiert, war reichsofficiel geworden' (p.420).

Indeed, Mann's depiction of Aschenbach vis-a-vis his readership may, I suspect, be a (mock-lyric) paraphrase of Nietzsche on Wagner and his 'herd'. Mann tells us that the mass-readership of this new, 'respectable' Aschenbach glorify him because they thereby, in fact, glorify themselves: Sie fanden sich bestätigt, besungen darin, sie wussten ihm Dank, sie verkundeten seinen Namen. (p.454). Nietzsche says exactly this about the relationship of Wagner to his public: Wagner 'gehört zu [der europäischen Decadence]: er ist ihr Protagonist, ihr grösster Name ... man ehrt sich, wenn man ihn in die Wolken hebt.' (VIII,16)

Aschenbach, then, has become the glorifier of (and is therefore glorified by) a public which is on the edge of exhaustion. The authorities of that society find his work as agreeable as the public: the powers that be ennoble him at the same time as accepting his texts into the educational canon.

I think that Mann's portrayal of the function Aschenbach fulfils in his society once again draws on levels of meaning which are informed by Nietzsche's

25 This suggestion is even clearer in the worknotes (Reed, Der Tod in Venedig, p.115): there, Aschenbach's new style is, among other things 'conservative'. In the actual text he uses less obviously loaded terms, leaving the reader (I would suggest) to draw cultural-political conclusions of which Mann himself was clearly aware while planning the work.
writings. Aschenbach now withdraws all sympathy from the lower depths of life and condemns that which is condemnable. In Die Geburt der Tragödie (which was probably the work of Nietzsche's Mann knew best of all), Nietzsche warns that 'die Verurteilung des Verbrechens und des Lasters' (which is exactly what Aschenbach now performs) is not the business of Art. The artist who wants 'die Erregung moralisch-religiöser Kräfte' is condemned: 'Der Aufruf der "Sittlichen Weltordnung" trat vikariierend ein' (IIIi,139). Such an artist, to Nietzsche, is merely the 'ascetic priest' in another guise. I would suggest that Mann is well aware of such implications in his portrait of Aschenbach: he provides a splendidly delicate, ironic hint of the 'theological' tendency in Aschenbach's art when he describes how the writer is delayed by 'Geschäfte weltlicher und literarischer Natur' (p.457) - the implication being that Aschenbach's literary 'business' is no longer 'worldly'.

This 'ascetic' tendency in Aschenbach's art (not to mention, in his lifestyle) makes him, in Nietzsche's terminology, one of those 'decadent' types, who are unable to cope with their own drives and must thus suppress them. Indeed, the way Mann presents Aschenbach's suspiciously passionate 'Wucht des Wortes' (p.451) in his rejection of moral plurality is distinctly reminiscent of the way Nietzsche mocks Schopenhauer's rejection of sensuality: 'Welche Vehemenz der Worte!' (VIIIi,366).

So far, then, I would suggest that Mann is very much aware of, and uses, Nietzsche's insights in sowing the reader's mind with doubts about the underlying reasons for Aschenbach's turn to form and his new respectability. This, however, is only one side of the Nietzschean coin in this work.

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It is most important for us now to recall that in dealing with Nietzsche we are dealing with a writer who offers not just one critical perspective, but contradictory ones. If Mann's hints regarding the dubiousness of Aschenbach's change of style seem thoroughly Nietzschean, then we must note that this Nietzschean critique is applied to a notion of artistic endeavour which is itself no less Nietzschean.

Without this awareness, we are in danger of constructing a one-sided picture of Nietzsche's importance for Mann. May investigates Aschenbach's abandoning of investigation and his grounds ('Erkenntniskeel') for so doing:

Were those grounds false? Three of Mann's teachers, Goethe, Nietzsche and Freud, would have declared them to be so.26

This is true up to a point - but one must bear in mind that Nietzsche also sometimes recommends just such an abandoning of investigation, and that Mann also uses this side of Nietzsche's thought.

Reed, in fact, has already noted that Aschenbach's swing away from 'Erkenntnis' is more than vaguely reminiscent of that turn which Nietzsche proclaims in Nietzsche Contra Wagner:

Nun, dieser schlechte Geschmack, dieser Wille zur Wahrheit, zur 'Wahrheit um jeden Preis', dieser Jünglings-Wahnsinn in der Liebe zur Wahrheit - ist uns verleidet: dazu sind wir zu erfahren, zu ernst, zu lustig, zu gebrannt, zu tief ... Dazu tut not, tapfer bei der

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26 Keith May, p.89.
Oberfläche, der Falte, der Haut stehen zu bleiben, den Schein anzubeten (VIII,436-7).27

Compare:

Gewiss ist, das die schwermütig gewissenhafteste Gründlichkeit des Jünglings Seichtheit bedeutet im Vergleich mit dem tiefen Entschlusse des Meisters gewordenen Mannes, das Wissen zu leugnen, es abzulehnen, erhabenen Hauptes darüber hinwegzugehen...

(p.454).

Mann, then, here 'turns to the Nietzsche who likes to repudiate all knowledge that does not serve life, who insists that the search for hidden truth must be subordinate to the need for the furthering and heightening of life'.28 An example of this might be seen when Mann writes that this new Aschenbach has 'das Verworfene verworfen' (p.451): he is using a phrase which is, in its import and construction, notably (and, I would suggest in the light of the above statements, consciously) reminiscent of Nietzsche's formula for aesthetic-physiological 'health': 'das Schädliche als schädlich empfinden' (VIII,16). Aschenbach thus gives up moral investigation in favour of an aesthetic 'Schönheitsinn' - and Mann's choice of absolutist language appears to associate this turn with Nietzsche's words on anti-decadent 'health'.

This highly Nietzschean equation of aestheticism with physical 'health' is just the same as that described by Oscar Wilde (whom Mann compares with Nietzsche in his 1947 essay):

27 Reed, Thomas Mann, p.144.

Life is terribly deficient in form ... it is through Art and through Art only that we can shield ourselves against the sordid perils of actual existence.  

In Wilde as in some of Nietzsche's writings, Art is seen almost literally as armour against the true nature of life. It is no coincidence that Aschenbach will indeed succumb to exactly the same sordid perils as Wilde. There is a consistent rationale in Mann's having his aestheticizing hero fall for Tadzio rather than for some Lolita. This rationale has been elucidated by Reed. For purposes of the argument, I think it necessary to include the gist of Reed's interpretation here. The following paragraphs are therefore particularly heavily indebted to his analysis.

Homoeroticism, in the Platonic tradition, is said to enable a noble man to experience The Beautiful (a revelation of the Absolute, of Truth) because it does not immediately and necessarily involve earthbound procreative lust. However, Mann's portrayal of Aschenbach suggests that homoeroticism is simply better able than heteroeroticism to disguise the true nature of its attraction to beauty. By the end of the novella Mann's own extraordinary 'Wucht des Wortes' shows that Aschenbach's desires are hardly spiritual (pp.517-8). Plato is no escape from Dionysos for such a man. The judgement is not on homoeroticism per se (in being sensual it is no different from the attraction of man to woman)
but on the dishonesty of Aschenbach's motivation. Aschenbach's specific vulnerability to homoeroticism lies in his wish to believe he can have his sensual cake and eat it: torn between the drive for sensuality (and knowledge) and the need to defend against it, he accepts gratefully the Platonic claim that in the love of male beauty sensualism can somehow sublimate itself and perceive 'pure' forms.

This supposed (and classically 'authorized') purity of desire persuades Aschenbach to permit himself the longed-for holiday from analysis. He thereby gives Eros a decisive 'window of opportunity' which would otherwise have been denied: the nature of Aschenbach's attraction to a beautiful young girl would have been so obvious as to activate the most reluctant of investigative faculties. Platonic homoeroticism is thus perfectly suited to be the nemesis of a man whose whole life has become an attempt to by-pass knowledge.

That knowledge which Aschenbach so wishes to avoid concerns not the fact that he is or is not fundamentally homosexual - but concerns, rather, the true nature of his existence, of The Artist. Mann's worknotes make clear both the logic of Aschenbach's particular temptation and the fact that the essential problematic of the Artist himself is at the root of it all:

Und nun! Der Konflikt ist: von der 'Würde' aus, von der Erkenntnisfeindschaft und zweiten Unbefangenschaft, aus antianalytischem Zustand gerät er in diese Leidenschaft. Die Form ist die Sünde. Die Oberfläche ist der Abgrund. Wie sehr wird dem würdig gewordener Künstler die Kunst noch einmal zum Problem!\(^{32}\)

\(^{32}\) See Reed, Der Tod in Venedig, p.87.
What, then, is that problem inherent in Art? Why 'Erkenntnisfeindschaft'? Why the need for Form? The purpose of suppressing investigation into the world is, as we have seen, defence against knowledge of the world. Mann tells us that 'gegen nichts ein edler und tüchtiger Geist sich rascher, sich gründlicher abstumpft als gegen den scharfen und bitteren Reiz der Erkenntnis' (p.455); we are reminded of Nietzsche's 'Bittere, Herbe, Wehetuende der Erkenntnis' (Vii,14). Specifically, we seem to be talking of 'Erkenntnis' into the nature of Art here: Aschenbach's early, investigative work seems to have implied (as we saw) that the artist is an essentially dubious person. This knowledge threatened to cripple Aschenbach, and so he rejected investigation. Instead, he turned to Form.

It is this swing away from analysis which dooms Aschenbach from the start of the work: when suddenly confronted with a 'jugendlich durstiges Verlangen' he no longer possesses the faculties to investigate the nature of his longings. His 'analysis' of their 'Wesen und Ziel' is grotesquely inadequate: 'Es war Reiselust, nichts weiter' (p.447). And in the paragraph which begins thus, Aschenbach's inadequate analysis gives way to the vision of the tiger in the swamp. Aschenbach, then, falls victim to the Dionysian vision through weakness. He falls, that is, through a tendency to fall.

Mann's thought on the relationship of physical and spiritual decay in this novella might, in my view, be summed up exactly by Nietzsche on 'Pessimismus': 'Man verfällt ihm, wie man der Cholera verfällt: man muss morbid genug dazu schon angelegt sein' (Viii,129-30). This section of Nietzsche's writings might, indeed, be present in Mann's mind while he writes the novella: Nicholls has
already suggested a relationship between Mann’s imagery of a cholera-infected, quarantine-threatened Venice and Nietzsche’s letters of May 1886.\textsuperscript{33}

So is Aschenbach ‘morbid’? If so, in what sense? Psychologically, we have traced the path of his vulnerability: Aschenbach tries to suppress investigation in order to preserve his capacity for living, and that suppression condemns him. But surely this means that he was doomed from the first? So be it. Mann says no less at the end of the novella: the Artist, declares Aschenbach in a final moment of lucidity, has an ‘unverbesserliche und natürliche Richtung zum Abgrund’ (p.522). Given this, the complications of Aschenbach’s psychological ‘decadence’ appear as merely the secondary ramifications of simple physiological fact, of a ‘sickness of soul which is indistinguishable from a sickness of body’.\textsuperscript{34}

Mann seems to be thinking along the lines of the later Nietzsche: this Nietzsche (as we have seen) no longer offers his form of salvation (that is, ‘Leben’) to all through the ‘Schutz und Heilmittel’ of Art (IIIi,97) but, rather, says that true Life is restricted precisely to those who do not need the ‘Schutz-und Heil-Instinkte eines degenerierenden Lebens’ (VIIi,384). Nietzsche thus proposes that some people are ineluctably ‘degenerate’, others not. Mann would appear to take this antinomism on board.

This, indeed, is the conclusion which Aschenbach himself reaches, and which, as Reed points out, is not to be merely dismissed as ‘seltsame Traumlogik’ by a narrator whose own ‘Wucht des Wortes’ must itself seem suspect in the context of this work.\textsuperscript{35} Aschenbach’s conclusion to the problematic of The Artist is very simple but utterly devastating: that the artist is essentially and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{33} Nicholls, p.90.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Hollingdale, \textit{Thomas Mann}, p.155.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Reed, \textit{Der Tod in Venedig}, p.162.
\end{itemize}
inescapably drawn to the abyss. Mann thus appears to suggest, as does the late Nietzsche, that men are either born 'healthy' or not.

Mann is certainly no stranger to the idea of physiological determinents: racially-mixed ancestry as a cause of internal division is one of his leitmotifs. Early on, we learn the brute fact that Aschenbach belongs to a line who lack the 'physische Basis' for success (p.451). To some extent the whole novella is an exegesis of this physiological doom. Neither Mann nor Nietzsche hold out much hope for the man born 'unhealthy' - only the pathos of 'durchhalten' or 'trotzdem'.

Here, however, is what I would see as the crux of the relationship between Nietzsche's writings and Mann's analysis in this work. Mann's investigation of the problem goes one step deeper into hopelessness even than Nietzsche's. For those not fatally infected by 'decadence' (that is, to the late Nietzsche: Nietzsche, Bizet, Czarist Russia and Siegfried), Nietzsche proposes an unreflective 'amor fati'. For the creative artist this means polishing up his surfaces with an uninvestigative admiration for the beauty of Things as they are. But this, as we have seen, is just what Aschenbach has already done - and is the very position which Mann's agonizing vivisection of his hero reveals as symptomatic of 'decadence'.

Mann's conclusion thus involves a clear judgement on Aschenbach's aestheticism. What the novella makes plain is that the turn to aestheticism is not the product of depth and wisdom but simply the defence-mechanism of a man who is too weak, psychologically and physically, to maintain a healthy,

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*It may be argued that neither Nietzsche's nor Mann's biological typologies are intended to be 'taken literally'. This is almost certainly true. But neither author directly forbids us to do so. Since the act of reading generally presupposes a more or less literal interpretation of images, exceptions to the rule run the risk of misinterpretation.*
constructive balance in his passions or in his art. The swing away from Dionysian to Apolline art is, to Mann, the expression of Aschenbach's (and by extension, his entire public's) rampant physiological decay. I would thus agree wholeheartedly with Reed's claim that the novella shows 'wie eine allzu fleissig angestrebte Regeneration nichts als ein Aspekt der Dekadenz sein mag, die sie zu überwinden vorgibt', and add the suggestion that this insight is arrived at through, and is of significance for our interpretation of, Mann's double-edged reading of Nietzsche.

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Mann and Nietzsche's Dual Voice

The significance of Mann's critique in Der Tod in Venedig of aestheticism as being 'decadent' can be seen by comparing it with what he said about Nietzsche some 35 years later, in 'Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung'. There, Nietzsche's aestheticizing vitalism is the 'rasende Verleugnung des Geistes zugunsten des schönen, starken und ruchlosen Lebens, die Selbstverleugnung eines Menschen also, der tief am Leben leidet' (p.707-8). His irrationalism is a 'Korrektur rationalischer Saturiertheit' (p.696). And when Mann writes with his usual vigour of the medical facts (as he saw them) behind Nietzsche's ecstatic late writings, he could almost be revisiting his description of Aschenbach's infatuation: he defines the supposed glories of such a state of mind as essentially 'einen verderblichen Reizungszustand, der dem paralytischen Kollaps höhnend vorangeht' (p.682).

37 Reed, Der Tod in Venedig, p.164.
Thus Aschenbach seems in many ways a blueprint for Mann's later critique of Nietzsche. The paradox about this critique of Nietzsche is, of course, that Mann owes those critical terms of reference to Nietzsche himself. As Dierks points out, if Mann's portrayal of the Dionysian 'Rausch' owes a clear debt to Nietzsche's Geburt der Tragödie, then we must also be aware of that '[auch] das spätere Urteil Nietzsches [i.e that such religious ecstasy is 'decadent'] gehört in die Ätiologie Aschenbach's'.

It would seem, then, that Mann registered (in my opinion, correctly) the duality in Nietzsche's thought. Indeed, Mann expressed this by contrasting the psychologizing, critical 'Nietzsche militans' and the aestheticizing, prophetic 'Nietzsche triumphans'. What makes the Nietzschean presence in Der Tod in Venedig so complex and important is that both influences appear to be present: in terms of its intellectual descent, the novella could almost be subtitled Nietzsche contra Nietzsche.

Once again, I must thus disagree with May's recent analysis of Mann's relationship to Nietzsche. May tell us that Mann's putting Nietzsche 'out of court' in Doktor Faustus was only possible 'by means of an ingenious final novel which tended to refute his earlier writings'. Firstly, May fails to note that Der Tod in Venedig contains a critique of Nietzschean aestheticism which, if by no means as obvious or of such clearly broader significance as the critique in Doktor Faustus, is nevertheless just as fundamental to this novella as to the later novel. Secondly, May's one-sided view of Nietzsche's importance to Mann (i.e. as aesthete) means that he fails to note that it is only one side of

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38 Dierks, p.29.
39 See Reed Thomas Mann, p.136.
40 Keith May, p.109.
Nietzsche’s influence which Mann places beyond the pale - both in Der Tod in Venedig and Doktor Faustus - and that the psychological-critical process by which Mann does so is just as Nietzschean as the aestheticism he rejects.

Let us take two examples only, one from each side of Nietzsche’s thought.

We have already seen, following Reed, how the depiction of the aesthete in Nietzsche contra Wagner seems highly likely to underly Mann’s portrayal of Aschenbach’s ‘masterly’ abandoning of his youthful investigations. But if the aesthete Nietzsche is thus indispensable to Mann’s portrait of Aschenbach, the psychologist Nietzsche is surely the unmistakeable guiding-spirit behind Mann’s critique of his hero:

Man findet hier und da eine leidenschaftliche und übertriebene Anbetung der ‘reinen Formen’ bei Philosophen wie bei Künstlern: möge niemand zweifeln, dass wer dergestalt den Kultus der Oberfläche nötig hat, irgendwann einmal einen unglückseligen Griff unter sie getan hat (VIii,76).

This section from Nietzsche could be a precis of Aschenbach’s position as detailed by Mann in 1912; it could just as well be a precis of Nietzsche’s position as detailed by Mann in 1947.

Nietzsche thus appears to provides the intellectual framework for Mann’s portrait of Aschenbach, for his critique of Aschenbach and for his later critique of Nietzsche himself: setting the aesthetic prophet Nietzsche against the investigative psychologist Nietzsche, Mann seems in little doubt who wins the day.

Let us recall the stages of the tale in this interpretation. Aschenbach initially has attained Nietzsche’s desired balance between Dionysian energy and Apolline form. Later (after his first physiological/emotional ‘defeat’ in Venice?) he makes
the same turn to aestheticism as Nietzsche tended to make, and (like Nietzsche 'in extremis') claims that this is the product of wisdom and development. Aschenbach dreams up an emblem of Dionysian life-forces. He fails adequately to investigate his own imagery, succumbs to the temptations of amoral Beauty, and comes to a disastrous end.

The reality behind the swamp-image comes from a character who typifies the anti-aesthetic ideal. The worried but steadfast English travel-agent (pp.512-3) tells Aschenbach the unpleasant naturalistic truth behind the beautiful aesthetic lie of Venice: the swamp - and it is beyond any doubt the same swamp Aschenbach saw in his initial vision - has spawned not Blakean tigers with flashing eyes, but mortal contagion. Cholera bacilli may indeed be a form of sun-bred primal Life, untroubled by the quibbling intellect, but such formless 'Life' is, Mann would appear to suggest, fundamentally inimical to mankind.

May sets out another one-sided Nietzschean-aesthetic point of view regarding 'Dionysian' forces:

strictly speaking, no concept should inevitably prevail over others, but all should be measured against life itself [..] If we retain images of growth and decay, or energies expending themselves endlessly and pointlessly, then at least we have a grasp of that profusion of forces against which all mere concepts must be measured and found wanting.41

Mann, it would seem, would not agree. Behind the apparent 'Life' of Aschenbach's Dionysian swamp-imagery - which abounds in just such 'images of growth and decay, of energies expending themselves endlessly and pointlessly' - their lurks, in Mann's analysis, a 'real reality'. To Mann, the truth of Dionysos's

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41 Keith May, p.150.
swamp is disease and death: the terrible beauty, the 'tiger', is there purely - or rather, impurely - in the mind of Aschenbach the decadent aesthete.

Mann's use of two distinct levels of Nietzschean formulations and insights in this novella suggest that amongst its other splendours the work is of great interest for our picture of the relationship between Mann and his most important cultural mentor: it would appear that Mann here accepts Nietzsche's confession that he is 'so gut wie Wagner das Kind dieser Zeit' (VIiii,3), but denies that Nietzsche has actually overcome the decadence of his era, as he claims to have done. In Der Tod in Venedig, the Nietzschean vision of untrammelled 'Life' is presented by Mann not as the antithesis of 'decadence' at all - but rather as its most extreme symptom. In Aschenbach, then, Mann provides us (among other things) with a highly Nietzschean case-study, a fictional recreation of the psychological-physiological condition which produced Nietzsche's imagery. Mann's investigations of that condition suggest that he sees Nietzsche, the supreme analyst of 'decadence', the man who claimed to have experienced and overcome decadence, as himself - even in his supposed 'cure' - inescapably the supreme decadent.

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42 Compare Giorgio Colli, Nach Nietzsche, Frankfurt 1980, p.56: 'Allein Nietzsche hat das Christentum ins Herz getroffen - damit nämlich dass er herauszufinden suchte, was der Mensch fühlt, in dem diese Religiosität aufkeimt'. This is exactly Thomas Mann's way of confronting Nietzschean aestheticism.
Conclusions: Mann, Hesse and Aestheticism

I suggested at the start of this chapter that Der Tod in Venedig shows a very different reaction to Nietzsche's works from that in Musil's Törlless. The difference between Mann's (Nietzschean) critical analysis of Nietzschean aestheticism and the acceptance of that aestheticism at face value - as a rejuvenating cure for 'decadence', that is - may be supported by making a brief comparison with another work. That work is almost exactly contemporary, and is by an author (frequently mentioned in the same breath as Mann) who is likewise widely agreed to have been heavily influenced by Nietzsche. The work in question is Hermann Hesse's Rosshalde (1914).43

The heroes of Der Tod in Venedig and Rosshalde both experience decisive confrontation with Dionysian jungle-imagery. Before confirming this textually, we should examine the context: we shall find that the heroes of these works occupy situations before the confrontation which are quite remarkably similar. But Mann and Hesse draw radically different conclusions from these parallel scenarios. The divergence may best be seen if we first look at the similarities between the works.

Both Gustav von Aschenbach in Der Tod in Venedig and Johann Veraguth in Rosshalde are respectable artists. Both are successful in their art (Aschenbach as writer, Veraguth as painter) and both espouse apparently blameless lifestyles. In both cases this lifestyle is, to all intents and purposes, that of the ascetic bachelor;44 it involves getting up early, washing in cold water and getting straight

43 References to Rosshalde are given as page numbers in Hermann Hesse, Gesammelte Werke in zwölf Bänden, Frankfurt 1970, vol. IV.

44 Aschenbach is widowed and, while Veraguth is theoretically married at the start of Rosshalde, he works, sleeps and largely lives in a totally separate part of his house. It is entertaining to speculate upon the implications of the heroes’
down to work (Rosshalde p.10; Der Tod in Venedig p.452). In both cases, too, this lifestyle is associated with a sapping of the artists's strength: Aschenbach works 'bei zunehmender Abnutzbarkeit seiner Kräfte' (p.444) and Veraguth drinks strong coffee to fight off 'die leise Ahnung von Schwindel und Zusammenbruch, die ihn neuerdings nach angestrengter Arbeit zuweilen anflog' (p.13). What is more, both find something missing in their creativity nowadays; Aschenbach feels the lack of that 'feurig spielende Laune' that is the sign of joy in one's work (p.449), while Veraguth complains: 'Für ein paar Minuten habe ich es manchmal wiedergefunden, dass plötzlich alles den sonderbaren Schimmer wieder hat - aber das reicht noch nicht' (p.43). When the Dionysian temptation strikes, both men have what appear to be similar reasons for feeling attracted to it: Aschenbach feels 'die Begierde nach Befreiung, Entbürdung und Vergessen - der Drang hinweg vom Werke, von der Alltagstätte eines starren, kalten und leidenschaftlichen Dienstes' (p.448) and Veraguth sees a world 'in der sein Leiden, Sorgen, Kämpfe und Entbehrungen fremd und fern und blass werden mussten, wo hundert kleine tägliche Lasten von der Seele fallen' (p.40).

Thus the heroes of both Der Tod in Venedig and Rosshalde are 'respectable' artists living ascetic lives under notice of a physical decrepitude, both heroes are secretly dissatisfied with works which bring renown and both are immediately tempted by the image of a 'Dionysian' world of luxuriant growth in which the daily tensions of their lives will disappear. Both ultimately yield to that temptation. So far the similarity is remarkably close.

The difference is simple and absolute: Mann shows that, to Aschenbach, that yielding is literally fatal, whereas Hesse clearly considers that, for Veraguth, it names. This might even lead us to suspect Hesse's choice of name to be a deliberate counterpart to Mann's: 'Ashenstream' versus 'Truevalue'?
is a positive step. So what is it that confronts the two heroes, and what is it about this confrontation which Hesse sees as constructive, Mann as disastrous?

In Rosshalde the hero's friend Burckhardt (the name is one often associated with Nietzsche's) talks about his home. Veraguth hears

[wie er] sein stilles, weltfremdes, tropisches Waldleben so verführerisch auftat, dass es dem Maler schien, er spähe durch einen Spalt in ein reiches, farbenschönes Paradiesland hineien. Er hörte von stillen, grossen Strömen im Urwald, von baumhohen Farnwildnissen... (p.39).

Then, Burckhardt shows pictures:

Er hatte Aufnahmen von allen Palmenarten, von grossblättrigen saftigen Pisangbäumen, von Urwaldwinkeln mit tausendfältigem Schlinggewächse, von heiligen Tempelhainen und Schildkrötenteichen... (p.42).

The image shares both its visual nature and its 'tropical' content (not to mention its deliberately exotic language) with Aschenbach's Dionysian hallucination. Aschenbach's vision of such a swamp (if we accept the comparison) is blatantly erotic and partly horror-filled; Veraguth's is neither. Aschenbach's vision is an autosuggested fantasy; Veraguth's is based on his 'freien, eigenwillig charaktervollen' (p.14) friend's depiction of a strange but genuinely experienced world. The figure who sets off Aschenbach's fantasy appears mysteriously from the cemetery (p.446) and (as we saw) hints at death; Hesse speaks of Burckhardt's 'Versuchung' and 'Koder', but he uses such morally-loaded words in a distinctly Nietzschean way - Burckhardt is demonic only in the sense of his being the agent of (ultimately constructive) existential confrontation.
It is precisely such differences that concern us here. Hesse and Mann ascribe very different values in these works to the vision of the Dionysian swamp, to that burgeoning of untrammelled, dangerous life. To reiterate: Mann sees it as fatal, Hesse as liberating.

Like Mann, Hesse shows us an artist whose apparently respectable relationship to society masks a persistent evasion of his fate. The Dionysian jungle-image likewise triggers the (willing or unwilling) embracing of this fate. The entirely different nature of that fate indicates two related points on which Hesse and Mann differ: in their readings of Nietzsche and, as the prime cause of this, in their views of the Artist.

Mann looks at Aschenbach’s Dionysian jungle with the eye of a (Nietzsche-educated) psychologist, while Hesse looks at Veraguth’s Dionysian jungle with the eye of a (Nietzsche-educated) aesthete. There is no problem involved, for Hesse, in Veraguth’s embracing of his version of the jungle-imagery: true, there are crocodiles there, but the friends talk of hunting these very much in the fashion of Zarathustrian supermen taking their existential exercise. Veraguth is invited to chase young native girls in a jolly way that would certainly set off Aschenbach’s (and most modern readers’) investigative alarms. There is only one problem: has Veraguth still got the Aesthetic Manliness to take his path, make his leap into ‘Life’?

The temptation to such flippancy with regard to Rosshalde comes not from its being a bad book, for it is not, but from its (and most other books’) insubstantiality when placed by the side of Der Tod in Venedig. To formulate the difference simply and seriously: while Aschenbach’s problem is the essential dubiousness of a life devoted to Art, Veraguth’s problem is that his life is not yet so devoted. Indeed, at the end of Rosshalde, Hesse’s aesthetic hero occupies
a position which is rather similar to that of the adult Törless, or to that of Aschenbach at the start of his journey in Der Tod in Venedig: he is off to the primeval swamps to fling himself into the 'unbändige Leidenschaft des Sehens, des Beobachtens und heimlich-stolzen Mitschaffens' (p.169).

The word 'Mitschaffen' provides an important clue as to the fundamental difference: Hesse, throughout his works, seems never to doubt that Art has a definite, a necessary place in the world. Mann certainly appears to doubt this very often. Once Veraguth's child has died off and his wife has been cast off, our Hero is ready for the next step on His Way. Hesse's works frequently contain this alarming tendency to kill off secondary characters in the service of the hero's development. His stories are aesthetic myths: as with Nietzsche's images, to treat them as true depictions of the world would be to court disaster.

Hesse recognized the aesthetic nature of his work before the Great War in later years: in a letter to Suhrkamp of 15/12/42 he writes that
der damalige Krieg mich aus der Entwicklung riss und mich, statt zum Meister guter Formen werden zu lassen, in eine Problematik hineinführte, vor dem das rein Ästhetische sich nicht halten konnte.
This is distinctly reminiscent of Aschenbach's problems, and is also a very similar view to that evinced by Mann in his 1947 Nietzsche-essay: 'Eine ästhetische Weltanschauung ist schlechterdings unfähig, den Problemen gerecht zu werden, deren Lösung uns obliegt.' (p.710-1)

The difference is that Mann appears to have reached this conclusion in his creative work before the event, whereas Hesse clearly did not. Veraguth consoles himself that his wife will be secure anyway, since she has the house, and (this is 1914) prices are going to rise (p.167). Like the young Musil, Hesse
here clearly inhabits a basically secure world. Der Tod in Venedig, on the other hand clearly predicts catastrophe for a Europe whose 'heroes' are like Aschenbach, and, in its opening sentence, points to the reality of that looming catastrophe by referring to the threat of war. Mann may have longed, as Reed demonstrates, to create an amoral 'hymnic' Art, but his stories remain grounded in the naturalistic conviction that there is indeed a 'real reality'. It is against this reality that Aschenbach can be called 'der Sturtsinniger' or 'der Betörte'. To Mann, Aschenbach can be, must be, and is, judged.

This makes it seem the more curious that it was Hesse, not Mann, who stood publicly against the war-fever of 1914. The author of Rosshalde had no doubt where aesthetic myth ended and the slaughterhouse began, while the author of Der Tod in Venedig apparently tried and for a while managed to persuade himself that 1914 was a symbolic rebirth, rather than that desperately longed-for release from 'Durchhalten' which he himself had so closely analyzed. Hesse, the convinced aesthete, came down from his eyrie (for a time) to challenge unreason while Mann, the reluctant realist, deserted his post (for a time) and fled to the enemy camp.

Mann's position is understandable. His analysis of Aschenbach the aesthete was in some measure self-depiction: biographical details and the stylistic perfection of the novella itself implicate Mann in Aschenbach's fate. Despite the great beauty - and ambiguity - of the closing scene of the work, the conclusions Mann reaches in Der Tod in Venedig are scarcely comforting ones for an artist entering his middle-age. An escape into the 'spirit of 1914' must

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45 Reed, Thomas Mann, pp.152-3.

46 See Reed, Thomas Mann, esp. pp.144-145 and 179-181.
have been as inviting for Mann as was the retreat from 'Erkenntnis' into respectability for Aschenbach.

But such a biographical 'Mitleidssatz' in our investigation of Thomas Mann's work has its dangers. While it may help us to understand and forgive the unattractive aspect of Mann's immediate subsequent development, it might also prevent us from recognizing the depth of his positive achievement. The fact that we know Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen is coming has perhaps prevented a full recognition of the powerful artistic (and by Mann's open implication, social) critique in Der Tod in Venedig. How, then, are we to interpret this apparently inconsistent chronology?

Mann himself gives us a key to understanding the relationship between an artist's creative and biographical 'lives': Nietzsche, he says, did not create Nazism, but has 'als sensibelstes Ausdrucks- und Registrierungsinstrument mit seinem Macht-Philosophen den heraufsteigenden Imperialismus vorempfunden und die faschistische Epoche ... als zitternder Nadel angekündigt' (p.702). It is in this, his own, light that Mann may best be read. We have seen how he appears unable in 1912 to find any terms for his condemnation of Nietzschean aestheticism other than physiological decadence - other, that is, than Nietzsche's own terminology. It could be argued that he never really escaped those categories: even in the 1947 essay (p.696) he castigates aestheticism as 'todverbunden' (as opposed, presumably, to 'lebenverbunden'?). But Mann would have been the last to suggest that the artist can somehow escape the conditions of his age. The necessary precondition of that Nietzschean ability to register hidden tendencies is to dwell within them even more abundantly than most people, for better or for worse.
The story of Thomas Mann between Der Tod in Venedig and Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen is a perfect example of both better and of worse: the pristine quality and ruthless honesty of the novella are certainly not reflected in his war-time publications. The difference between them makes the strongest plea for us to distinguish always between the (often all-too-timely) views of Mann the philosophic scribe and the (often extraordinary) insights of Mann the creative artist. If Mann's explicit proclamation of the dubious associations of Nietzschean aestheticism came only in 1947 (a distinct case of shutting the door after the horse has bolted), it seems clear from Der Tod in Venedig that this insight was implicit in his art as early as 1912. Fortunately, it is by his artistic work, and not by his pamphleteering (of whatever political hue) that he will be remembered.

In this particular example of that work Mann, remarkably, investigates Nietzschean aestheticism in the terms of Nietzschean criticism: Mann's artistic practice would thus appear in a way to pre-empt Paul de Man's critical recommendation that we try to 'read Nietzsche with the rhetorical awareness provided by [Nietzsche's] own theory of rhetoric'. In seeking a 'Beglaubigung eigener Gedanken', Mann uses Nietzsche in much the same way as Musil: but Mann, unlike the young Musil, does not ignore the ambiguity in Nietzsche's presentation. Rather, he uses both sides of Nietzsche's presentation in the service of his own construction, of his own systematic ambiguity: 'he had a bad conscience about espousing either realm [...] he wrote of them both'. When Mann finally does come down on one side (which I maintain he does) it is not the then-fashionable aestheticizing Nietzsche who is his reference-point.

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49 Swales, Thomas Mann, p.13.
(however much he may have longed to embrace such ideas), but the Nietzsche
to whom he had first been attracted. In the end, then, Pütz's conclusion rings
true: 'Dem Psychologen der Decadence gab Thomas Mann eindeutig den
Vorzug vor dem Propheten des Übermenschen'.

I would conclude that Mann's ability to register both of Nietzsche's voices -
and his awareness of the attractions and dangers of both those voices -
contributes greatly to the depth of his artistic achievement and to its resonance
for us. It is praise of that artistic achievement rather than denigration of Musil's
or Hesse's to say that, unlike them, Mann was sensitive enough a needle himself
to register the subterranean tendencies of his age, to detect the hidden ideology
beneath Nietzschean aestheticism in the very attempt to embrace it and to
serve warning of the consequences before the event.

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51 See Reed, Der Tod In Venedig, p.164.
CHAPTER 6: The Artist in Retreat

(Rilke: Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge)

Introduction

In principle, the idea that Nietzsche may have impinged on Rilke’s creativity is anything but new. Erich Heller says that Rilke’s early work shows ‘Nietzsche neither assimilated nor transformed, but rather imitated and sometimes vulgarized’; later, ‘although the Zarathustra opinions and gestures vanish from Rilke’s writings, the kinship between his own and Nietzsche’s ideas and inner attitudes is deepens steadily. To Heller, Rilke is no less than ‘the St. Francis of the Will to Power’: the parallels between his and Nietzsche’s ‘acceptance and transforming of suffering [...] appear to be exact’.1 Both seek ‘in the greatest possible intensification of immanence salvation from the inglorious prison’:2 all in all, Rilke is ‘the poet of a world whose philosopher is Nietzsche’.3 Heller, then, is in no doubt whatever that Rilke writes in the awareness of Nietzsche’s writings and that his writings bear the distinctive imprint of this indebtedness.

Ulrich Fülleborn’s claim is less resoundingly phrased, but is in fundamental agreement: ‘Rilke ist nicht ohne Nietzsche, die Romantik (und vieles andere [...] zu denken.’4 Bruno Hillebrand is not so ready to admit so decisive or direct

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2 Heller, p.141.
3 Heller, p.151. Heller’s conclusions on the generic similarity between Rilke’s angels and Nietzsche’s supermen have been echoed recently in Keith May, pp.45-79.
an influence: he claims that, apart from Rilke's 'Marginalien' on Die Geburt der Tragödie, we can find 'Kaum etwas Konkretes'. Reed, on the other hand, shows that in Der Apostel (1896) we can find 'some of Nietzsche's central doctrines, delivered almost verbatim' and that Nietzsche's animal-images are still central to the Duino Elegies: he is in no doubt that Rilke is among the poets who have undergone 'an influence' from their readings of Nietzsche. One might well be drawn to ask Hillebrand just how much more 'konkret' things are supposed to be before they can be accepted as indicative of indebtedness. In fact, Hillebrand (as it turns out) agrees that much in the Florenzer Tagebuch (1898) 'verweist auf Nietzsche'. His conclusion that 'Ein traditionell definiertes Rezeptionsverhalten liegt nicht vor' seems rather curious, since he has already declared that 'Nietzsches Thema der immanenten Metaphysik zeigt sich bis ins Wörtliche hinein, mehr aber noch von der Substanz her, in Rilkes Spätwerk'. However much Hillebrand hedges his bets, then, it would appear that even he agrees with these other distinguished commentators that there is pressing textual evidence for Nietzsche's influence on Rilke in the latter's early and latest works.

But what of Malte Laurids Brigge? What is most interesting for our investigation is, perhaps, the position Hillebrand seems to assign to the novel:

Das Rühmen, das Preisen, das Ja-sagen über den Abgrund hinweg ist
der Weg Rilkes von der auf Faktizität ausgerichteten,
konstatierenden Perspektive im Malte Laurids Brigge [...]

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7 Hillebrand, vol. I, p.32-34.
8 References to Malte Laurids Brigge are to Rainer Maria Rilke, Gesammelte Werke, Frankfurt 1966, vol.VI.
This view of Malte is fundamentally similar to Reed's: he takes the novel as showing that, for Rilke, life is compounded of miseries and terrors which it is his task to accept and commute. The novel might thus appear to occupy a 'Wendepunkt' in Rilke's work: the confident (not to say, strident) aesthete of Der Apostel or of the Florenzer Tagebuch becomes an artist only too well aware of the reality of human wretchedness, singing in spite of it. The new depth given to Rilke's art by his greatest confrontation with reality (and, concomitantly, his greatest experiment with a naturalistic mode of writing) explains the way in which Anthony Stephens, too, places Malte at the fulcrum of Rilke's work:

In werkgeschichtlicher Hinsicht steht Malte Laurids Brigge im Zentrum von Rilke's dichterischer Entwicklung [...] Die neue Breite und Präzision des dichterischen Ausdrucks, die hier erreicht wird, zusammen mit der Hartknäckigkeit und Intensität von Malte’s Selbstanalyse, bilden eine notwendige Vorstufe zur späten Lyrik.

It is the tension between the naturalistic, dispassionate registration of the urban, modern world's terrors - which Rilke, according to Pascal, sees as 'the decisive reality of his time' - and the attempts to construct an alternative world which inform the entire structure of Malte Laurids Brigge. The novel opens with

9 Ibid.

10 Reed, 'Nietzsche's Animals', p.189.


12 Pascal, From Naturalism to Expressionism, p.131.
paragraphs of haunting Naturalism which brilliantly evoke the urban world and its psychological inroads into the narrator's 'Ich'; it subsequently fluctuates between this mode of writing and another which displays (at greater and greater length) the various attempts of Malte to provide himself with touchstones of another world, with an alternative 'Auslegung der Dinge'. I hope to show that both Rilke's depiction of the new urban reality and his depiction of attempts to counter it may betray the presence of Nietzsche's images and formulations. I will argue that Rilke's relationship to his Nietzschean influence is different from that which we have seen in the authors so far examined.

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Naturalistic Metropolis and Aesthetic City

We have already noted in passing the way in which the then-fashionable distinction between 'Schreiben' and 'Dichten' may have left its mark on Der Tod in Venedig. Mann, I argued, comes ultimately down in favour of a set of reference-points in the Naturalistically-inclined world of 'Schreiben'. The same thematic is evident in Malte Laurids Brigge, for Malte's early commitment to 'Schreiben' as a transformational force (p.728) is transformed, by the end, into the idea that he can now hear the 'herrliche Sprache' of 'Dichten' (p.943). I would suggest that we look at this Naturalistic-Aesthetic divide in terms of the city-imagery of Rilke's novel: it seems to me that Rilke's analysis may be clarified by examining the possible relationship of his ideas to Nietzsche's.

Malte, the young artist about to confront the necessity for a complete revision of his artistic parameters, is in Paris. The opening paragraphs of the novel are set around the Hospital, where the narrator (as yet not present as such) is
confronted by Naturalistically-registered images of sickness and death, amid the sound and restless fury of the metropolis, where to survive (rather than to live) is all that matters.

Nietzsche's famous denunciation of the 'decadent' mentality in artists refers (down to geographical detail) to exactly these problems:

die, welche heute die kleinen Pariser décadents interessiren. Immer fünf schritte weit vom Hospital! Lauter ganz moderne, ganz grossstädtische Probleme. (VIII, 28).

Rilke's imagery is not only textually similar to Nietzsche's, but also contextually: he uses it to refer to the problem of the modern, metropolitan artist - which is, of course, exactly the theme which Nietzsche is addressing in the above passage.

We might also note that the one artist apart from Wagner to whom Nietzsche here refers by name - Flaubert - also appears by name in Malte, again in connection with hospital-imagery (p.775). John Sandford has shown how 'the faults of the city [...] in Rilke's eyes, may be summarized as falsity and fragmentation': 13 the reader acquainted with Der Fall Wagner will again recall Nietzsche's text, this time in his depiction of how decadence is characterized by the fact that 'das Ganze lebt überhaupt nicht mehr: es ist zusammengesetzt, gerechnet, künstlich.' (VIII, 21)

Given this agreement in terms of image, use of image and analysis - and given the critical agreement which we have seen on the degree and importance of Rilke's contact with Nietzsche - I would suggest that it is highly probable that Nietzsche's analysis of Parisian-metropolitan 'décadence' is in Rilke's mind as he opens Malte. I do not mean that Nietzsche is a 'source' for Rilke's depiction

of Paris - which is highly autobiographical - but that Rilke's striking depictions may be informed by his awareness of this specific Nietzsche-text.

The physical crisis of this metropolitan environment - overcrowding, noise and so on in Malte - has (as Nietzsche was perhaps the first consciously to have seen) a psychological counterpart which, though less tangible, is no less real. The modern city is (quite literally) the concrete embodiment of the problem seminally depicted by Nietzsche: modern Man is cut off not only from 'nature' but from 'natural' truths about the world. Balzac/Rastignac's 'A nous deux maintenant' in the face of Paris is simply no longer possible: that cry presupposes that the hero is in possession of some alternative dynamic to The City, that he can stand outside it and thus against it. Now, such individual conviction in one's own 'truth' (which, in the extreme case of Malte, can mean even in the truth of one's very existence) is under massive assault: in the teeming metropolis the value of a thing (including a person) is determined not by reference to absolute categories (such as truth or falsehood, good or bad) but solely by the innumerable hordes of Other People. Malte's resistance is so crushed that, by the end, even when he flees the city he cannot regain his conviction in his own 'Ich': 'im Ganzen war man schon der, für den sie einen hier hielten' (p.940).

The direct experience of 'Natur' is thus unavailable to Malte both literally (as physical freedom from the oppression of the city) and metaphorically (as mental freedom from relativity). For him, 'nature' has been replaced by an inescapably urban, homocentric, thoroughly 'modern' world. This is not just a question of electric lights, trams and cars: the urban world is the quintessence of 'modernity', both physically and spiritually. As Loock puts it:
In dem Grossstädterlebnis Maltes und seiner Darstellung sehen wir etwas Repräsentantes und Epochales: die Entdeckung von Hintergründen der Wahrheit, eine Entdeckung, die Zeitgenossen Rilkes in ähnlicher Weise gemacht haben.\textsuperscript{14}

It is, of course, central to my argument that contemporary writers proceed roughly 'in ähnlicher Weise' because the conditions of their artistic production are roughly similar. I have elsewhere discussed parallels between Rilke's and Kafka's novelistic uses of real-world, 'zeitbedingt' images.\textsuperscript{15} The point is that as a highly important text-within-history, Nietzsche is among the historical conditions of later artistic production: Nietzsche, in other words, does not cause a later writer to perceive such things as 'Hintergründe der Wahrheit' - but the particular way in which they are perceived may be influenced by his earlier perceptions. From an interpretative point of view, it is particularly interesting when we come across both specific images or formulations which are reminiscent of Nietzsche's and more general congruities of perception between Nietzsche and later writers.

A prime example of this can be seen in the one icon of a non-modern urban world which Malte sets up: Venice, that city which was 'immer wieder besungen' by Rilke.\textsuperscript{16} The contrast of Paris and Venice echoes Pascal's point on the contemporary work of Georg Simmel: what is in question is not the city as such (Venice, after all, is a city just as much as Paris, in the traditional definition of


\textsuperscript{15} J.M. Hawes, 'Rilke's "Malte" and Kafka's "Prozess": Two Searches for the "Andere Auslegung"', in Ridley/Klieneberger (eds.) Rilke und der Wandel in der Sensibilität, Essen, 1990.

\textsuperscript{16} Wolfgang Leppman, Rilke: Leben und Werk, Munich, 1982, p.84.
the word) but 'the metropolis, where specifically modern features are clashing with and modifying older social and cultural forms'.

As we have seen, Rilke's depiction of the metropolis is parallel to Nietzsche's not only in terms of its exact physical setting. Rilke and Nietzsche share the perception that the significance of this urban world is not exhausted by its physical being. In this city, 'Life' is reduced to a state of mere Darwinistic biological existence: 'die Hauptsache war, dass man lebte' (p.709).

This is in direct contrast to Rilke's depiction of the city of Venice at which Malte arrives much later in the book and which occasions one of the most important statements of Rilke/Malte's definition of the 'andere Auslegung der Dinge':

In Kurzem würde es kalt sein. Das weiche, opiatische Venedig ihrer Vorurteile und Bedürfnisse verschwindet [...] und eines Morgens ist das andere da, das wirkliche, wache, bis zum Zerspringen spröde, durchaus nicht erträumte: das mitten im Nichts auf versenkten Wäldern gewollte, erzwungene und endlich so durch und durch vorhandene Venedig. [...] War es denkbar, dass in diesen Sälen nicht einer war, der unwillkürlich darauf wartete, über das Wesen dieser Umgebung aufgeklärt zu sein? Ein junger Mensch, der es sofort begriff, dass hier nicht ein Genuss aufgeschlagen war, sondern ein Beispiel des Willens, wie es sich nirgends anfordernder und strenger finden liess? (p.932-3).

Here we find an accumulation of concepts which, I would argue, together make up a distinctively Nietzschean (as opposed to a broadly 'vitalist') world-view. We

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17 Roy Pascal, Culture and the Division of Labour, Warwick University, 1974, p.35.
have the will as creative force; a subjective theory of perception whereby the
sorry psychological/physiological state of the public (their 'Vorurteile und
Bedürfnisse') determines how they see things; the rejection of the
pleasure-principle (Venice is 'nicht ein Genuss') in favour of strenuousness
(' nirgends anfordernder und strenger'); the appeal to perceive the 'here-ness'
and reality of phenomena ('das wirkliche, wache [...] Venedig'); the hope that
one particular young individual among the deluded masses may be 'aufgeklärt'
about the true relationship between self and world.

Thus, then, this important example of Malte's attempts to define the 'andere
Auslegung der Dinge' for which he searches would appear to run parallel to
Nietzsche's analysis: Malte sees the tourists' view of Venice as an instance of the
misinterpretations which are symptomatic of cultural-spiritual 'tiredness' (that is,
in Nietzsche's terminology, 'decadence'). He establishes a counterview which
invokes the above-mentioned and distinctly Nietzschean parameters of cultural
evaluation.

I would suggest that the textual contrast between the naturalistically-
described Paris and the aesthetically-interpreted Venice is surely deliberate. If
the portrait of Paris seemed to echo Nietzsche's use of Paris as symptomatic of
decadence, then the portrait of Venice seems to be informed by a distinctly
Nietzschean aestheticism and theory of willed, creative 'life'. The contrast
between such a 'gewollte' City and mere 'Darwinian' maintenance of existence
in the Metropolis echoes exactly Nietzsche's own objection to Darwin as
paraphrased by Heidegger: 'Jede blosse Lebenserhaltung ist schon Niedergang
des Lebens\textsuperscript{18} because it ignores the fundamental 'Wesen des Lebens als Selbststeigerung'.\textsuperscript{19}

I would thus argue that Rilke's setting-up of the opposition between the modern metropolis and the traditional city involves a contrast between a naturalistic (passive) registration of phenomena and aesthetic (active) interpretation of them. I would argue too, that his depiction of this contrast is indebted to Nietzsche's categories of decadent existence and willed living. If we now go on to examine the first of Malte's counter-icons of an alternative, non-urban world, we shall, I think, again see that the idea of the Will is of central importance.

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Alternative Images (i): Death as Kernel of Life

It is notable that Malte's examples of that alternative, 'authentic' experience, here and throughout the book, are backward-looking both in terms of his own experience of time (i.e. referring back to his childhood) and in terms of social relations (i.e. referring back to a pre-urban past): the experience of the threatening urban world thus becomes parallel to the loss of childhood security. (By the same token - and by an extension which Malte himself admits, as we shall see - the challenge of this new reality becomes parallel to the challenge of adulthood.) Pondering the question of modern life and death, Malte takes us back to a time when life and death where organically entwined:


dann glaub ich, das muss früher anders gewesen sein. Früher wusste man (oder vielleicht man ahnte es), dass man den Tod in sich hatte, wie die Frucht den Kern. (p.715)

Here, I would suggest that Rilke may be directly influenced in his analysis and imagery by one of Nietzsche’s attempts to apprehend the gulf which separates ‘modern’ man from his (supposedly less crisis-ridden) forebears:

Wir verstehen nicht mehr ganz, wie die alten Menschen das Nächtliche und Häufigste empfanden [...] das ganze Leben, mit der Zurückstrahlung des Todes und seiner Bedeutung: unser ’Tod’ ist ein ganz anderer Tod. (Vii,173)

We might also note that in one short section of Zarathustra (‘Vom freien Tode’) Nietzsche stresses the need for a ‘willed’ death - and uses repeated images of fruit, nuts, ripening, falling from trees and so on to express this. Clearly, there is a general congruity here between Rilke’s ideal of carrying one’s death in oneself ‘wie die Frucht den Kern’ and Zarathustra-Nietzsche’s fruit-images of a ‘Tod, der mir kommt, weil ich will’. The fact that it is explicitly the Grandfather’s unused-up ‘Stolz, Willen und Herrenkraft’ which constitutes this powerful Death (p.720) is noteworthy: surely Malte’s imagery implies that this ‘Stolz, Willen und Herrenkraft’ constitutes that ‘Kern’ of his grandfather’s life (and death) to which he refers? This first example of an alternative, pre-urban, authentic-individualistic mode of living and dying is thus characterised by the fundamental primacy of willed energy, just as Venice (the alternative to Paris) is so characterised in Malte’s later depiction.

There is, of course, a total contrast in one sense: Zarathustra’s dictum ‘in eurem Sterben soll noch euer Geist und eure Tugend glühn’ is reversed in Rilke’s terrifying presentation of a man possessed by a death which is the
roaring conglomerate of his unused willpower. But this reversal is a feature of
the relationship between Nietzsche's and Rilke's formulations (as we shall see
later) in the central problematic of the imagery of 'Fest' and dissolution of the
'Ich'. In both, though, it is the individual's own will which is expressed in death.
For now, we might finally note that Nietzsche uses that image of death as a
'Fest' in the section of Zarathustra from which we have just seen the imagery
of fruit and ripeness for death.

Both Nietzsche and Rilke, then, are concerned with the ways in which modern
man has lost touch with death - with death, that is, as an essential and by no
means wholly negative dimension of life itself: both mourn the loss of a state in
which life is paradoxically rooted in and lit by a firm, personal and (most
importantly) individual relationship with death. In Malte, Rilke makes plain the
connection between an individual death and an individual life:

   Der Wunsch, einen eigenen Tod zu haben, wird immer seltener. Eine
   Weile noch und, und er wird ebenso selten wie ein eigenes Leben.

   (p.714)
Both interpret the present lack of such a unity as symptomatic of the 'modern'
world and both appear to imply that this problematic is somehow rooted in a
damaging distance between man and his innermost drive, his willpower.

I would suggest, then, that Malte's observations on death remind us of
Nietzsche's thought, both in terms of imagery and of general analysis. Again, any
echoes of specific images are amplified considerably by their contextualization
within a scheme of thought which bears a strong general resemblance to
Nietzsche's.
Alternative Images (ii): The Rounded Saint

The insecurity of modern man has, according to Malte, been transferred to 'die Dinge'. People have lost that intimate and personal relationship with things which characterizes Malte's depictions of the Old Days. The wall-hangings are no longer in the old castle, the people who look at them no longer have them in their blood (p.831). Man's (here clearly social) restlessness and insecurity have resulted in a situation where 'die Dinge' themselves feel uneasy. Rilke constructs an extended pathetic fallacy in which 'die Dinge' have minds of their own. The passage is informed not simply by whimsy: it is clearly intended primarily as a comment on man, informed by that (thoroughly Nietzschean) idea that all Things in the world are given meaning only by man. It is thus no surprise that these 'Dinge' should reflect and even, here, personify man's insecurity. Malte ponders the question of lids which no longer fit their pots properly:

Hier zeigt es sich, wie verwirrend der Umgang mit den Menschen auf die Dinge gewirkt hat. Die Menschen nämlich, wenn es angeht, sie ganz vorübergehend mit solchen Deckeln zu vergleichen, sitzen höchst ungern und schlecht auf ihren Beschäftigungen [...] Wo aber einer ist, ein Einsamer etwa, der so recht rund auf sich beruhen wollte Tag und Nacht, da fordert er gerade den Widerspruch, den Hohn, den Hass der entarteten Geräte aus. (pp.877-8)

I would like to suggest that this passage may be directly indebted to the following passage from Nietzsche both in image and in meaning:

Die grossen Probleme verlangen alle die grosse Liebe, und dieser sind nur die starken, runden, sicheren Geister fähig, die fest auf sich
selber sitzen. (Vii,259).

The image of a great, saintly man sitting 'rund' on himself in the midst of general disorder is by no means a particularly common one, and I think coincidence is unlikely to be an adequate explanation for the overlap here: both Nietzsche and Rilke use this image to speak of a great individual who will, by his own spiritual strength (which is rooted in his relationship to himself) bring new order to the world.

I would suggest, then, that Malte's presentation of the problems of modern life is distinctly similar to Nietzsche's. Nietzsche - affecting to scorn such modern problems' - proclaims that what we need is a thoroughly new (that is, paradoxically, un-'modern') way of looking at things. As we shall now see, the proposals made by Rilke/Malte as alternatives to the problems of modern life are, too, notably reminiscent of some of Nietzsche's writings.

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Alternative Modes: 'sehen-lernen' and 'nicht urteilen'

Malte's answer to the problem - to put it as simply as possible - is that the artist will have to be that secure, rounded figure who can rescue things from their state of hopeless relativity: 'Er wird schreiben müssen' (p.728). But what will he write about? How will he write? It is here that we first come across that tension between the constatation of the world as it is and the setting-up of alternative icons.

Malte's theory of artistic perception is first expounded as follows:

Ich lerne sehen. Ich weiss nicht, woran es liegt, es geht alles tiefer in mich ein und bleibt nicht an der Stelle stehen, wo es sonst immer zu
Ende war. (p.710)

Here, as often in the novel, the 'Ich' of the narrator is no longer the subject, but rather the object of the process: things go into him, 'Diesmal werde ich geschrieben' (p.756).

Now, this would seem to be a very different idea from Musil's depictions (which, as we saw, were quite possibly directly indebted to Götzen-Dämmerung) of how the artist gives of himself to the objects of his art. There (in Musil) the artist is the energy-giving subject, here (in Rilke) the powerless object. Again, though, we must always be aware of how many different prospects Nietzsche offers to his successors, for Rilke's formula of 'Ich lerne sehen' is surely informed by Nietzsche too:

> Sehen lernen - dem Auge die Ruhe, die Geduld, das An-sich-herankommen-lassen angewöhnen, das Urtheil hinausschieben, den Einzelfall von allen Seiten umgehen und umfassen lernen [...] Sehen lernen, so wie ich es verstehe, ist beinahe das, was die unphilosophische Sprechweise den starken Willen nennt.

(Vliii, 102-3)

There is not only a verbal similarity here, but a connecting logic: the 'starker Wille' which Nietzsche says is a more popular term for 'Sehen lernen' is just what that rounded figure needs to restore order to the rebellious 'Dinge'.

Rilke, then, would appear to refer to that part of Nietzsche's thought which considers 'die Unfähigkeit, nicht zu reagieren' as the problem of modern life. The identification of this passage in Nietzsche as a probable source for Malte's 'Ich lerne sehen' passes the critical test of illuminating the text, because it enables us to see a direct and consistent line between this early statement and the philosophy which is later associated with the iconic figure of the
newspaper-seller: 'dass wir doch lernten, vor allem aushalten und nicht urteilen'
(p.903). This can be read as a virtual paraphrase of Nietzsche's ideas as set out
above: 'das An-sich-herankommen-lassen, das Urteil hinausschieben'.

Here, then, the identification of Nietzsche's text as a probable source for
Rilke's formulation can illuminate the complexities of Rilke's text as it moves
from Malte's early creative programme to that icon near the end.

The interpretative vista to which this gives rise means that Malte's later
position is not so much a development out of his early stance as an
extrapolation from it. This interpretation would suggest a mental stasis in Malte:
his experiences do not lead to any real development of his ideas. The
identification of possible Nietzschean elements, then, would appear to support
the view advanced by Stephens in answer to those who wish to see the novel as
a sort of 'Bildungs-/Entwicklungsroman'. As he puts it:

Die Faktizität des Todes ist am Ende des Romans fast irrelevant
geworden, weil ein solcher Ausgang, was die Erzählgegenwart betrifft,
von dem nunmehr statischen Charakter der existentiellen Lage in
grossem Masse vorweggenommen worden ist.20

This may suggest the reason for the total passivity which is a notable feature of
Malte's later human icons: it is to these I now wish to turn.

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'Abgenommene Christusse': Christ as Patron of 'Innerlichkeit'

The characters which are associated with Malte's ideal of 'nicht urteilen' (which,
as we saw, may well owe its specific formulation to Nietzsche) are physically

reminiscent of another of Nietzsche’s depictions. Here is Nietzsche’s ‘Epiktetischer Mensch’:

Vor allem aber wird er in der tiefen, niedrigen Masse zu suchen sein,
als der Stille, Sich-Selbst-Genügende innerhalb einer allgemeinen Verknechtung. (Vi,320)

Nietzsche admits the quasi-christian nature of such a figure: 'Von dem Christen unterscheidet er sich vor allem hierin, dass der Christ in Hoffnung lebt [...] während Epiktet nicht hofft' (Vi,320-1). Rilke, in what appears to be a close parallel to Nietzsche’s thought, proclaims the idealisation of the 'durch keine Vorsicht oder Verstellung eingeschränkte Hingegebenheit' (p.902) of the newspaper-seller, who is certainly found 'in der tiefen, niedrigen Masse', just as Nietzsche proposed. Here, then, Rilke’s depictions would appear to run in parallel with a specific (and relatively little-noted) theme of Nietzsche’s thought: the idealization of non-reaction to the world.

It is perhaps fruitful to note that Rilke (just like Nietzsche, above) associates this figure with Christ. Bradley produces the evidence: in trying to describe the man selling newspapers, Malte has - yet again - to call on the known world to describe what is supposedly utterly new. The one image which he now knows helped him a little was that of 'die vielen abgenommenen Christusse' (p.900). Malte’s search for the completely new way of seeing has become a thinly disguised search for (some kind of) God.

Rilke, then, relates his icons of 'nicht urteilen' to Christ. I would suggest that such depictions of the 'New Ideal' here may be related to Nietzsche’s version of Jesus Christ in Der Antichrist. There, the process hinted at in Nietzsche’s portrayal of the 'Epiktetischer Mensch’ is taken up and expanded:

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Christ is 'ein von dem Zeitbegriff erlöstes psychologisches Symbol' (VIII, 204) who teaches an 'andres Sein' (VIII,209) which speaks of 'leiden' and 'nicht sich wehren, nicht zürnen, nicht verantwortlich machen' (VIII,206).

Nietzsche’s idiosyncratic portrait of Christ, which may thus have influenced Rilke’s depictions of the utterly 'hingegeben' man who has somehow escaped time, is the most extreme version of his thought on the lines of 'amor fati'. Nietzsche depicts in Christ a man so thoroughly 'innerlich' that he literally cannot conceive of 'the world' as we understand it:

Wenn ich irgend etwas von diesem grossen Symbolisten verstehe, so ist es das, dass er nur innere Realitäten als Realitäten, als 'Wahrheiten' nahm, - dass er den Rest, alles Natürliche, Zeitliche, Räumliche, Historische nur als Zeichen, als Gelegenheit zu Gleichnissen verstand (VIII,204).

Such a man is, in fact, so 'innerlich' as to be deprived of (or, as Nietzsche would have said by this stage: freed of) all the attributes commonly recognized as constituting humanity. Even love is inward-looking. As Ursula Schneider puts it:

Diese neue und letzte Liebe ['amor fati'] is keine Liebe zu etwas, das so und so seidend ausser ihr existiert. Es ist die, die im Zarathustra so häufig berufen wird als eine ganz neuartiger Bezug zu den Dingen.22

I would like to suggest that this description of Nietzsche’s ideas (a description made without reference to Rilke) might just as well fit the ideas in Malte of 'besitzlose Liebe', of God conceived of not as an object of human love, but only as 'eine Richtung der Liebe', from whom 'keine Gegenliebe [...] zu fürchten

Indeed, that formula, 'dass Gott nur eine Richtung der Liebe ist' (p.937), is (once again) reminiscent of Nietzsche's analysis in this section of Der Antichrist: 'Das "Himmelreich" ist ein Zustand des Herzens'. (VIII,205)

Again, the relationship is here not one of word-to-word 'influence', but I think it fair to argue that Rilke's idiosyncratic thought on the nature of the God-man relationship is notably similar to Nietzsche's earlier writings on the subject. Both writers place these ideas in the centre of their conceptual world: for the late Nietzsche as for Rilke, this new relationship between individual self and transformed 'reality' is to be the foundation of that 'neuartiger Bezug zu den Dingen' that 'andere Auslegung der Dinge' which both sought.

Rilke's 'Rückzug in die Innerlichkeit' would thus appear to be well under way by the end of Malte Laurids Brigge. J.B. Leishman points out the consequences of this for Rilke's later art:

The poet who, in his letters, is so often found 'humanistically' and 'progressively' insisting on 'this-worldliness' and 'this-sidedness' cannot, in his poetry, especially in his later poetry, imaginatively apprehend either humanity or himself, cannot imaginatively assess their achievements, misachievements and possibilities, except against a perpetual background of 'other-worldliness' and 'other-sidedness', a background of angels, constellations and even gods.  

This development in Rilke's art would seem to show parallels to Nietzsche's retreat from investigation.

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23 Loock, Interpretation, p.93.

'Unterlassene Erkundung': The Abrogation of Investigation.

At certain points in the work the possibility of success in held out: Malte's position could indeed bear fruit, the fruit of that 'andere Auslegung': 'Die Zeit der anderen Auslegung wird anbrechen ... Bei aller Furcht bin ich schliesslich doch wie einer, der vor etwas Grossem steht' (p.756). But for all the rhetoric of 'learning to see' and so on, it is clear that Malte is the account of a failure. The text makes it plain that though Malte stands before 'etwas Grossem', what actually happens is that 'das Grosse' grows huge within him.

Why this disastrous inward turn? Why is 'die von Cézanne verkörperte Möglichkeit der kunstlerischen Erfüllung von Malte wahrgenommen, aber nicht ergriffen worden'? Stephens notes 'dass die Grundstruktur von Malte's Persönlichkeit auf einer Gegenüberstellung von Oberfläche und Kern basiert' - and this insight, I think, indicates how it is that we might be able to relate Malte's dilemma to his situation within (and attitudes to) his surroundings. The fact is that Malte is situated within a world - the modern, urban world - which is textually acknowledged from the very start of the book and whose threat to the writer, whose resistance to his perceived needs as a writer (e.g. silence, individuality, traditional forms of life) is constantly reiterated. The theme of Malte's experiencing 'Oberfläche und Kern' in his personality is, by this registration, tied intimately to the theme of experience of the world. Rilke's own statement on the way in which *Malte Laurids Brigge* records a failure is perhaps

26 Stephens, p.76.
interesting in this respect: he declares 'dass diese Prüfung ihn überstieg, dass er sie am Wirklichen nicht bestand'.

Here, I think that 'am Wirklichen' gives the clue to a possible analysis of Malte's failure which can account for the failure to attain the Cézanne-ideal of artistic productivity not just in personal-artistic terms, but in terms of Malte's relationship to the given world. Malte's failure 'am Wirklichen' is noted by Bradley, who then draws attention to the social identity of the world ranged against Malte, and to the fact that the imperative to investigate this reality is part and parcel of his make-up. Bradley sees the problem of the book, its unifying theme, as that of 'unterlassene Erkundung'. According to her, Malte is like his father, who wants to investigate the appearance of Christine Brahe's ghost, but who in the end stays seated at the table (p.738): Malte, too, is torn between the need to investigate this unbearable world and the need to remain in terra cognita. It has also been noted that this duality is, indeed, part of Malte's biological inheritance.

I would suggest that these warring imperatives are central to the problem of Malte. The hero longs for that 'andere Auslegung' - but this must, by its very nature, lie beyond the known 'Bedeutungen' which he also longs to remain within. Malte's dilemma is summed up thus: 'Nur ein Schritt, und mein tiefes Elend würde Seligkeit sein. Aber ich kann diesen Schritt nicht tun' (p.756).

Bradley, then, holds that Malte's personal dilemma is rooted in his attitude to the social world around him: his 'Aufzeichnungen'.

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27 See Bradley, p.51.

28 See Patricia Pollock Brodsky, Rainer Maria Rilke, Boston, Ma., 1988, pp.120-1.
To become a new person thus involves a new attitude to the given world. Malte cannot take such a step, because to do so would make necessary the abandoning of his established artistic ideals, which are (like Nietzsche’s and like most of the writers who called on his example) individualistic and anti-functionalist. To become a new artist he would have to cease being an Artist - that is, cease being an artist who views the world simply as the raw material for some aesthetic-cum-metaphysical quest.

Keeping Bradley’s thesis in mind can illuminate the significance of Malte’s attitude to ‘die Fortgeworfenen’. The crux of the matter is that Malte does note and depict social problems - but reacts to them only by trying desperately to preserve himself from them. Malte, that is, refuses to draw social conclusions from what are quite clearly observations of a concrete social phenomenon. Moreover, this is a conscious refusal:

Ich unterschlage den Wagen, den er schob, ich tue, als hätte ich nicht bemerkt, dass er Blumenkohl ausrief. Aber ist das wesentlich? Und wenn es auch wesentlich wäre, kommt es nicht darauf an, was die ganze Sache für mich gewesen ist? (p.748)

Here, Malte is pretty openly claiming that the (undefined) importance of this experience 'für mich' is of greater importance than the recognition of those
socio-economic factors (i.e. what the man is actually doing and selling) which, almost despite himself, he admits to having registered. Again, then, we have the thematic of a naturalistic registration which is consciously made subordinate to the act of individual aesthetic reception: 'Das habe ich gesehen. Gesehen.’ (p.748)

I would suggest that such details can fulfil the demand made by Stephens when he says that in order to make a sophisticated sociological analysis of Malte, 'müsst man in der Lage sein, die "Verdrängung" der sozialen Thematik in der Darstellung von Malte's Entfremdung und Vereinzelung nachzuweisen'. Bradley's success in pointing to such details makes her interpretation, to me, highly convincing.

The result of this "Verdrängung" der sozialen Thematik' is that the problems of society become merely metaphors for the artist's nameless dilemma. This process can be clearly seen in Rilke's letter to Lou of 28/12/1911: he confesses that he should have finished with Malte before, 'aber dazu häng ich wohl noch zu sehr am Eigenthum und kann das masslose Armsein nicht leiden, so sehr es auch wahrscheinlich meine entscheidende Aufgabe ist'. In this letter, then, Rilke (like Malte) uses metaphors of possession and poverty ('Armsein', 'Eigenthum') without acknowledging the social reality which is their root. This is also true of some Malte-criticism: for example, Heller places Malte as one of his 'enterbte Geister', and Wilhelm Loock says that Malte is no longer 'im Besitz seiner ordnenden Unterscheidungskraft'. But surely, if we take such metaphors literally the social reality behind Malte's position springs out at us: Malte is quite literally 'enterbt', he is not 'im Besitz' of anything any more, let alone his

30 Stephens, p.27.
31 Loock, Interpretationen, p.22.
'Unterscheidungskraft'. Malte's problems are thus, I would suggest, clearly involved in social reality and in his attitude to it.

So, to support this suspicion, is his vision of utopia: Malte longs for 'sesshafte Dinge', he longs to sit 'in der stillen Stube eines ererbten Hauses' out in the country with flowers and dogs (p.746) and to have someone quietly make his fire for him. We might here note that the bark of a dog functions early in the text (p.710) as an 'Erleichterung' in the city - that is, as an icon of the non-urban world. Malte's ideal life is thus clearly dependent on images of a distance from the mass-life of the city which is social as well as geographical.

One of the most famous and moving depictions of Malte's alternative, aesthetic-contemplative life, that ideal of a 'Welt der Nuancen',\(^2\) is interesting in this respect. The depiction of the 'Dame à la Licorne' is specifically related to the feelings of the girls who (like Malte) have left the old houses in which nothing remains (i.e. houses like those in which the objects in the museum were once 'at home') and gone lost in the city (p.830). Like him, they have trouble keeping up old standards - their dresses (not intended for such a lonely existence) are never quite properly done up (p.831). The alternative life, the possibility of which they intimate, is described thus:

\[\text{ein leises Leben langsamer, nie ganz aufgeklärter Gebärden} \text{ (p.830)}\]

But the possible social reality behind such aesthetically-conceived lifestyles might be suggested by comparing this with E.M. Forster's contemporary (and ironic) depiction of those country-house sets who dwell in a world of 'dignified movements that mean nothing.'\(^3\)

\(^2\) Ulrich Fülleborn, in a paper delivered at the Dublin Rilke-Symposium, December 1987.

I would suggest, then, that both Malte’s dilemma and his vision of an aesthetic-utopian solution to it are firmly grounded in social reality. Given this, it seems that Malte’s failure to find his ‘andere Auslegung’ may well be, as Bradley suggests, rooted in the conscious retreat from acknowledging this fact.

This is not to say that the solution to Malte’s problems is simply social reform. The text makes it quite clear that Malte’s attempts to overcome this ‘new reality’ by referring back to his childhood fail precisely because that childhood itself was not an idyll, but was subject to the same constant danger of some ‘new reality’ breaking in. Thus, Malte recalls a birthday in his childhood:

man möchte wohl noch wie früher angekleidet werden und dann alles Weitere entgegennehmen. Aber kaum ist man wach, so ruft jemand draussen, die Torte sei nicht da: oder man hört, dass etwas zerbricht (pp.841-2).

Thus it would be clearly absurd to say that Malte’s problematical position is simply and only a result of his, individually, having become poorer. This does not, though, mean that a broader sociological interpretation - concerning, that is, the fall of a whole way of life rather than of one individual’s lifestyle - is placed out of court.

The text itself implies that Malte’s refusal to write about the social side of his dilemma compromises Malte’s ability to portray it, for the novel’s own proclaimed scheme of things holds that to write about something means ‘etwas tun’ about it. (p.728) Malte, of course, does not intend this statement to read as programme for social engagement - but this may be the root of the problem: since Malte’s troubles clearly stem from his involvement, willy-nilly, in a socially given world, the need to ‘do something’ about those problems clearly demands that this ‘something’ operate, in some way or other, on a social plane.
The episode concerning the 'Fortgeworfenen' is highly revealing in this respect. Malte takes great care, we read, (p.742) of the little details of dress and cleanliness which maintain his membership of 'respectable' society. He is, that is to say, anything but ignorant of social realities, and attempts to control them. Nevertheless, 'die Fortgeworfenen' know 'dass ich eigentlich zu ihnen gehöre' (p.742). Despite the outward show of suits and calling cards, Malte knows, the 'Fortgeworfenen' know, and (as it turns out) the hospital doctors know the reality of his situation in society. But the fact that 'die Fortgeworfenen' are in the hospital too is pregnant with meaning: Malte’s fate is conceived in terms both of medical and physiological decline. Indeed, from the very first pages (where the hospital is symbolic of the whole problematic of the metropolis) the line between the two is blurred. Malte’s existential troubles, then, appear to be contributed to both by social and by medical elements which - as a result of his refusal to admit that 'das Wesentliche' might lie in the physical reality of things - are kept none to clearly apart.

Once again, Nietzsche’s ambiguous analysis of 'decadence' (which, as I argued, seems imagistically to underlie Rilke’s opening pages) leaps to mind. It is (as we saw in chapter 2) extremely hard to tell where Nietzsche conceives of the problematic of modern man as a medical, existential or sociological phenomenon. Malte’s reaction to this hazy problematic, though, is the same as that which we saw in much of Nietzsche’s later work: an essentially aestheticizing reaction is proposed to what is quite clearly depicted by the writer as a material-phenomenological problem.

If we now return to that thematic of 'nicht urteilen' (p.903) we can see, I think, that it represents the logical climax to the theme of 'unterlassene Erkundung': Malte, trapped between critical awareness of the modern world and
a wish to remain within known horizons, has apparently decided it is best completely to abolish his critical intellect in favour of an uncritical acceptance of 'die Dinge' as-they-are. Malte is aware of the consequences: 'Auch die Kindheit würde aber gewissermassen noch zu leisten sein, wenn man sie nicht für immer verloren geben wollte' (p.856). The homecoming-imagery of the final pages expresses that failure to come to terms with a post-childhood world. But Malte has not escaped reality at all; now he is condemned to experience it 'alles noch einmal und nun wirklich' (p. 945).

Malte's conception of what 'real' experiencing is like, though, remains grounded in a thesis of non-investigation. He decides that he must see the newspaper-seller in such a way 'das nichts an ihm nebensächlich war' (p.901). This seems almost a paraphrase of Nietzsche's statement (in the aphorism which immediately follows the famed announcement of 'amor fati'): we must see everything 'als ein Ding, das "nicht fehlen dürfte"' (Vii,202). The only modus vivendi which Malte can propose is that of those quasi-saintly figures who are completely 'verdinglicht', who are 'hingestellt und weggenommen wie Bleisoldaten' (p.780). The wish to 'do something' about his situation becomes the recommendation for a total absence of doing. Malte finds that, as a man who 'wird schreiben müssen' (as opposed to engaging in plastic art?), he cannot deny the reality in which he exists - yet he cannot conceive of an artistic programme which would change that reality. The result is that the artist can neither evade the given world, nor act upon it. Instead, he is enacted: 'diesmal werde ich geschrieben.' (p.756)
Conclusions: Dionysus in Reverse

Many of the important concepts and images which Malte gives us - 'sehen-lernen', 'nicht urteilen', the saintly 'rounded' figure, the icons of 'Innerlichkeit' - may, I would argue, have direct antecedents in Nietzsche's writings, as may the whole problematic of the 'sick' metropolis with which the modern artist is confronted. They are concepts which, in the end, enshrine the failure of Malte to react positively to that new 'reality'.

Malte's stasis may have much to do with his creator's stasis. The lack of development in Malte's position makes a most interesting parallel to the tendency which Rio Preisner has described in Rilke's early (and openly Nietzsche-influenced) works:

An vielen Stellen seiner Prosastücke gibt René Rilke der Sehnsucht nach einer radikalen Umänderung nach [...] wobei allerdings die ursprüngliche Revolte des Übermenschen Rezek oder des 'Apostels' fast ganz ins Ästhetische umgewertet wird.\textsuperscript{34}

The radical difference in Rilke's art between such early works and Malte is characterized by the fact that the loud, aestheticizing 'Zarathustra opinions', to quote Heller's phrase, are no longer found to be tenable. In Malte, Rilke portrays the conflict of the artist with a reality which is quite clearly proof against his attempts at an aesthetic re-interpretation: however loudly Malte shouts, the metropolitan crowd shouts more loudly around him.

This idea of the individual's powerlessness is one which turns Rilke's Nietzschean individualism on its head. This does not, of course, mean that Rilke

\textsuperscript{34} Rio Preisner, 'Rilke in Böhmen' in Solbrig/Storck \textit{Rilke Heute}, p.238.
is no longer thinking in 'Nietzschean' terms: a mirror-image of a thing is still an image of that thing, even if reversed. Rilke's physical depiction of the effect of that new reality on the individual can be related to Nietzsche's concept of the 'Dionysian'. When Malte is submerged in the 'Tanzkraft' of the Parisian masses, Was hier hervorbricht und das Ich verschwinden lässt, ist ganz deutlich dem Nietzscheschen Begriff des Dionysischen verschwistert.

'Was hier hervorbricht', 'das Grosse' which overcomes Malte in then hospital, comes 'aus mir' (p.765), just as did the death of his grandfather. It is not, then, a question of Malte being a 'willenloser Körper' like the man beside him in the hospital (p.763) - but of something (that 'Kern' of alienated 'Willenskraft'?) within him breaking out. Again, it is not the lack of 'Life' in the spectacle of the houseless walls which terrifies him - but the very sense of a gross, amorphous 'Leben' which still exists around them (pp.750-1). Malte's problem, then, is not a lack of 'Life' as such, but the sense of a form of 'Life' which is not given expression and which demands expression even at the cost of the individual self.

Richard Cox has seen just this phenomenon, whereby the Nietzschean 'Fest' becomes one not of that promised supra-egoistic joy in the acceptance of life-as-it-is, in 'amor fati', but one of hopeless personal dissolution:

The boundaries between inner and outer crumble, but not in favour of the 'Fest' promised by Rilke's early idealism: all the 'Qual und Grauen' without act as a catalyst to release 'das Grosse' within and the self disintegrates.36

This might appear to be a direct counter-argument to Nietzsche:

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Der Lebensphilosophie Nietzsche's wäre damit - unter dem Einfluss
des Grossstadterlebnisses - eine Vision des Sterbens als des
universalen Urgrundes aller Erscheinungen entgegengesetzt.37

In fact, however, Loock sees that such a transformation is not anti-'Nietzschean',
but Nietzsche as if in a photographic negative: the Nietzschean 'Fest'
erscheint hier als Offenbarung des Negativ-Dionysischen [...] Das Bild
des Zeugungsvorganges, das in die dionysische Sphäre gehört, gerät
hier, als sinnloses Massengeschehen, in die Sphäre des 'Widerlichen'.38

The vital words here are 'sinnloses Massengeschehen': the simple fact that the
Dionysian 'Fest' has become a 'Massengeschehen' is sufficient to make it
'sinnlos'.

In Malte, then, the individual's sense of his own individuality - which, to both
Nietzsche and Rilke is a prerequisite of true 'Life' - is swamped in the
confrontation with the amorphous, mass 'Life' of the new, urban 'reality'.
Nietzsche's example - as the ecstatic transfigurer of his own individual suffering -
is one which Malte cannot follow.

I would suggest that Rilke's 'swerve' (in Bloom's terminology) away from
Nietzsche is tied in with the whole structure of the novel, with its rival modes
of naturalistic and aesthetic registration. In the end, Malte cannot avoid or
escape registering the realness of the urban reality in which he finds himself.

Rilke, then, has flung his individualist artist-hero into world which is
fundamentally inimical to such individualism. Just as did Nietzsche, Rilke/Malte
insists that nothing less than an absolute congruity between inner and outer
experience will be accepted: since this is unattainable - the world will not

37 Loock, p.35.
38 Loock, p.36.
conform to the individual - a tragic outcome is inevitable. The emotional power of Malte's refusal to compromise against insurmountable odds means that we can use the word 'tragic' advisedly: the reader is convinced that the 'one step' Malte feels he needs to take really is only just a step away. Stephens argues that there is a good deal of 'neuromantischer Ballast' about in Malte. Except that it is not ballast at all: Malte's neoromanticism is characteristic of the anti-realistic mode of writing which stands opposed to the Naturalistic registration of the urban reality around him. And it is precisely as a neoromantic that Malte is, finally and fatally, unable to abandon his individualistic attitudes. The insistence on individuality within a world where individuality cannot hope to trump the amorphous, metropolitan plurality around it, means that the only modus vivendi available to Malte (and it is one which is scarcely life any more in any meaningful sense) is that of a permanent and unlimited retreating away from a reality which the individual has no chance of altering and in which he has no way of participating except at the cost of his desperately-maintained individuality itself.

Hence the fundamental importance within this work of the ideal of 'nicht urteilen' and of the idiosyncratic images of those quasi-christlike figures. The total quietism of these ideals suggests that the headlong retreat from reality must culminate in a withdrawal from all human contact, from all human consciousness.

Malte Laurids Brigge, then, appears to propose a life outside human life as a cure for the terrors of human life which it has brilliantly evoked. Unforgettable, depictions of an urban world whose looming presence we recognize all too well sit uneasily beside aesthetic-metaphysical excursions into

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Stephens, p.16.
strictly personal domains. By the end, it is clear that there is no hope that such excursions can fulfil Malte’s early desire to ‘do something’ about the state of the world: such Art is no match for Reality. Malte sees that the reality of the urban world is, as Pascal puts it, indeed ‘decisive.’ As the later poetry makes clear, Rilke more and more leaves the field to Reality, moving himself into other, more distant realms.

Those realms are ones, as has often been suggested, inhabited by ‘angels’ who are strongly (or rather: gently) reminiscent of Nietzsche’s supermen. I would suggest that this a version of Nietzsche’s thought which Rilke could have derived from Nietzsche himself, for such is exactly the extraordinary re-interpretation of his own imagery which Nietzsche himself makes in those sections of Der Antichrist to which we have referred. If Rilke is, in Heller’s phrase, the St Francis of the Will to Power, then it is only fair to note that Nietzsche had already, in his last days of sanity, arrived at such a figure himself in that remarkable portrait of Christ.

Rilke - as his early works make quite clear - wants to accept Nietzsche’s ecstatic, individualistic ‘transformation’ of reality. Malte, though, finds that reality cares nothing for the individual’s attempts to transform it. The only relationships possible between the individual and this urban ‘reality’ are utter dissolution into the jostling mass or infinite retreat from it. It is the same with Naturalistic registration and aesthetic interpretation: Malte finds in the end that aesthetic interpretation simply cannot alter the reality around him,

dass die Erfahrungen, die den eigentlichen Kern des Werkes ausmachen, durch alle ‘Gestalten’, durch die Verwandlung des Hässlichen in das ‘Kunst-Ding’ nicht zu beschwichtigen sind.\(^{40}\)

\(^{40}\) Loock, p.95.
The ideal of an active, dynamically effective aestheticism thus has to be abandoned. Malte is left only with a passive aestheticism. He can only counter the problem (declared to be such by himself) of ineluctably subjective interpretation with a proposal for the complete denial of interpretation: the need for a re-interpretation of the world becomes the proposal for non-interpretation of the world. The challenge of positively transforming the new reality is met by Malte, in the end, with the attempt to retreat into a hermetically-sealed private world: the early hope that writing could 'etwas tun' has changed into the despairing recognition that the most his images of beauty and 'Innerlichkeit' can do is to function as a sort of artistic double-glazing against the loud metropolis around him.

As to the implications of this stance, Reed, having examined the influence on Rilke of Nietzsche's animal imagery, reaches a judgement which might apply as well to Malte Laurids Brigge as to Rilke's later poetry:

For Rilke [animal nature] is a sufficient objection to the most basic mechanisms and functions of human intelligence. [...] The poet who started out from Nietzsche's vision of man creatively transforming animal instinct ends by idealizing and mysticizing animal nature in totally regressive fashion.41

If the early Rilke is well-known to have found a Nietzsche to his taste in the prophetic rumblings of Zarathustra, then the Rilke of Malte Laurids Brigge would appear to have found another Nietzsche to which he can refer: the despairing, late Nietzsche. This is the Nietzsche who appears to have concluded that life cannot, after all, be sustained by that complex process (described from Die Geburt der Tragödie onwards) of a conscious dwelling within illusions.

41 Reed, 'Nietzsche's Animals', pp.193-4.
Instead, Nietzsche appears to decide that Life - as in animals - is best served by a complete absence of consciousness.

The impossibility of attaining the aesthetic re-interpretation of things for which he longs - that 'Beispiel des Willens' incarnated in Malte's vision of Venice - is the decisive turn which Rilke makes away from Nietzsche. Thus - and in this respect it is interestingly parallel to Der Tod in Venedig - Malte Laurids Brigge is a fascinating demonstration of the impossibility of a modern prose escaping from the hold of 'reality'. It is also a fascinating example of how substantial artistic creation is brought up head-to-head against problems which the 'philosopher-artist' may circumvent. May tells us that 'whenever there is a discrepancy between comparable attitudes of Rilke and Nietzsche, it is the poet who goes under'. As a description of Rilke's inability to take the hurdle of 'affirmation', this is accurate. I would suggest, though, that Rilke-Malte is unable to cry out Nietzsche's 'ja!' not because he is weak, but because he, unlike Nietzsche, is a true artist, whose writing is - as truly artistic prose rather than quasi-philosophic discourse - tied ultimately to a reality whose concreteness and power he may bemoan but which he cannot, in the end, deny. Nietzsche's aphoristic-philosophical mode of writing may allow him to speak of 'The World', but Malte inhabits a specifically visualized, socially particular world, whose distinctive problematic and barrenness are inextricably related to his own existential dilemma.

In short, Malte Laurids Brigge shows the confrontation of Rilke's art with a new reality which demands interpretation. The stance at which he arrives - total retreat from that reality - predicts his later (implicit) conclusion that we, like 'die findigen Tiere', can only be reliably at home in an uninterpreted world. In

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42 Keith May, pp.48-9.
terms of the relationship between Rilke and Nietzsche, I would argue that Heller is quite right to see the depth of agreement between the 'inner attitudes' of the two. I would suggest that the reader of Nietzsche will recognise in this work not only the imagery of decadence versus willed living, but that Rilke's stance by the end of Malte is notably similar to that of the late Nietzsche - bar the 'affirmative' shouting.
CHAPTER 7: The Powers That Be

(Heinrich Mann: Der Untertan/Kafka: Der Prozess)

Introduction

I have decided to group Der Untertan and Der Prozess together.¹ The reason for this is that I believe that there are textual parallels between them - and that these parallels inhabit areas of thought to which Nietzsche devoted many of his most important writings. It will become obvious that the focus is ultimately - which does not necessarily mean, principally - on Kafka's novel. The reason for this is quite simple and, I think, legitimate: we are in particular need of 'lenses' (i.e. textual comparisons) to direct the Nietzschean light at Kafka.

In order to justify such an arrangement, one only needs to point to the current state of the critical debate. The fact is that Rilke, Thomas Mann and Musil are authors about whose general interest in and concern with Nietzsche there is hardly a doubt. In all three cases I was able to assume that the reader of this thesis would not immediately be put off by the suggestion that we might fruitfully look again at their work in the light of a close textual comparison with Nietzsche's works. I could thus at least approach these works without the need of too much initial justification - however complex the relationship with Nietzsche was later seen to be. The same might be said of Heinrich Mann: there is (as we shall see) a widespread critical agreement that he was aware of, and concerned with, the issues thrown up by Nietzsche's texts. Again, then, the initial suggestion of a comparison with Nietzsche's texts will not cause the reader

¹ References to Heinrich Mann's Der Untertan are to the DTV edition, Munich, 1966. References to Kafka's Der Prozess are to the Fischer Taschenbuch edition, Frankfurt, 1979.
immediately to suspect that I am simply assuming a Nietzschean 'presence', a priori, in every text of the era. This is, however, by no means true of Kafka. As the relevant critical survey will attempt to show, there have indeed been suggestions that Kafka's works might usefully be looked at in the light of Nietzsche - but such suggestions, despite their coming from respected sources, have not been followed up as substantially as might have been expected: there are very many readers who will feel an immediate resistance to the suggestion that Kafka is aware of, and his writing affected by his awareness of, the specific perspectives opened up by Nietzsche's writings.

The comparisons between Kafka's text and Heinrich Mann's may, I think, be useful in providing circumstantial evidence which might suggest that the expedition into Kafka's text in the light of Nietzsche might be in principle worth the (considerable) trouble of the undertaking. Quite simply: if we come across parallels between a text which is widely accepted as being indebted to Nietzsche and one which is not so accepted, and if those parallels may be shown to occur within a thematic or set of images which can also be found in Nietzsche, does this not suggest that we should at least look again more carefully at the supposedly 'non-Nietzschean' work?

I am not for a moment trying to claim that a textual comparison with another work can replace or even strengthen indications given by a text itself. As in the earlier pages of this thesis, I will here assume that any text-comparative procedure is to be conceived of as akin to Wittgenstein's ladder of mathematical logic at the end of the Tractatus: the proof of its value lies precisely (strictly speaking, only) in the fact that we can dispense with it - having used it to get somewhere.
One may, I think, be excused for pursuing such strategies in approaching Der Prozess. The awesome number of tracts dealing with Kafka’s novel - and the even more awesome degree of interpretative disagreement they display - indicate an extraordinary level of argument as to just what that text itself ‘means’. Any timorousness on the part of the reader who wishes to advance a general and partly new interpretation of Der Prozess is amply grounded in the knowledge that counter-interpretations are likely to dog the attempt at every step in a manner which is simply not the case with our other texts. I therefore intend to approach Der Prozess through the preliminary comparison with Der Untertan: only when the prima facie case has been argued will I proceed to a direct comparison of Kafka’s and Nietzsche’s texts.

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The Critical Consensus

Of all the works examined in this thesis none is more clearly concerned to criticize the realities of the world as it is than Heinrich Mann’s Der Untertan (1914; first full publication 1918). It is perhaps no coincidence that the work is held in relatively low critical esteem:

Nimmt man Literaturgeschichten der Gegenwart als Gradmesser ’kanonisierter’ Geltung, so zählt keines der Werke Heinrich Manns zu den Paradigmen spezifischer ’Modernity’: In der Reihe der Namen Broch, Kafka, Musil, Thomas Mann oder Rilke pflegt er nicht genannt zu werden [...] Das hat konkret angebbare Gründe: Heinrich Mann ist ein ’traditioneller’ Erzähler, der das von Musil auf die Verlustliste der Erzählmöglichkeiten gesetzte ’als’, ’ehe’ und
'nachdem' noch zu setzen wagt. [...] Sein Erzählen gewinnt entscheidende Impulse aus dem Willen zu moralisch-analytischer Wirklichkeitserfassung, was allerdings nicht heisst, dass es als 'realistisch' im Sinne der Romantradition des 19. Jahrhunderts zu gelten habe. Für Heinrich Mann bedeutet Wirklichkeitserfassung stets Wirklichkeitskritik. [...] Heinrich Manns Erzählstil ist weder 'dichterisch' im Sinne der traditionellen bürgerlichen Popularästhetik des 19 Jahrhunderts [...] noch 'poetisch' im Sinner einer Ästhetik, die Formbrüche als Kompositionsprinzip, Partialität des Wirklichkeitsverständnisses, Erschliessung des Unbewussten als Gegenstand literarischer Darstellung, Ich-Dissoziation, Dauerreflexion und Hermetismus als die Signaturen einer spezifisch modernen, avantgardistischen Kunst begreift.²

In a recent essay, however, Mark W. Roche has argued - from a basis in classical philosophy - that there is considerably more subtlety in Heinrich Mann's Der Untertan than is sometimes granted. For me, the most interesting passage is the following:

Buck has no value structures with which to counter Diederich [...] Buck, with his Nietzschean view that what matters are mere appearances, cannot stem Diederich's power positivism. Indeed, his position would seem to pass over into Diederich's: if all positions are illusions and lies, one cannot argue against any one lie; one must grant power to the strongest lie, the most successful illusion.³

² Renate Werner, Skeptizismus, Ästhetizismus, Aktivismus: Der Frühe Heinrich Mann, Düsseldorf, 1972, p.5.
This interpretation of *Der Untertan* is very similar to Martin Swales's persuasive analysis of the conflict between Georg and his father in Kafka's *Das Urteil*:

Any facts that are mentioned in the course of the battle for domination are not neutral, reliable entities; they are totally coloured by the present context of their usage. The winner is the one whose reading is acknowledged by the other.'

According to these readings, then, both Mann and Kafka depict power-struggles in which the victorious interpretation will be called 'the truth'. Whatever convinces, is 'true'.

It may be said with some confidence that the first name such a scenario calls to mind in works of this period is that of Nietzsche.

According to Nietzsche, the 'Grundeinsicht' that there is 'keine prästablierte Harmonie zwischen der Förderung der Wahrheit und dem Wohle der Menschheit' (IVii,335) implies that Life 'will Täuschung, es lebt von der Täuschung' (IVii,8). Any 'Glaube an die unbedingte Autorität, an die entgültige Wahrheit' (IVii,298) is thus discredited: all values, are created by mankind from the perspective of their usefulness to 'Life'. 'Truth' is 'somit nicht etwas, was da wäre und was aufzufinden, zu entdecken wäre, sondern etwas, das zu schaffen ist ... es ist ein Wort für den 'Willen zur Macht' (VIIIii,49). Roche's reading of *Der Untertan* and Swales's of *Das Urteil* both show a process whereby 'truth' is depicted in just such a way: an obedient servant of power, 'truth' falls in at the command of an interpretative will strong enough to create a particular view of the world and force it upon others. Roche, indeed, specifically calls this situation in Mann 'Nietzschean'. The question is: is it Nietzschean, then, in

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Kafka too?

This element in Kafka's writing - and that it is indeed a 'Nietzschean' one in general terms - has already been noted by Hartmut Binder, who sees in Kafka 'die grundsätzliche Verwirrung, die schon von Nietzsche eingesehene Tatsache, dass die Welt aus Verhältnissen und nicht aus Wesen besteht'. It is thus perhaps remarkable that Binder never mentions Nietzsche at all in his book of three years earlier. This brings us to the central question of how acceptable it is to call Nietzsche into the debate concerning these two writers.

In Heinrich Mann's case (as in Thomas Mann's, Musil's and Rilke's) it is so acceptable as to be practically unavoidable. Heinrich Mann belongs to that generation whose adolescence was lit up by the first glare of Nietzsche's fame (around 1890) and which was 'von Nietzsche massgeblich beeinflusst'. Rudolf Walter sees an affinity between Mann and Nietzsche 'die sich nicht in der Übernahme von Bildern, Motiven oder theoretischen Einflüssen erschöpft'. Many such comments could be added, so much so that we might here content ourselves with Jens Malte Fischer's conclusion: '[es] braucht in diesem Zusammenhang kein Wort verloren zu werden'. In terms of a differentiated Nietzsche-reception in Heinrich Mann, Renate Werner makes the important point that one must note the ambivalence in his view of Nietzsche after 1910 -

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7 Hillebrand, Nietzsche und die deutsche Literatur Vol.I, p.5.
after, that is, his development of an 'Asthetik der sozialen Sympathie'.\textsuperscript{10} Klaus Schröter shows how this involves the supplanting of aesthetic by political-historical criteria.\textsuperscript{11} In a letter to Thomas Mann, though, Heinrich insists that one must nevertheless not be 'respektlos' towards Nietzsche - clearly implying that Nietzsche has more to offer than the now-rejected aestheticism.\textsuperscript{12} Malcolm Pasley suggests in what region of Nietzsche's thought Heinrich Mann continues to find useful insights:

\begin{quote}
A major link between his earlier and his later work is his interest in the psychology of power, and he owed much to Nietzsche's speculations in the matter.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

This point may serve as an indication as to the direction my investigation will take.

Though Kafka belongs broadly to the same generation, there is no such widespread critical agreement that Nietzsche may have been important for his work. On the contrary, Kafka seems often to be accorded by implication an almost uniquely 'Nietzsche-free' status. For example, Pascal tells us that during this period there is 'scarcely a cultural area unaffected by Nietzsche's doctrines', yet Kafka is conspicuously absent from his list of writers who were so affected.\textsuperscript{14} Pütz does not think it necessary even to note Kafka's absence from his chapter

\begin{footnotes}
\item[10] Werner, p.252.
\item[14] Pascal, \textit{From Naturalism to Expressionism}, p. 57.
\end{footnotes}
on Nietzsche's 'Wirkung'.\textsuperscript{15} Kafka goes entirely unnoted, too, in Hillebrand's seminal compilation.\textsuperscript{16} Older standard works on Kafka, like Binder or Emrich, contain one or two passing references to Nietzsche, while the most modern students' handbooks, such as Hartmut Müller's, do no more.\textsuperscript{17}

Not that the idea of a connection between Kafka and Nietzsche has lacked for some persuasive advocates: Binder's list of those who do mention the two in one breath includes Heller and Walter Sokel.\textsuperscript{18} The list also notes Pasley's detailed evidence.\textsuperscript{19} Despite this, Binder's bibliography needs relatively few additions in respect of the decade or more which has passed since its compilation: Ritchie Robertson adds a couple of suggestions to Pasley's;\textsuperscript{20} Wiebrecht Ries\textsuperscript{21} and Ralf Nicolai\textsuperscript{22} point (as we shall see) to Nietzschean echoes in \textit{Der Prozess}, though without analyzing the import of these very rigorously; Reed has provided one of the most important broad supports for this present study in his recognition that Kafka - like Thomas Mann, Rilke and Benn - found a stimulus in Nietzsche, and that he reacts to it in perhaps the most profound

\textsuperscript{15} Pütz, Friedrich Nietzsche, pp.58-59.

\textsuperscript{16} Hillebrand, vol.II.


\textsuperscript{18} Binder, \textit{Kafka-Handbuch} vol.1 pp.251-2.


\textsuperscript{22} Ralf Nicolai, 'Wahrheit und Lüge bei Kafka und Nietzsche' in \textit{Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch} (Neue Folge) 22 (1981), pp.109-118.
way of the four; J.M. Rignal indicates the possible influence of Nietzsche's historical thought on *Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer*. Patrick Bridgwater's, however, remains the only full-scale attempt to extend these explorations.

Bridgwater makes several suggestions as to textual parallels between Kafka and Nietzsche which I consider to be persuasive: I am indebted directly to a couple of his suggestions, as I shall acknowledge in the proper place. On the other hand, many of Bridgwater's textual parallels (for example, those concerning *Der Prozess* and *Zarathustra*) appear unconvincing. In the end, Bridgwater seems to propose that *Der Prozess* offers a simple (and moralising) solution to the dilemma it depicts. I suspect that this is a result of too schematic a view. Bridgwater (quoting Kant) says Kafka is 'concerned to show 'die vernunft mit sich selbst ...[in] Widerspruch'. I heartily agree. Undoubtedly, Nietzsche is the most urgent portrayer of such conflict to Kafka's generation. But two pages later, Bridgwater goes on as follows:

> It is axiomatic that man must know himself before he can judge himself. On this subject of self-knowledge too, Kafka will have found his views reinforced by Kant [...] Man's only hope of salvation lies through the hell of self-knowledge.

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23 Reed 'Nietzsche's Animals' p.209.


26 Bridgwater, pp.78-82.

27 Bridgwater, p.74.

28 Bridgwater, p.76.
Here Bridgwater's somewhat schematic view regarding Kafka and Kant/Schopenhauer leads him to propose a 'solution' to the dilemma which he sees in Kafka's text. But I would ask how a book whose essence is the portrayal of 'reason at war with itself' can also be a simple call for (highly traditional) self-judgement. Bridgwater's interpretation would seem to imply that the 'dilemma' seen by Kafka, the 'Widerspruch' in Josef K., is simply a question of the Right Way having been inadequately perceived. Bridgwater thus identifies (in my view, correctly) the dilemma which Kafka depicts, but then appears to interpret Kafka's novel as a moral tale which clearly tells us 'what K. should have done'.

Nevertheless, Bridgwater has raised important questions about Kafka's text which demand (and which have not yet received) full answers. His study has broadened the range of possible frameworks for interpretation of Kafka's texts in such a manner that any subsequent study of 'influences' on Kafka must take note of his work.

I intend, to repeat a point I have already made, to approach Kafka's work not directly, but firstly through the comparison with the work of an author who is generally agreed to have known and been influenced by Nietzsche: Heinrich Mann. There is not much doubt that Der Untertan represents Mann's most telling contribution to prose literature in the period leading up to the War: both in terms of form and chronology, Der Prozess is the work of Kafka which most obviously presents itself for comparison. As far as I know, it is a comparison which has never yet been made.  

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Despite the works being high-points of the German novel in this era, and despite their being almost exact contemporaries, one can see why not. Der Untertan deals, after all, (rarely, for a German work at this time) with 'the realities of contemporary public life'.

It focuses its satire on a specific issues of the age, even referring to historical details like the Berlin riots (p.43) or the Kaiser's reward to a soldier who had shot a striker (p.126). There can be few novels in any literature more clearly inhabiting the realms of direct social comment. Moreover, Der Untertan relates events in a thoroughly traditional manner. Der Prozess, on the other hand, has often been held up as as a paradigm of that narrative 'modernity' which (as we have seen) would exclude Heinrich Mann from its ranks on grounds of 'traditionality': deliberately imprecise in its setting, Kafka's novel appears to inhabit some timeless and abstracted region of existential crisis.

I hope, though, to show that Der Prozess and Der Untertan, despite their outward incompatibility, perceive socio-psychological mechanisms in a notably similar manner. I would suggest that this agreement can be shown by immediate textual comparison between the two. If parallels can be established between Kafka's text and a text which is widely accepted as owing much to Nietzsche, and if such parallels (if any) should turn out to be located at nodal points in the texts, then this might well have implications for our view of Der Prozess: it may also, moreover, affect our valuation of Der Untertan.

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30 Pasley, 'Modern German Literature', p.579.
By the end of Der Untertan, Diederich Hessling's social life is surprisingly similar to Josef K.'s social life before his arrest, as described in the short flashback in chapter 1 of Der Prozess. Both heroes regularly visit a 'Stammtisch' society consisting of generally older men (Hessling 'jeden zweiten, dritten Abend, manchmal noch öfter' on p.341; Josef K. 'Wenn dies noch möglich war' on p.20); both go once a week to a girl who is in neither case actually called a prostitute, but who is clearly nothing else (Der Prozess p.20, Der Untertan p.343); both are young men who have made swift progress in the 'real' (i.e. business) world, and see their 'Aufstieg' as continuing. What are we to make of such parallels? The importance of the passage in Der Prozess is considerable. There are few indications as to K.'s lifestyle before his arrest, and this is by far the most substantial, which has made it one of the sections most frequently referred to by Kafka's interpreters. Clearly, there is an invitation in Kafka's text to ask whether there is not some connection between K.'s pre-arrest life and the arrest itself. Any possible light which can be thrown on the passage is, then, worth careful consideration.

Mann's text, by contrast, is transparently clear. This means that it is particularly well-suited to play a part in a comparative process, since it can be used as a 'control', as a known quantity: there can be no doubt whatever that Diederich Hessling's social life is intended to represent, and effectively represents, that of a man who has, as Pasley puts it, 'all the most distasteful characteristics of the Wilhelmine bourgeoisie'. If Josef K.'s contemporary social life appears to be rather similar, what does this imply?

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31 Pasley, 'Modern German Literature', p.579.
Is Kafka, unlike Mann, simply unaware of the significance of such social details in his work? If this is the case, then K.'s lifestyle might indeed, as Heinz Politzer has it, be intended to stand as 'a downright model of moderation' - but Politzer's interpretation would require us to see Kafka as a blithely innocent user of social details.\(^\text{32}\)

Is Kafka, then, using these social details with a conscious and calculated lack of criticism? Is Josef K.'s social life, in other words, presented simply as part, for better or worse, of 'the world as-it-is'? This view would admit Martin Greenberg's reading that K.'s lifestyle is a depiction of some ineluctable and universal human condition\(^\text{33}\) - but it would also seem to imply that Kafka's view of the human condition is merely the point of view of the Wilhelmine bourgeoisie writ large.

Or shall we credit Kafka with as much insight as Mann into the implications of what he is writing? In this case, the similarity between K.'s and Hessling's lifestyles suggests that Robertson is correct to see that Josef K. as 'a character of a distinct and recognizable type. Calculating, egoistical, aggressive, authoritarian, self-deceived and repressed'.\(^\text{34}\) Like Hessling, K. leads the social life of the 'Stammtisch' - a social mode which one writer has shown to be a highly significant part of the 'ghastly idyll' of the philistine 'Bürger' in this

\(^{32}\) Heinz Politzer, Parable and Paradox, Cornell University, 1966, p.194.

\(^{33}\) Martin Greenberg, The Terror of Art, London 1971, p.114. Greenberg claims that Josef K.'s life is guilt-ridden not because of its individual features, 'but because it is human life'. Greenberg's whole reading of the novel (including, on p.151, his claim to have discovered a 'defect') is heavily dependent on this interpretation of Josef K.'s pre-arrest lifestyle.

\(^{34}\) Robertson, p.100.
Moreover, it is, as Pascal shows, by no means unusual to find a condemnation of this sort of lifestyle in literature at this time:

Most serious literary works show the emptiness of the freedoms of drinking (in the Verbindung) and whoring. In Heinrich Mann’s Der Untertan these freedoms are simply the delusory compensations of Diederich Hessling’s subjection.36

It is my own opinion that Kafka’s critique of this lifestyle is clear from his text alone. The comparison with Der Untertan, though, offers a most useful support for this opinion in any debate with readers who do not see such a critique in Kafka’s text. I would suggest that in this case a reading of Der Prozess against its contemporary social (and literary) background provides confirmation of the view that Kafka’s novel rejects a lifestyle such as that espoused by Josef K. before his arrest. Here, then, I think we have a strong case for suggesting that the recognition of the cultural-historical ‘space’ occupied by Kafka’s text can illuminate the significance of important elements within the text itself.

Kafka’s novel, in other words, would appear to declare quite plainly that its hero is flawed - and flawed in a manner which places him in a specific social context. I would suggest, then that Josef K. and Hessling, as far as their social lives at these points go, are of the same broad genus; that of men successful in commercial life, hypocritical in sexual life and uncritical of the established social structure as represented by older males.37 The question which Der Untertan very


36 Pascal, From Naturalism to Expressionism, p. 226.

37 Roche (p.73) says that Hessling ‘achieves power less through ingenuity than assimilation’. The Brod-excluded episode of K. and Hasterer (Der Prozess, pp.201-207) suggests just this of Kafka’s hero too.
clearly asks and which Der Prozess, I suggest, asks by implication, is as follows: how did this state of affairs come about? How is it that such a social life has come to be regarded as 'normal'? What kind of men accept such a lifestyle? To answer these questions we will now proceed to look more deeply at the psychology of the two 'heroes', Josef K. and Diederich Hessling.

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The Ascetic Dynamo

The textual details of Josef K.'s and Hessling's relations to higher-status males provide further suggestions that these two contemporary portraits are concerned to depict the same type of man.

The situation is clearest in their relations with the one particular figure whom each considers to stand in his way. Josef K. is obsessed with the idea that the 'Direktor-Stellvertreter' of his bank is always blocking and threatening his career. Hessling is equally obsessed that 'der alte Buck' is the great obstacle to his progress. Both assume that their immediate superiors are essentially hostile - but in neither case does the author give any indication that this is true. If anything, the contrary is indicated. The supposed hostility would appear to reside in the minds of K. and Hessling. The similarity is not merely general, for the ways in which they express themselves regarding their supposed enemies are so strikingly alike as to be virtually interchangeable:

Jetzt bin ich ihm nicht gewachsen [...] wenn aber meine persönlichen Schwierigkeiten einmal beseitigt sein werden, dann soll er wahrhaftig der erste sein, der es zu fühlen bekommt, und zwar möglichst bitter.

(Der Prozess, p.121)
Er hat mich eingefangen und unschädlich machen wollen [...] Aber er soll sehen [...] Vorläufig muss man sich noch mit ihm verhalten, aber wehe, wenn ich der Stärkere bin! (Der Untertan, p.91)

What are we to make of such textual parallels? It is most unlikely that there is any question of textual cross-fertilization here, though I suppose it would be chronologically just possible. I would suggest instead the following: that the similarity here is such as to demand the question whether there is not some common basis of perception. Both K. and Hessling are powerless now, but they look forward to a state of affairs where existing power-relations will be reversed in their favour - and both envisage revenge on present superiors when that day comes.

Now, it is possible that what we have here are two accurate portraits of the same contemporary social reality - portraits that will thus naturally be very similar. I would certainly subscribe to this interpretation. However, it seems to me that one might enquire as to the intellectual process by which Mann and Kafka arrive at such a similar presentation. The fact is that the presentation which both Kafka and Mann seem to make will be immediately and strikingly familiar to readers acquainted with Nietzsche - this time, to readers conversant with Nietzsche’s writings on the 'Sklavenaufstand in der Moral' (VIII,119 and 282-5).

Here, Nietzsche describes those people 'denen die eigentliche Reaktion, die der That, versagt ist, die sich nur durch eine imaginäre Rache schadlos halten' (VIII,285). That 'imaginäre Rache' is still a product of the 'will to power', but here expressed, as Samuel Beckett puts it, in 'the pleasure of reversing the

38 There is no evidence that Kafka read those sections of Mann’s novel published before the outbreak of war.
physical experience. Here the kick that the physical Murphy received, the mental Murphy gave. It was the same kick, but corrected as to direction. Such is the case with Hessling and K.: they both dream of revising existing power-relations - but only in terms of changing the positions around. They do not conceive of changing the structure of relations, which remains based on power.

But why do such men act in this way? In perhaps the most far-reaching of all his psychological insights, Nietzsche makes the following connection between the secret desire for power and the 'ascetic teaching' which, according to him, is the bane of western man: the power-dreams of men unable to achieve power directly are the foundation of the 'asketische Lehre' because their Will to Power demands that it be exercised in some direction, even if that direction is 'das Nichts' (VIII,429). Instead of conquering other things in life, the 'ascetic' wants to conquer 'Life' itself (VIII,380):

The ascetic is driven by the same 'Machtwille' as the predatory type, only instead of striving to enhance his feeling of power directly through conquest and incorporation he turns his 'Machtwille' inwards against himself. Such is Pasley's presentation of Nietzsche's formulations; he concludes that Kafka's Hünnergünstler is indebted to them. This coincides with Sokel's broader statement: 'Wie bei Nietzsche wird also bei Kafka der Ursprung des Asketischen im Willen zur Macht gesehen'. It is a view, I would suggest, which is supported by the text of Der Prozess.

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41 Walter Sokel, Franz Kafka: Tragik und Ironie, Munich 1964, p.211.
'Ascetic man', then, seeks (like the 'Hungerkünstler') to exercise and increase his power through suffering rather than directly. Again, our 'Nietzschean reading' opens up a new vista of both these texts: in this light, we can see a logic to the apparent contradiction in the fact that Hessling and K. plot against their immediate superiors while feeling no such hatred for the very highest powers: Hessling worships the Kaiser, whom he conceives to be surrounded by 'Umsturz' and onerous duties (p.114 et al) while Josef K. loves the director, seeing him as weak, ill, overburdened (p.206). In our Nietzschean scenario the explanation is clear: the last thing K. and Hessling want is to supplant these ultimate authority-figures. They want more power for themselves, yes, but neither desires that controlling position which is seen as so burdensome. Both need some final superior, need some form of subordination to an 'ascetic' morality. Both, that is, are essentially uncomfortable in any relation to power but that of the sufferer, of the 'Untertan'.

This becomes strikingly clear when reduced to its simplest level - the characters' relationship to brute physical power and suffering. Hessling denounces his school-comrades, causing them to be beaten, but 'recht geheuer und seiner Sache gewiss fühlte er sich nur, wenn er selbst die Prügel bekam' (p.8). Josef K. denounces the 'Wächter', causing them to be beaten; however, he did not intend this and thinks that if stopping it demands too great a sacrifice, 'so wäre es ja fast einfacher gewesen, K. hätte sich selbst ausgezogen und dem Prügler als Ersatz für die Wächter angeboten' (p.78).

Again, then, Kafka's and Mann's texts would appear to bear a curious resemblance to each other in their portraits of the heroes' psychology. In both books that psychology is intimately connected with the content of the novel: here, certainly, character is plot. One of the most important facets of any
character-depiction is inevitably going to be the depiction of the character's sexual proclivities. Here again, we shall find notable similarities between K. and Hessling - and again, these similarities are, I would suggest, to be found in terms which recall Nietzsche's writings.

The most obvious field for the ascetic 'Wille zur Selbstpeinigung, jene zurückgetretene Grausamkeit des innerlich gemachten' (VIII,348) to show itself is that of sexual relations. The underlying attitude of both Hessling and K. to sex is revealed by the way they react to women's offers:

Hessling (p.20): 'eine, die sich in mich verliebt, muss wirklich dumm sein.'

Josef K. (p.48): 'sie bietet sich mir an, sie ist verdorben...'

K. and Hessling reason subconsciously that anyone who is attracted to them must be stupid or fallen. No-one 'normal' could find them attractive. Their apparent arrogance is thus rooted in self-despising, their condemnation of others in repressed self-judgement. In both men, this unconscious assessment of themselves as wretched expresses itself as sexual subordination-fantasy: Hessling secretly likes being insulted and trodden on by his wife (p.340), and Josef K.'s 'lover', Elsa, is 'stark' and not 'sanft und freundlich' (p.95). In chapter three (p.54), K. imagines the student begging for mercy at Elsa's bedside (once again, he thereby mentally reverses a defeat). The nature of K.'s relationship with Elsa, then, seems fairly clear.

The important thing about both K.'s and Hessling's subordination-fantasies is that they take place under controlled circumstances. In K.'s case once a week with Elsa is enough; he is reduced almost to tears when the sado-masochistic theme intrudes into his 'normal' life at the bank (p.79). Thus, too, Hessling's bouts of masochism are always followed by manic affirmations of 'normal'
What, then, is the relationship between this 'fantasy' and 'normality'? The key, I think, is that the enactment of the subordination 'fantasy' is a safety-valve for 'normality'. Both Hessling and Josef K. are driven to allow the regular and controlled acknowledgment and enactment of that underlying order which, concealed though it usually is by 'normality', remains the basic psychological dynamo of their lives: the 'ascetic' pursuit of power through suffering.

Hessling and Josef K. thus appear to share a good deal more, and more deeply, than simply the outward fittings of social life. The type of social life both espouse is merely symptomatic of a thoroughgoing agreement in their relations with the world as a whole. Whether Josef K. and Hessling are engaging in 'revanchist' dreams of future power or unconsciously playing out their fundamental 'ascetic' urges, both Kafka and Mann show their heroes to dwell mentally, as well as physically, within a system of power-relations which is strongly reminiscent of Nietzsche's distinctive analysis.

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Society as Court

These novels, however, do not concentrate the weight of their attention on the depiction of individual peccadillos, but rather on the theme of the confrontation with (or assimilation to) power in a broader sense. The personal and sexual tendencies of the heroes are simply details in a broader picture which, in both cases, extends to an examination of the workings of a whole system of power-structures. In the depictions of the heroes' confrontations with these structures of power we can find another most interesting agreement - and one which might
again be looked at in the light of another of Nietzsche’s most important critical ideas.

In both books, the heroes’ confrontation with authority is visualised in terms of a court case. Naturally, there are striking differences on the surface: Kafka’s court is clearly more than an ordinary court, while Mann’s court is clearly a grotesque portrait of a real one. Underneath the apparent difference, though, I would suggest that there lurks a fundamental agreement: both books depict a legal mechanism which merely clothes the workings of extra-legal (or, perhaps better, ante-legal) powers.

The first hints of this idea of a ‘court’ which extends beyond the mere walls of the courtroom are to be seen in the ways in which Josef K. and Hessling plan their first appearances at court. These plans, in both novels, clearly express the characters’ obsessions with power-relations. In both cases their plans are instinctively defensive while their actual gestures betray the secret desire to conform. Here again, I would suggest that the two passages concerned are so alike as to be almost interchangeable: Hessling plans

mit einiger Verspätung bei Gericht einzutreffen und durch sein ganzes Auftreten zu zeigen, wie wenig die Geschichte ihn angehe.

Aber es hielt ihn nicht... (p.160)

while Josef K.

hatte aber auch nicht die geringste Lust, sich durch allzu grosse Pünktlichkeit vor der Untersuchungskommission zu erniedrigen.

Allerdings lief er jetzt... (p.34)

The psychology depicted in these episodes would seem to be the same. In both books the tone is thereby set for the whole ‘legal’ proceeding. In Der Untertan, Hessling’s fears, troubles and ultimate triumph in his ‘Majestätsbeleidigung’ case
(pp.161-187) stem not from legal, but from social factors. Throughout the episode, it is the attitude of the public - both outside and inside the courtroom - which not only measures success or failure, but actually defines (and thus decides) that success or failure. This is true of Der Prozess as well: Josef K. only takes the arrest seriously when he is kept by old men from the girl (p.44). Her loss - not a legal defeat - is his 'erste zweifellose Niederlage' (p.53). The trial begins to involve his job and his family (p.108), to affect his relationship to Fräulein Bürstner (pp.108-109) and his career (p.115). Finally, it is the 'Mahnung' of his failure with Fräulein Bürstner which stops him resisting his executioners (p.192).

In both novels, then, the legal mechanisms of court and trial would appear to be presented as merely formalized enactments of a process of judging and condemnation which takes place independently of them. In both, the really decisive 'trial' seems to involve not the institutionalized incarnations of power, but something deeper and less distinct: those on trial are judged by a 'court' which somehow consists of their entire social milieu. The painter's phrase in Der Prozess would apply equally to the legal depictions in 'Der Untertan': 'Es gehört ja alles zum Gericht' (p.129).

Once again, the parallel between Mann's and Kafka's texts positively invites us to look for a common factor. Once again I would suggest we look to Nietzsche - and specifically to his concept of 'Sittlichkeit der Sitte' (Vi,17 et al.).

42 Politzer (pp.184-190) has noted this aspect of K.'s trial in his concept of the 'public secret'.

This is Nietzsche's term for that conservative tendency in any social organisation, which (like Dr. Johnson supporting the established church) will demand support for established things simply because they are established. Its orders are obeyed 'nicht weil sie das uns Nützliche befehlt, sondern weil sie befehlt' (Vi,18). This is, Nietzsche claims, 'jene viel ältere und ursprünglichere Art Moral, welche toto coelo von der altruistischen Werthungsweise abliegt' (VIii,263); it is 'die wirkliche und entscheidende Hauptgeschichte, welches den Character der Menschheit bestimmt hat' (Vi,28 & VIIi,377).

Nietzsche's analysis proposes that group-'morality' is simply a passive reflection of whatever power-relations happen to exist. Both novels show such a situation. In Der Untertan, public 'opinion' merely consists in watching and obeying the smallest gestures from Wulckow, representative of imperial authority (p.167, p.177); in Der Prozess the apparently bipartisan audience K. tries to sway is actually a single group, all of whom secretly wear the same badge as the presiding 'Untersuchungsrichter' (p.45). In both novels, then, we see the court to be populated by a group whose opinions depend on the dictates of power, in the same way as Roche and Swales saw 'truth' depicted as a function of power. Such is exactly the case with Diederich Hessling's triumph over the elder Buck. His superiority is based not on any moral grounds, but on the power within the group which derives purely from his material success. Auf welche Erfolge berief sich der Alte? Er hatte schon längst keine mehr und brachte nun hohle Worte vor [...] Und Diederich blitze. Er blitze den Alten, der vergebens flammte, einfach nieder, und diesmal endgültig, mitsamt der Gerechtigkeit und dem Wohl aller. Zuerst das eigene Wohl - und gerecht war die Sache, die Erfolg hatte (p.327).
Where ‘Gerechtigkeit’ is a floating category which follows ‘Erfolg’, the fact that the elder Buck has failed means that he is wrong. His defeat and Diederich’s victory are defined not by law - legally speaking, Buck actually wins his case (p.327) - but by the attitude of his social group to him. In any group, (according to Nietzsche), conformity to established norms (called ‘morality’) demands the condemnation of any nonconformity (‘immorality’), since ‘Sittlichkeit der Sitte’ sees change as ‘das Unsittliche und Verderbenschwangere an sich’ (Vi,28 & VIIi,377). Under this ‘moral’ code, having drawn attention to oneself means that one is not fully assimilated into the group, hence that one is ‘different’, hence ‘dangerous’, hence ‘guilty’. Therefore the answer to whether Buck should guide the town any longer is automatic: ‘Die Frage aufwerfen, hiess sie verneinen’ (p.328).

This is notably reminiscent of the Uncle’s cryptic warning to Josef K.: ‘Einen solchen Prozess haben, heisst ihn schon verloren haben’ (p.85). He says that K. will be ‘gestrichen’ and that ‘die ganze Verwandtschaft mitgerissen oder wenigstens bis auf dem Boden gedemütigt wird’ (p.85). This apparently mysterious passage is clearer in the light of Nietzsche’s ‘Sittlichkeit der Sitte’, with its belief that any ‘Verletzung der Sitte’ (i.e. any nonconformity) will be requited in some nameless way ‘vor allem auf die Gemeinde’ (Vi,19). We shall return to this passage in more detail later on.

It would seem, then, that Kafka and Mann depict the workings of similar systems - systems of judging and condemning which operate at a more fundamental level of social psychology than the apparent ‘laws’. In both novels the theme is of utmost importance: if Der Prozess is clearly centered on the trial of Josef K., then the trial in Der Untertan is no less than ‘the enacted
commentary of the novel'. I would suggest that these central depictions are not only similar, but that both run in a most interesting agreement with Nietzsche’s analysis of group power-mechanisms.

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Assimilation and Revolt

Under such conditions - where, that is, 'the Law' operates independently of 'the Truth' - Hessling's attitude to power brings worldly success. That attitude is quite simple: to obey without question the dictate of established authority. 'Er unterschrieb jedes Wort in jeder Rede des Kaisers' (p.339). The language in which Hessling's power-worship is couched is worth noting: at school, ('ein riesiges Strafgericht', p.8) Hessling sees a teacher, an apparently omnipotent Power himself, brought down by unknown 'noch höhere Gewalten', and is filled with 'heiligem und süßem Schauder'; The Kaiser ('Der Allerhöchste') inhabits 'Welten, nie geahnt' (p.339); grovelling to an aristocratic lady, Hessling says that 'dort oben herrschen natürlich Begriffe, die sich unserm Urteil entziehn' (p.226). Such formulations might be taken almost verbatim into Der Prozess: the doorkeeper belongs to the Law, and is 'also dem menschlichen Urteil entrückt' (p.188), only 'das oberste, für Sie, für mich und für uns alle ganz unerreichbare Gericht' can set K. free (p.136).

There is, however, a vital difference in terms of who mouths such phrases: in Der Prozess the sentiments which sound so similar to those in Der Untertan are not put in the mouth of Josef K. himself, but in the mouths of other characters.

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They represent one possible view of the court which K. is offered during his quest. To follow such pointers would be to become like Kaufmann Block (Chapter 8). Block shares with Hessling a mixture of grovelling and secret ambition which is very like Nietzsche's 'religious man', who seeks to win advantage 'Durch Flehen und Gebete, durch Unterwerfung, durch die Verpflichtung zu regelmässigen Abgaben, durch schmeichelhafte Verherrlichungen' (IVii,114). Some readers have interpreted such an attitude to the court as Kafka's authorial indication of the way K. 'should have' behaved. The comparison with Der Untertan, however, militates against this. Mann's phrases are plainly intended to mock the language of those who crawl to power: we must ask whether the language used by some of Kafka's characters to glorify power can be taken at face value when it is so reminiscent of Diederich Hessling's contemporary fawning.

But what alternative is there to assimilating oneself to established norms? In both Der Prozess and Der Untertan the heroes do actually challenge authority at certain moments. Or rather, they appear to do so.

Thus Josef K. appears occasionally to see the need for an absolutely radical turn: he wants to know 'nicht etwa wie der Prozess zu beeinflussen war, sondern wie man aus dem Prozess ausbrechen, wie man ihn umgehen, wie man ausserhalb des Prozesses leben konnte' (p.181); he realizes briefly that the complex defence-plans suggested by the painter 'verhindern aber auch die wirkliche Freisprechung' (p.139). But these are essentially 'theological',

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45 For an example of this see Eric Marson, Kafka's Trial: The Case Against Josef K., University of Queensland, 1975, p.312: '[the Chaplain] informs K. quite bluntly that the law and its servants are incomparably above the man and his wishes'. Diederich Hessling would no doubt put it in very similar terms. Apart from anything else, Marson is textually inaccurate: he attributes to the Chaplain what the Chaplain himself calls merely 'eine Gegenmeinung' (Der Prozess, pp.187-8).
metaphysical conceptions: absolute innocence, absolute freedom. Josef K.'s 'radicalism' thus seems to be involved again in what Nietzsche called the 'ascetic ideal' which depends 'on the belief in the possibility of attaining absolute truth'.

The one passing hint as to K.'s concept of an afterlife provides firm textual evidence that his 'theological' tendencies are anything but a radical alternative to the psychology of power. The 'Untersuchungsrichter' can have women delivered to him: 'Darauf wollte K. aber, wenigstens in diesem Leben, gerne verzichten' (p.55). But here, Kafka's text makes it plain that Josef K. is voicing the 'ascetic' lie direct: two paragraphs earlier (p.53), K. was 'wütend vor Enttäuschung' that his plan to take the girl from the judge (p.52) had failed. Not only did K. certainly want her, but he wanted her in order to gain 'Rache' (p.52), just as he wanted revenge on the 'Direktor-Stellvertreter' and the student. Unable (not unwilling) to exercise power in this world, Josef K. contents himself with the thought that the next world will be better. Kafka's text makes it quite clear that Josef K.'s 'ascetic' thought-process, which claims that it will happily 'verzichten auf' earthly pleasures, is based on a frustrated wish for vengeance and power. It hardly needs restating, I think, that such an analysis of the origins of 'otherworldly' ambitions calls no-one to mind as much as Nietzsche.

Diederich Hessling is just as keen to take power from those at present in possession of it: 'Menschenschinder! Säbelrassler! Hochnäsiges Pack...Wenn wir mal Schluss machen mit der ganzen Bande - !'(p.253); 'Sie sollen sehen, was Umsturz ist!'(p.305). This is power-seeking revolution pure and simple. No 'asceticism' here, then - at least, not yet. But Hessling's threats soon fade when he thinks again of 'die Macht, die Macht über uns, die ganz unerschütterlich ist'

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(p.305). Instead, he decides, 'Wer treten wollte, musste sich treten lassen, das war das ehere Gesetz der Macht' (p.306). Here again, we have that same, distinctively Nietzschean scenario: Hessling's openly 'revanchist' desires for power become sublimated into an 'ascetic' world view - power attained through one's own suffering - as soon as he sees he is too weak to challenge for power directly.

Thus, though both Hessling and Josef K. see flaws in their worlds, neither is able to conceive of a truly radical alternative to the existing psychology of power: both are too much involved in that psychology themselves. Nevertheless, both books do contain faint glimmers of hope, though not for the heroes. In both cases these seem to arise from the depictions of 'unrespectable' people, particularly women. Here again we shall find that we must distinguish between genuine radicalism and role-reversing 'revolution'.

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The Unrespectable Alternative

When Diederich Hessling meets the demi-mondaine Käthchen Zillich, she seems to cut across his established axes of thought, with their simple distinction between 'law-abiding' and 'criminal'. 'Es gab also noch andere Welten ausserhalb der bürgerlichen, als nur die, [i.e. prison] worin jetzt der Herr Lauer lebte' (p.199). In fact, however, Käthchen, by the end of the book, has been totally integrated into the milieu of the 'Bürger'. Just as the apparent contradiction of dominance-subordination is actually part of the same structure of relationships, so Käthchen's apparent revolt is merely the obverse of her existence as the pastor's daughter. It is confirmatory 'revolution', not truly
challenging radicalism. Her existence is just another 'Beruf', for which she has been 'vorgebildet' (p.343). Hessling sees her as 'einen stattlichen Posten auf seinem Reklamkonto' (p.344); her choice of career has by no means cut her off from his world.

Against this, we have the situation of Hessling's sister, Emmi. She is shamed by an aristocratic Lothario against whom Hessling has no form of redress. Hessling sees her, in a rare visionary moment, as 'durch ihr Unglück feiner und gewissermassen ungereifbarer geworden ... versenkt wie in einen unbekannten Abgrund' (p.306). This is reminiscent of Amalia in Das Schloss, who is also somehow more distant and deeper after having had attention from on high visited upon her to socially ruinous effect. It might also remind us of the accused in Der Prozess, who are wretched but 'eben die Schönsten' (p.158). The suggestion may be that unsought conflict with established social power might lead to the appearance of some new and (because new, necessarily) imperfectly-defined potential in people.

This suggestion, in fact, is quite explicit at another stage in Der Untertan: the guiltless Lauer falls, but his wife still loves him even though he is legally, socially and financially ruined. To Diederich this is quite incomprehensible: 'Es gab Verhältnisse, von denen man sich als anständiger Mensch nichts träumen liess' (p.324). Here, Mann draws an immediate parallel between 'anständig-sein' and the inability to conceive of relationships as based on anything but social utility and power. Such a limited view of relationships is just what Pascal sees as the root of K.'s inability (in Das Schloss) to break out of the 'tower of his ego'. In Der Prozess, Fräulein Bürstner is regarded as 'unrespectable' (not to mention

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48 Pascal, From Naturalism to Expressionism, p.240.
unclean) by Frau Grubach (p.24), while K., the would-be sexual predator, ‘wusste, dass Fräulein Bürstner nur ein kleines Schreibmaschinenfräulein war, das ihm nicht lange Widerstand leisten sollte’ (p.72). Thus she too suffers from the scorn of ‘respectable’ society. She, though, can ‘für alles, was in meinem Zimmer geschieht, die Verantwortung tragen, und zwar gegenüber jedem’ (p.30), which is a good deal more than K. can do. Her acceptance of responsibility suggests the ability autonomously to validate her life: it may be that this is related to her status as ‘unrespectable’. Perhaps this is the meaning of the Advokat’s statement that the beauty of the accused is caused by the proceedings against them (p.158).

Thus the state of being ‘unrespectable’, like Lauer or Emmi in Der Untertan, like Fräulein Bürstner or the accused in Der Prozess, seems to be somehow related in both novels to the potential for advance out of established modes into some new way of living. Both Mann and Kafka use physical imagery to suggest the ambiguous status of such people. Yet again, we have not only a common ground, but a common ground which is curiously reminiscent of the ‘critical’ Nietzsche, who sees the state of being outcast as a precondition for spiritual renewal: ‘Alle Neuerer des Geistes haben eine Zeit das fahle und fatalistische Zeichen des Tschandala auf der Stirn (VIII,142).’

But the mere state of being outcast is not, in itself, a guarantee of such renewal. Josef K., though accused, never advances out of the psychology of power. He remains dependent on other people’s opinions: ‘Glauben Sie denn, dass ich schuldlos bin?’ he asks Fräulein Bürstner (p.27). In this, K. is again like Hessling: ‘Die anderen hatten angefangen, an [Hessling] zu glauben: alsbald kannte auch er keinen Zweifel mehr’ (p.324). He shares with Hessling another aspect of this lack of self-generated values: the wish to evade individual
responsibility for his actions. Thus Josef K. appeals to a community of human fallibility: 'Wie kann denn ein Mensch überhaupt schuldig sein. Wir sind hier alle Menschen, einer wie der andere' (p.180). Hessling learns early on 'Wie wohl man sich fühlte bei geteilter Verantwortlichkeit und einem Schuld bewusstsein, das kollektiv war!' (p.10). In K.'s case, any potential inhering in the situation of being 'accused' is clearly not fulfilled, while Hessling remains, in his assimilation, a stunted being. Thus both books show that a lack of individual responsibility, of self-validation, is fatal to the potential for full human life. By negation, then, both suggest that such autonomy, such freedom from the need both for domination and for subordination, is required. On the other hand both clearly show that individualist 'striving' or 'theological' longing for absolutes are part of that same blighting psychology of power. Thus, again by negation, both suggest that man must live among men and within human values. In other words, man must live a life at once independent and communal.

Neither book proposes how this balancing-act is to be performed. Both, indeed, clearly understand the difficulty or impossibility of true radicalism: how can we escape from the conditions of a given way of living when external and internal imperatives are so closely related? Der Prozess is famous for the depiction of how Josef K.'s psychology and the surrounding social mechanisms are endlessly entwined, but the relationship in Der Untertan between hero and world is also unclear. Hessling copies the Kaiser's speeches - but sometimes he also anticipates them. On the one hand, Hessling's psychology is an a priori, 'natural' fact (we are told that he is born weak and fearful); yet the school-system and the student corporation actively encourage his line of development. Whether power-relations are cause or effect of the character's psychology is, then, by no means entirely clear in Der Untertan either.
In fact, one of the most striking points about Hessling's position is that it is at the same time the logical expression of his psychology and the only active position available to his society as a whole, as the opening extract from Roche's essay suggested. The liberals are a comfortable clique whose downfall is in the end due to genuinely (if, compared to Diederich, modestly) corrupt dealing (p.315). If the elder Buck is held up as an example, then it must be seen that his example is no longer a living one:

eben dieser Bannerträger des demokratischen Ideals wird dargestellt
als abgelebt und historisch überholt durch den Vormarsch des imperialistischen Bourgeois und durch den leibhaftig präsentierten Verfall seines tatkräftigen Idealismus in der Gestalt seines Sohnes.49

The social democrat foreman of Hessling's factory is out for himself just like Diederich - in fact, in cahoots with Diederich (p.308). Wolfgang Buck, critical and intellectual, sees his generation's future as 'Theater' and no more (p.347). The typical man of the times is the actor (p.157). Mann holds out no hope of such a man achieving change in society. Mann shows that Buck's aestheticizing (which Mann himself - unlike, say, Musil - had by this time abandoned) is useless as a means of effecting change in the face of dominant power-realities:

Buck sucht eine Verwandlung der bestehenden Verhältnissen zu erreichen durch eine ästhetischen Niveausteigerung und durch Non-konformität: eben dieser Versuch der Ästhetisierung aber erweist sich als die grosse Illusion, auf die Buck mit Resignation antwortet.50


50 Werner, p.244.
Nietzsche is undoubtedly the presiding spirit behind Mann on the theatre: for example, Mann’s hilarious depiction (pp.265-70) of the amateur performance of Lohengrin is surely informed by Nietzsche’s irreverent suggestions in Der Fall Wagner (VIiii,28 and 33). Roberts has noted that ‘Buck takes up Nietzsche’s criticism of the age in Der Fall Wagner in his interpretation of the Kaiser’s role’. Thus even the scurrilous farce of the book - an element which has often been felt to damage its literary status - is rooted in the central dilemma of the ‘theatricalization’ of living due to the lack of belief in any value beyond appearances. Kafka fills the start of the final chapter of Der Prozess (pp.190-1) with just such imagery of theatre and artificiality; he no more offers a solution to the dilemma of breaking free into ‘authentic’ life than does Mann.

Conclusions

Both novels, then, use a technique of negation which places thoroughly flawed ‘heroes’ in thoroughly flawed societies, showing that there is a complex relationship between these flaws. In both, there is much weight placed on the investigation of relationships between the individual and systems of social power: both individualism and social control are criticized. Mann’s statements on this matter may be (apparently) open where Kafka’s are (apparently) delphic, but a comparison of the two novels suggests that both are concerned to depict the all-pervading nature of the psychology of power.

The familiarity of this shared psychology to the reader of Nietzsche is, I would suggest, striking. This would appear to confirm Mann’s (widely acknowledged)

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n Roberts, p.93.
debt to Nietzsche in this field: more radically, it might lend support to Sokel's view that Kafka's 'Verwandschaft mit Nietzsche' is specifically located in his 'dauerndes Kreisen um die Frage von Macht und Ohnmacht'.

Both books hint that the experience of being socially stigmatized, of having to stand outside the group, might conceivably be a necessary precondition (which does not mean a guarantee) of discovering an alternative to that psychology: as to what that new way may be, both are unclear. The hopes contained in the elder Buck's last words on the 'Geist der Menschheit' (p.348), or in K.'s last vision of unattained human community (p.194), are vague indeed. In both works, then, only a perilously small grain of hope survives the refiner's fire of negation: neither is any more able than its 'hero' to discover a concrete alternative to the mechanisms, however visibly baneful, of the psychology of power. Hessling, the very personification of that psychology, triumphs: Josef K. is so trapped within it that he dies - in a final image of subordination to power - like a dog, unable to find what Kafka elsewhere calls the unattainable 'dritte Welt' where one might live neither as ruler nor ruled but 'frei von Befehlen und Gehorchen'.

History suggests that these authors' concern with the psychology of power they saw around them was justified and prophetic: both books were soon to be publicly burnt under a system which venerated power, theatricalized politics, proclaimed the 'mystic' unity of the group and relegated 'justice' to a tag for the whim of those in power.

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52 Sokel, Franz Kafka, p.29.

In conclusion, the comparison between these two apparently very different novels shows up the less obvious elements of both. If Kafka's novel is accepted (as it universally is) as going beyond its immediate milieu to ponder wider problems, then Roche's conclusion that Der Untertan does likewise must be seriously considered. If, on the other hand, Mann's depictions of the psychology of power are accepted (as they seem widely to be) as being informed by Nietzsche's ideas, then what of Kafka's contemporary depictions that are, in Der Prozess, often so notably similar?

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54 Roche, p.88.
CHAPTER 7 part 2: Der Prozess and Nietzsche.

Introduction

The comparison with Der Untertan has indicated, I think, that there is at least a case to be argued for the influence of Nietzsche's works on Kafka's Der Prozess. Certainly, I have no intention of arguing that Kafka's works are 'based on' Nietzsche - any more than they are 'based on' Freud, Judaism or any other of the many influences which continue to be discovered by his readers.

One might note here that a positivistic concept of 'influence' upon Kafka from one source or another is by no means out of the question. Binder for one is persuaded that he has located one such quite specific source: 'entscheidende motivliche und formale Anregungen für seinen Bericht für eine Akademie erhielt Kafka durch zwei Erzählungen E.T.A. Hoffmanns'.¹ I tend to agree with Binder. Indeed, I tend to agree with much that has been written on the influence on Kafka of Freud, Judaism, Kierkegaard and so on. Kafka, to me, is an eclectic writer in the best sense of that word: he assimilates and makes his own the work of many others in the service of his personal vision. Reed has shown in detail an example of this creative process: Kafka finds a passage from Schopenhauer (probably via Brod) and the result is ultimately

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\text{die völlig neue Ausarbeitung eines einfachen Gedankens, eines ursprünglichen Bildes, das, Wochen oder Monaten vorher in das Gedächtnis aufgenommen, sich dann im Augenblick des Schreibens}
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It is, perhaps, the union of a uniquely personal vision and a highly-developed capacity for eclecticism (in other words, a high degree of dwelling within a literary continuum) which gives Kafka's art its enormous strength.

A glance at the conclusions made will quickly reveal that I have no intention of setting Kafka up as a disciple of Nietzsche. All I want to argue is that the Nietzschean component of Kafka's eclecticism as seen in Der Prozess has been inadequately recognized. At certain points in Kafka's text I will be suggesting that there is a conglomeration of imagery and words which so densely recall Nietzsche that one has to ask whether an interpretation of the phenomenon other than in terms of a manifest indebtedness is really adequate; at other, more numerous points I will be simply suggesting that a Nietzschean reading of Kafka's text - a reading, that is, in the light of Nietzsche's texts - can be made. In both cases I will argue (and this is, after all, the acid test of any such idea) that an awareness of Nietzsche's writings can help to clarify the significance of certain problematic passages in the novel.

Room for such clarification would appear still to exist. Franz Kafka's known life, thoughts and works have refused to yield up a solution to the dilemma of Josef K. in Der Prozess. It is unlikely that this is due to quantitively inadequate research. More probably, it may be due to K.'s dilemma being insoluble, to his being in some way 'hoffnungslos gespalten', as Walter Sokel puts it. Sokel sees K. as pursuing spiritual purity on the one hand and earthly desires on the other.

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3 Sokel, Franz Kafka, p.52.
He compares him to Faust. I have elsewhere suggested that specific elements in Kafka's text justify this comparison, though I cannot agree fully with Sokel's analysis. I certainly agree, though, that Josef K. is hopelessly split between contradictory imperatives.

It is indeed, in investigating the exact nature of Josef K.'s dilemma, the specific content of his mutually opposing imperatives, that Nietzsche's texts may be fruitfully applied. The comparison with Der Untertan has suggested, to me, that underlying considerations of both Kafka's and Heinrich Mann's socio-critical thinking may be illuminated by the juxtaposition of certain of Nietzsche's ideas regarding 'Sittlichkeit der Sitte' and the psychology of 'ascetic' power-seeking. The time has now come to see whether such circumstantial hints gleaned from a text-comparative process have really indicated a useful way to approach Kafka's text itself: can the Nietzschean investigation bear fruit when applied straight to Der Prozess?

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Josef K. as 'Übergangsmensch'

At the start of the novel Josef K.'s life is interrupted by an unpleasant birthday surprise: outside the secure bedroom, a challenging new reality is waiting. Bridgwater has convincingly juxtaposed the words of Nietzsche's 'ascetic priest' in Zur Genealogie der Moral ('daran muss irgend jemand schuld sein') with the famous opening line of Der Prozess. This will immediately remind the reader

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4 J.M. Hawes, 'Faust and Nietzsche in Kafka's Der Prozess', in New German Studies, 15/2.

5 Bridgwater, p.83.
of the hints given by the comparison with Diederich Hessling: again, Josef K. appears to be involved in what Nietzsche would have recognized as an 'ascetic' mentality.

Bridgwater goes on to tell us roundly that Josef K. 'is the "man of little faith", the sceptic, the Nietzschean "Free-Thinker"'. While Bridgwater's textual comparison (above) is very suggestive, his conclusion is, I would argue, too one-sided. Whatever the challenging apparition may or may not be, Josef K.'s reactions to it are certainly not simple and one-sided. On the contrary, they are essentially ambiguous: Josef K. desires 'Klarheit über seine Lage' (p.9), yet also holds that once order returns, everything will resume 'seinen alten Gang' (p.20) and he hopes always for this restoration of the pre-arrest lifestyle.

These twin imperatives of investigation and of remaining within known parameters are essentially contradictory, and make Josef K. a figure who (like many other literary heroes of the era) bears a general resemblance to Nietzsche's depiction of the modern 'Übergangsmensch', who struggles with this dilemma:

-bis endlich die Erkenntnisse und jene uralten Grundirrtümer aufeinander stiessen, beide als Leben, beide als Macht, beide in demselben Menschen ... in dem der Trieb zur Wahrheit und jene lebenerhaltenden Irrtümer ihren ersten Kampf kämpfen (VII,149).

Both imperatives are contained within Josef K., who is thus reminiscent of Malte, Aschenbach and Törless: he inhabits the border regions where awareness of the need for critical investigation struggles with the wish to remain within mental terra cognita.

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* Bridgwater, p.83.
To call such a scenario 'Nietzschean' is, of course, merely to beg the question of Nietzsche's relationship to the intellectual currents of the day. At certain points in *Der Prozess*, however, the idea of a specifically Nietzschean influence on Kafka's text assumes more precise contours. In looking at these, we should always bear in mind the contradictory nature of Josef K.'s longings as established in the first pages of the novel.

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Contradictory Critiques (i): 'Sittlichkeit der Sitte'

In the comparison with *Der Untertan* we referred to the episode in which K.'s Uncle persuades him to go to the lawyer. It is worth looking again at this passage in more detail. In this exchange we can, perhaps, see a Nietzschean element allied to Kafka's familiar leitmotiv of the battle between protagonist and father-figure. The Uncle uses a strikingly idiomatic argument to stress the fatal results if K. loses his trial:

> Das bedeutet, dass du einfach gestrichen wirst. Und dass die ganze Verwandschaft mitgerissen oder wenigstens bis auf den Boden gedemütigt wird (p.85).

What on earth is the reader to make of this? The Uncle says that the Josef K.'s 'ganze Verwandschaft' will be involved, because of him, in some mysterious and terrifying catastrophe. It appears difficult (to say the least) to grasp the Uncle's train of thought here, and the reader is naturally tempted to assume that Kafka is, in fact, imputing no perceptible logic to the Uncle's threat. Perhaps Kafka is simply showing us an example of ungrounded 'paternalist' browbeating?
However, the reader acquainted with Nietzsche's thought - and perhaps only the reader acquainted with Nietzsche's thought - has access to a conceptual model in the light of which the Uncle's thought-process is anything but arcane:

Überall, wo es eine Gemeinde, und folglich eine Sittlichkeit der Sitte gibt, herrscht auch der Gedanke, dass die Strafe für die Verletzung der Sitte vor allem auf die Gemeinde fällt: jene übernatürliche Strafe, deren Äusserung und Grenze so schwer zu begreifen ist und mit so abergläubischer Angst ergründet wird. (VI, 19)

This, I think, is a good example of where referring to Nietzsche passes that acid test of clarification. The Uncle's argument can now be read not as some opaquely private 'kafkaesque' formulation, nor as simply ungrounded judgement of the sort Kafka depicts in Brief an den Vater. Rather, the Uncle's judgement can be seen in its broader social implications - as a perfectly logical example of a potentially free individual being attacked as dangerous to his entire group in terms of something akin to 'Sittlichkeit der Sitte'.

The whole point is that this Nietzschean reading does not involve some tortuous reinterpretation of Kafka's text. Rather, it provides illumination in much the same way as the best Freudian criticism has often done - that is, by offering a consistent logic for the obvious (if apparently irrational) meaning of the text. The Nietzschean searchlight, that is, can here (to paraphrase Bloom) show up the hidden roads that lead from element to element of Kafka's text - the secret connections which help to give Kafka's 'Traumlogik' that extraordinary sense of being at once groundless and yet ineluctable.

Here, then, it is clear to any reader that K.'s membership of a social group is invoked by the Uncle, and used to enforce conformity; the reader who knows his Nietzsche, however, has access to a level of meaning which does not so much
change as deepen and heighten his appreciation of what is going on in Kafka's text.

In this case, the Nietzsche-reader will understand more clearly and more exactly the nature of the conflict between Josef K. and his Uncle - and the consequences of the Uncle's victory. For the Uncle does win: Josef K. is unable to understand his Uncle's logic, but accepts the decision nevertheless, relegating his own judgement to a 'Nebensache' (p.85). This is one of the decisive episodes in Der Prozess: here, for the first time, Josef K. is persuaded to channel his 'quest', which has a vague but nonetheless inherent radicalism, via established routes of investigation. For the first time, his search becomes guided by the advice and judgement of older male authority-figures.

If we add this to the suggestions we arrived at by comparing the depictions of social authority and legal mechanisms in Der Prozess and Der Untertan, I think a case can be made for arguing as follows: that Kafka's depictions of the functioning of established power-mechanisms can, at important moments, profitably be read in the light of a specifically Nietzschean set of ideas ('Sittlichkeit der Sitte') regarding the 'superstitious' operations of essentially conservative social power-structures.

In some way or other, at any rate, Josef K. would here appear to be the (easy) victim of a social control which regards nonconformity as bad per se. But if this is the case, then what is the nature of K.'s 'nonconformity'? One is tempted to bring in exterior evidence (i.e. Kafka's diaries and letters) to support the view that this consists in his not being married at thirty. However, such external evidence is not really necessary: the text of Der Prozess provides ample evidence that Josef K.'s relationships with women are seriously wanting in Kafka's authorial eyes. These episodes suggest that K.'s 'innocence' may conceal
an actual moral offence, giving genuine grounds for action against him.

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Contradictory Critiques (ii); The Ascetic Egoist

K. encounters three women as a result of his quest, all of whom are, at least for one moment, available to him: Fraülein Bürstner; the 'junge Frau' of chapters two and three; and Leni. Whatever else it may or may not indicate, this surely hints at some potential for advance in human relationships compared to the weekly visit to a prostitute which is part of his pre-arrest existence. Josef K.'s experience of arrest and confrontation with the court is thus not devoid of potentially positive results. But K. is only able to react to these women in terms of moral stereotypes. Thus Fraülein Bürstner is (as we have already seen) considered to be a girl of lower status 'das ihm nicht lange Widerstand leisten sollte' (p.72). The context of this statement clearly shows, however, that K.'s denigrating judgement of Fraülein Bürstner is actually a reaction to his failure with her. Thus too the 'junge Frau' is condemned: 'Sie bietet sich mir an, sie ist verdorben wie alle hier ringsum' (p.48). As we saw in the comparison with Diederich Hessling, the quasi-causal association of 'sich mir anbieten' and 'verdorben-sein' hints clearly that K.'s moralizing is caused by suppressed self-judgement: 'to be attracted to me is to be a fallen women'.

The 'ascetic' tendency to surreptitious power-seeking leads Josef K. to see his opportunities for human relations purely in terms of some possible, vaguely-defined future advantage in his power-struggle with the court - rather than as relationships with their own internal and autonomous justification in the here-and-now. We have already seen one example of how K. desires the 'junge Frau'
in order to get revenge on the examining magistrate (pp.52-5). Pascal puts the case clearly:

Sexuality has a place in Der Prozess and Das Schloss chiefly as a means to acquire power over another person: in the heroes' sexual approaches is a desperate expedient towards the achievement, as they hope, of their goal ... Perhaps the only real gain of K. in Das Schloss is indeed something he understands too late - his affection for Frieda, the personal relationship, the only breach in the tower of his egoism.7

We see this when Leni asks if K. likes her; he thinks to himself that he does but instead of telling her so he continues 'alles andere vernachlässigen' to ask about the court (p.155). When K. meets Fräulein Bürstner after his arrest, she lies on the sofa and strokes her hips (a classic image of sexual availability) while K. remains obsessed with the solipsistic re-enactment of his interrogation (p.28). Josef K.'s personal relationships, then, are undoubtedly deficient. Kafka's text makes it quite clear that K.'s relationship to other people is at the heart of his trial:

Wäre er allein in der Welt gewesen, hätte er den Prozess leicht missachten können, wenn es allerdings auch sicher war, dass dann der Prozess überhaupt nicht entstanden wäre (p.108).

This one excerpt is sufficient to demolish any idea that K.'s trial is an issue simply of personal damnation or salvation, of a relationship to some metaphysical seat of judgement.

Kafka seems, then, on the one hand to depict a situation where the court is simply the mechanism whereby society enforces its (arbitrary but supposedly

7 Pascal, From Naturalism to Expressionism, p.240.
absolute) set of rules. On the other hand, though, Josef K. is no blameless 'free spirit'. I would argue that this ambiguity is at the heart of Der Prozess: Kafka provides grounds both for doubting that this court enshrines absolute justice and for doubting the moral soundness of Josef K. He makes us look 'zunächst auf die fragwürdig erscheinende Behörde, dann aber auf Josef K. selbst.'

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'Wirkliche Freisprechung' or 'Verhinderte Verurteilung'?

Particularly in the light of some 'post-modern' interpretations of Kafka's writings (i.e. that Kafka is writing about writing itself), we might expect the one episode where K. actually comes into contact with the world of Art to be a highly important one. It certainly appears to be: here (chapter 7) we are given what appear to be some of the most concrete (which, in Kafka, also means, of course, most paradoxical) information about the operations of the court. I think that this section of the novel may also be profitably looked at in our Nietzschean perspective.

Bridgwater argues convincingly that Kafka's painter fits Nietzsche's socio-critical portrayal of every artist as 'Kammerdiener einer Moral' (VIII,362). As quasi-official court artist he perpetuates the symbols of the court, while knowing very well that the grandly portrayed judge actually sits in very different

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8 That is, a situation where, as Nietzsche puts it, 'Strafe' is nothing other than 'die Rache der Gesellschaft an einem, der sie nicht ehrt' (IVIII,205)


10 Bridgwater, p.86.
circumstances. His craft is thus the transformation of reality in the service of an established ideal. Indeed, the painter describes himself in religious terms as an 'initiate' ('Eingeweihter'), preserving inherited and arcane forms. Moreover, the painter does not merely fit Nietzsche's general type. His work for the court has what may be specifically Nietzschean connotations.

There is a mysterious figure on the 'Thronsessel' in his portrait of the judge: 'Es ist eigentlich die Gerechtigkeit und die Siegesgöttin in einem' (p.126). This apparently delphic conflation is typical of the sort of thing which gives Kafka's interpreters such problems. What possible meaning can this image enshrine, unless it be a purely private one? Here, again, a knowledge of Nietzsche's texts can come to our aid, for Kafka's image is perhaps not entirely original. It is, in fact, rather like one of Nietzsche's formulations in Zur Genealogie der Moral. What is more, it should be noted that the formulation concerned is to be found in the same passage as that image, familiar in Kafka, of 'waiting at the door': Nietzsche describes 'ascetic' man and 'sein An-der-Tür-stehen, sein unvermeidliches Warten-Müssen [...] was sie verlangen, das heissen sie nicht Vergeltung, sondern "den Triumph der Gerechtigkeit" [...] den Sieg Gottes'(VIII,295-7). Thus the possible origin of Kafka's 'Gerechtigkeit - Siegesgöttin' figure. The Nietzschean echo again suggests a dubious element in this 'Justice'. More specifically, it associates the court with Nietzsche's sayings on Christianity, where the Christian idea of ultimate 'Justice' is merely a cover-word for the secret will to 'revanche' and power.

The comparison with Diederich Hessling's contemporary language of power-worship has already suggested that any 'Schwärmerei' regarding the Powers that Be should be treated by the reader as highly suspect. Certainly, when Kafka's painter speaks of the great court which has 'das Recht, endgültig
freizusprechen', his syntax and imagery is coloured to the extent that it takes on clearly metaphysical overtones:

dieses Recht hat nur das oberste, für Sie, für mich, für uns alle ganz unerreichbare Gericht (p.136).

The painter, then, glorifies the court. But he also provides a different perspective on it. This we can find in the painter's private work. In chapter nine (as we shall see), the chaplain leaves his pulpit after doing his job ('Dienst'): so, now, the painter does his own work as distinct from the court's. In their capacities as workers of the court, both priest and artist aid its claims to 'eternal' (or at least, time-honoured) verity; both, however, outside their 'Dienst', provide Josef K. not with an alternative as such, but with images which express the conundrum involved in his 'quest'. Again, it is Bridgwater who points to the obsessive theme of the painter's private work - 'Zwei schwache Baume' - as an echo of Nietzsche's image from Genesis (IViii,178). It is certainly true that Kafka concerned himself with this image elsewhere (Betrachtungen nos. 82-3) but it must also be noted that there, Kafka treats the image in a quite explicitly biblical context, possibly in relation to his readings of Kierkegaard. However, we shall see later that Kafka's words at the end of the novel concerning the relationship of Knowledge to Life are particularly reminiscent of Nietzsche's thought, rather than of Kierkegaardian or biblical formulae.

The painter's private work, whatever its possible hidden antecedents, would appear to hint that K.'s predicament involves the confusion of the 'tree of knowledge' with the 'tree of life'. His image does not offer a solution, but expresses the conundrum facing Josef K. The entire discussion between the painter and K., in fact, revolves around this conundrum of the relationship

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11 Bridgwater, p.87.
between 'logical' analysis and life. Let us look at K.'s reaction to the complex
defence-plans described by the painter:

'Sie verhindern aber auch die wirkliche Freisprechung', sagte K. leise,
aschämte er sich, das erkannt zu haben. 'Sie haben den Kern der
Sache erfasst', sagte der Maler schnell. (p.139)

What, then, is this point which K. has grasped, and which seems so important
to the painter? The thing to note about the defence-plans offered by the painter
(pp.133-139) is that both involve 'helpers', whereas 'real absolution' does not.
Josef K. sees that the plans involving 'helpers' can delay or avoid judgement, but
must also prevent that 'real absolution' which he wants.

Once again, the reader appears to be faced with a hopelessly opaque example
of Kafka's thought and imagery. How is it that 'helpers' can be of use on one
level, but hinder on another? It is possible, though, that the passage may be
illuminated if we look at it from the (just as paradoxical) perspective of
Nietzsche's writings on this subject:

Es gibt nur ein perspektivisches Sehen, nur ein perspektivisches
Sehen "Erkennen"; [...] je mehr Augen, verschiedene Augen wir uns
für dieselbe Sache einzusetzen wissen, um so vollständiger wird unser
'Begriff' dieser Sache, unsre 'Objektivität' sein. Den Willen aber
überhaupt eliminieren [...] wie? Hiesse das nicht den Intellekt
kastrieren? (VIii,383)

Here we touch upon an ambivalence that is central to Nietzsche's (and, it seems,
to Kafka's) thought. On the one hand Nietzsche insists that all seeing is
perspectival; thus it is logically better to 'see' with multiple perspectives, that is,
to perceive through the various 'eyes' that human community alone makes
possible. The analogy here would be Kafka's 'helpers' and Nietzsche's 'eyes'. But
to depend on such (logical) aid is, says Nietzsche, to eliminate the individual will, to 'castrate the intellect'. We see Kafka, in this episode, engaging precisely this paradox: K. realizes that the schemes requiring other humans as 'helpers' provide a modus vivendi (however wretched) within existing society - but at the price of precluding the individual's longed-for 'real freedom'.

Such a Nietzschean reading of this passage is fully in accordance with the ambiguous portrayal of the quest throughout Der Prozess. To accept that truth and freedom exist only in social terms is logically to say that individual seeking-after-truth cannot do us any good, and may do harm by imperilling our social existence. The obvious answer (the one made by Nietzsche in the concept of 'amor fati', however much he would have denied it) is to abrogate the investigative faculties. If Josef K. were to accept that it is 'oft besser, in Ketten, als Frei zu sein', (p.162) then life of a sort would be possible for him. Block, after all, has not merely survived for five years so far (more than K. will achieve) but is granted a room in the lawyer's house and (it would seem) the occasional favours of Leni (chapter 8). Wretched such a life may be, but it is life of a sort. Nietzsche famously rejects such a stance: such a life, he says, is no life.

What of Kafka?

In chapter seven K. realizes that 'true freedom' demands the abandoning of the tactical defences he has so far used. But he shies away from the implications of this. Exactly as in chapter nine, Kafka has K. (p.141) take a supposedly easier 'way out' rather than face the (here openly sexual) challenge which awaits at the main door. But, in a superb and chilling passage, this 'Ausgang' leads K. straight back to the court. As in Vor dem Gesetz, the avoidance of crisis merely produces an ongoing disaster: 'Das Verfahren geht allmählich ins Urteil über' (p.180). This is clear as we observe Block in the following chapter. As well as
making it plain beyond reasonable doubt that Kafka, like Nietzsche in the above-quoted passage, rejects 'castration of the intellect' as a solution to the problem of inescapable subjectivity, the figure of Block once again shows some possible parallels with Nietzsche’s thought.

Block’s trial begins ‘kurz nach dem Tod meiner Frau’ (p.148). It seems thus to be rooted, like K.’s, in a crisis of interpersonal existence. He reacts to this - as did K. - by imagining that the court can be won over. His methods are (as I suggested briefly in the comparison with Diederich Hessling) identical even in points of detail to those ascribed by Nietzsche to ‘religious Man’: Block seeks to win some undefined advantage

Durch Flehen und Gebete, durch Unterwerfung, durch die Verpflichtung zu regelmässigen Abgaben und Geschenke, durch schmeichelhafte Verherrlichungen...(IVii,114)

This passage is echoed many times in the scene where Block is degraded by the lawyer, (pp.164-8) with its clear suggestion that Block treats the lawyer like a God (‘Dann folge auch niemanden sonst’, p.164). We might take another section from Nietzsche, simply in order to stress that such shades of Kafka’s figure are not restricted to one passage. Here is his depiction of the ‘Mensch der Ressentiment’: ‘Er versteht sich auf das Schweigen, das Nicht-vergessen, das Warten, das vorläufige Sich-verkleinern, Sich-demüthigen’. (Vili,286) Again, this could almost be a programme for Kafka’s imagery in his depiction of Block.

Kafka’s judgement on Block occurs in one of those passages of ‘erlebte Rede’ in which no authorial distance is visible: ‘Das war kein Klient mehr, das war der Hund des Advokaten’ (p.166). This pre-echo of Josef K.’s final shame at dying ‘like a dog’, shows that to ‘castrate the intellect’ is to lose all human dignity: ‘Nichts könnte ihn in den Augen eines Mitmenschen rechtfertigen’ (p.166).
The grotesqueness of Block shows that suspension of individuality, abrogation of the critical intellect, assimilation to the forms of existing authority are, to Kafka, no answer to crisis. Such attitudes, indeed, are part of the crisis. But we have seen how an egoistical 'freedom' that uses others to some 'ascetic' private end is shown to be barren. The unquestioning acceptance of received values is criticised, but the unassimilated mind that questions them seems equally compromised. If both the imperatives of established society and those of the investigative individual are flawed, which 'Law' do we obey?

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Kafka’s Cathedral (i): The Burial of God

Kafka, typically, does not provide an answer to this question. What he does instead is set a trap for the unwary, weary reader. The trap is subtly baited, for that bait consists not in some sudden new feature, but in the quiet cessation of one element of the work: in chapter nine Kafka abstains from the critique of the 'Gericht' which almost every previous chapter has contained as a parallel to the critique of Josef K. In the cathedral, he permits the court to luxuriate unchallenged in the trappings of religion and allows its representative to subject Josef K. to a devastating critique. In short, the double-edged critique of the preceding chapters becomes a one-way process in chapter nine.

It is a splendidly weighted device: by now the reader is thoroughly infected with Josef K.’s desperation to find the 'Law', with his rage for meaning. The 'religious' setting of the chapter is concomitantly tempting: for us, as for Josef K., these surroundings still speak potently of Eternal Things. In such a setting, it is irresistibly inviting for both hero and reader to accept that the 'Gericht',
after all, really does somehow enshrine the absolute justice for which Josef K. has been searching.

This, then, is the most loaded of Kafka's chapters, the one which most invites (or, I would suggest, tempts) the reader into a definite judgemental (religious-moral) interpretation of the text in terms of 'what Josef K. should have done...'.

The attentive reader, though, will have been already forewarned by previous events - the painter's 'religious' power-glorification, the 'pious' degradation of Block. Moreover, there is a substantial hint, even before the chaplain appears, regarding the 'religious' atmosphere. It is a hint which is accessible to any reader; but if that reader also knows Nietzsche's works, it is, again, one whose wider implications will be more immediately recognisable. Kafka describes only one of the decorations of the cathedral in detail: it is a picture of Christ's burial, 'eine Grablegung Christi' (p.175). The picture - which is 'ein neueres Bild' - shows a man looking on at the burial of Christ, with K.'s attention attracted to the man. Of course, Christianity abounds in pictures of the burial of Christ. Here, though, the focus is not on Christ, but on the man watching the burial: he is the first thing K. notices, the one thing on which he dwells 'längere Zeit' and (most importantly) the one element of the picture which K. feels drawn to interpret. I suggest that Kafka's focus on the man suggests an immediately obvious Nietzschean echo: what is the position of Man at the death of God? In depicting the burial - not the resurrection - of Christ, Kafka is confronting that religion at its core. One only has to imagine what a difference it would make to the whole text if Kafka had made Josef K. stand and look at 'eine Auferstehung Christi'. It seems as if Kafka is indeed depicting something very like Nietzsche's 'Grüfte und Grabmäler Gottes' (Vii,160) - as Robertson has already noted.\footnote{Robertson, p.122.}
Kafka's cathedral, I would suggest, is the burial-place of a dead God. It is, in fact, a structure whose rationale has died, but which still exists. The machine in In der Strafkolonie provides a parallel idea and image from another of Kafka's works, and one which Pasley has shown to be indebted to Nietzsche.\(^{13}\)

The chaplain's sermon must therefore be seen in this light: it appeals to a religious conception of guilt and innocence - but Nietzsche has told us that the God who stands as guarantor of such a universe is dead and Kafka shows that God being buried. The chaplain (like the officer in In der Strafkolonie) upholds a religious world-view without a God to justify it.

The religious trappings of what follows are thus, I would suggest, no more to be taken at face value than are the claims of the officer in In der Strafkolonie. Josef K.'s quest for absolute certainties (i.e. for 'The Law'), then, culminates in a question of religiosity. Of religiosity, not of religion: K.'s dilemma is not 'religious' in the sense of a problem which can be solved by referring to any revealed or unrevealed moral-metaphysical scheme of things. His 'quest', rather, enshrines the dilemma of man's 'religious', metaphysical urges, of the search for 'truth' within a purely human, God-less world.

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Kafka's Cathedral (ii): The Need for Judgement

When confronted with the suggestion that his guilt is established, Josef K. appeals precisely to that purely human conceptual world within which no absolute judgements are possible: K. claims that since all men are alike, none can be guilty. The chaplain answers that K. is right - but that the guilty talk that

\[^{13}\text{Pasley, Der Heizer/In der Strafkolonie/Der Bau, p.17.}\]
way: "Das ist richtig" sagte der Geistliche, "aber so pflegen die Schuldigen zu reden". (p.180) This, one of the most famous of all Kafka's paradoxes, has given rise to endless interpretations.

One can see why. Josef K.'s defence ('Wir sind hier doch alle Menschen, einer wie der andere') is a virtual repetition of the wretched Block's defence against K. himself: 'Sie sind kein besserer Mensch als ich' (p.164). So the text would appear to suggest that this defence is flawed. Yet the chaplain accepts it as 'richtig' - and then tells K. that such thought is characteristic of the 'guilty'. But if Kafka shows us the 'Gericht' treating a man as guilty while recognising that he is right, must he not intend us to see such a court simply as a force of irrational malevolence?

Once again, I would suggest that this paradox can be elucidated (not solved) in the light of Nietzsche's writings. The words Kafka puts in K.'s mouth at this decisive juncture are, in fact, not only reminiscent of Block's, but are extraordinarily similar to some of Nietzsche's concerning such a 'religious man':

Wie kann denn ein Mensch überhaupt schuldig sein. Wir sind hier
doeh alle Menschen, einer wie der andere. (p.253).

Er ist böse als Mensch überhaupt und beruhigt sich ein Wenig bei
dem Satze: Wir Alle sind Einer Art. (IVi,119)

This, I think, is one of the points where the similarity between what Kafka writes and what Nietzsche wrote before him is so striking that coincidence (even within a general 'Zeitgeist') is plainly inadequate as an explanation. Here, then, I would make so bold as to move on from the illuminations provided by a 'Nietzschean reading' to suggest that there is a direct relationship between Nietzsche's and Kafka's texts: Kafka has placed Nietzsche's formulation almost verbatim in the mouth of Josef K.
Now, the whole value of this insight lies in the fact that the echo is not merely a verbal one: if we follow up this textual echo of Nietzsche, it can enable us to discover a recognisable logic to the apparently insoluble paradox of a man being 'right' yet 'guilty' in the eyes of this court.

The first step is to note exactly what Nietzsche is saying here: it is worse than useless here to refer to vaguely 'Nietzschean ideas'. Nietzsche's phrase, so very like Josef K.'s words, concerns a specific type: that is, the 'modern' Christian, a 'moral', 'ascetic' man who has lost the 'Stachel' of individual responsibility.

Once again, then, Kafka's text echoes Nietzsche's analysis of man implicated in a crepuscular religion. The comparison with Der Untertan has already suggested that Josef K. bears some resemblance to Nietzsche's 'ascetic' moral type. The chaplain would appear to serve an 'ascetic' religion: thus the pulpit from which he speaks seems 'wie zur Qual des Predigers bestimmt' (p.177). In Nietzsche's writings on man and morality we can perhaps find helpful guidance in interpreting the chaplain's apparently contradictory position.

Nietzsche's reductive argument states that there is no necessary connection between the nature of the world and the good of mankind. What is 'good' (that is, beneficial to man) is not necessarily 'true' (that is, an accurate representation of the world). What is 'bad' (that is, harmful to man) is not necessarily 'false' (that is, inaccurate). Thus, for example, an insight into the true nature of the world may be harmful to man.

In these terms, I would suggest that the chaplain's apparent paradox is suddenly illuminated: Josef K.'s claim that he is no worse than anyone else, hence not guilty, may be logically valid - but it may also be harmful. Such a claim could be 'right' (that is, an accurate representation of the world) but still make him one of the 'guilty' (that is, those who do harm to man by hampering
'Life').

We might at this point call in further evidence to demonstrate that this interpretation does not impose foreign ideas on Kafka. Elsewhere, we find him addressing precisely this same problem:

Streben nach Nivellierung: ich sagte "es ist nicht so arg, alle sind so",
machte es aber ärger dadurch. [...] Die Nivellierung ist richtig, vielleicht, aber eine so weitgehende Objectivierung hebt alle Lebensmöglichkeit auf.\textsuperscript{14}

I would suggest that this passage is identical in meaning to the exchange between Josef K. and the chaplain. Kafka's conclusion seems very like the chaplain's: 'Nivellierung' may be 'richtig' but is also dubious in terms of 'Lebensmöglichkeit'. Kafka here explicitly opposes 'Lebensmöglichkeit' to 'richtig-sein' in a manner which is thoroughly in keeping with Nietzsche's analysis: the foundations of one's ability to live (Kafka: 'Lebensmöglichkeit') are not only not logical ('richtig'), but are anti-logical. It is a point which Kafka will repeat explicitly in the final sentences of the novel.

I would argue, then, that the identification of a specific textual relationship to Nietzsche's phrase and thought is highly fruitful in terms of a general and new illumination of this much-discussed passage of Der Prozess. Josef K. denies that judgement is possible, and appeals to a 'levelled-down' conception of mankind as a community of fallibility. The chaplain insists that judgement of the individual is possible, indeed, that the denial of the possibility of judgement is itself indicative of some 'guilt'. The comparison with Kafka on 'Nivellierung' suggests that this 'guilt' is to be interpreted in terms of 'Lebensmöglichkeit': to deny the possibility of individual moral judgement is to deny the possibility of

\textsuperscript{14} Kafka, Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande, p.168.
life itself. The chaplain’s objection to Josef K.’s ‘Nivellierung’ then, appears to be that some basis for judgement is needed - however disastrous the implication of that judgemental basis might be.

And what might that basis for judgement be?

The hints as to Josef K.’s ‘ascetic’ tendencies powerfully recall Nietzsche’s analysis of how ‘das asketische Ideal’ has - up till now - provided man with a direction for his will (however perverse) to fill the gap of meaning in his life and thus preserve him from nihilism.

In denying the possibility of individual condemnation, then, Josef K. rejects such an ‘ascetic’ structure of judgement with its fundamental insistence on the ontological imperfection of human life in the here-and-now. The chaplain sees this attitude as disastrous: ‘Siehst du denn nicht zwei Schritte weit?’ (p.181). Why does the chaplain react like this?

In our Nietzschean scenario the answer is clear: the chaplain is horrified because K., in denying the ‘ascetic ideal’ of individual responsibility, is denying the only basis for judgement, and thus for living, which he has. The chaplain now goes on to illustrate K.’s position in a story.

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Kafka’s Cathedral (iii): The Legend

K.’s ‘Täuschung’, then, consists somehow in his relationship to the ascetic ideal incorporated in this ‘Law’. That error is one which, we are told, is to be found in the story of the ‘Mann vom Lande’.

The problem with this interpretation of the story and its significance might appear to be that it depends upon the chaplain functioning both as mouthpiece
of the 'ascetic' court and as genuinely objective presenter of the underlying dilemma. But this is, indeed, what Kafka's text suggests by the 'staging' of the discussion between K. and the chaplain. The chaplain tells his legend after coming down from his pulpit. Such visual indicators cannot be ignored in Kafka's work. The chaplain himself differentiates between his 'Dienst' in the pulpit and what follows. That is to say: in the pulpit he acts according to his prescribed duty as chaplain of the court by supporting its 'ascetic' claim to eternal verity. But he is also able to step outside his strict duty in order to present Josef K. with an image of the conundrum facing him. We saw much the same phenomenon with the painter in chapter seven. The chaplain, then, first addresses K. within the terms of the court he serves; now, though, he proceeds to give what we may take as an objective depiction of (which does not mean, a solution to) K.'s dilemma.

Kafka's justly famous 'legend' may have specific Nietzschean antecedents. Nietzsche, too, had formulated the image of 'An-der-Tür-Stehen' (VIii,295) and of the figure who sits waiting for the 'Erlaubnis' to act which will only come when he is 'durch Stillsitzen verbraucht' (VIii,237-8).15 Again, I would suggest that we may here be dealing not merely with parallel imagery, but with a broad conceptual agreement, for the whole 'legend' can be read consistently in terms of Nietzsche's ambiguous valuation of the 'quest' for knowledge, of the need for a 'Law'. Such an interpretation will, in its turn, preserve us from any simple judgement on the 'Mann vom Lande': it will insist upon our preserving the fundamental ambiguity in Kafka's portrayal of the 'quest' in Der Prozess.

15 Bridgewater (pp.96-7) has also noted these parallels.
The man from the country comes to the Law. Bridgwater's assertion that 'he
is "der Wüstling in der Wüste' is quite unsupported by Kafka's text.16 Kafka's
man does not come from the desert, but from the country. Why 'from the
country'? It is a truism that the metropolitan setting is germane to Der Prozess.
I would therefore argue that we pay great attention to the fact that this man
comes 'vom Lande' - comes, that is, from a place deliberately set outside that
urban environment. Kafka elsewhere refers to the Jewish 'Übergangsgeneration,
welche von verhältnismässig noch frommen Land in die Städte auswanderte'.17
The Uncle tells K. that the court is relatively weak in the country (p.84). I would
suggest the following interpretation: that the country is seen by Kafka (not to
mention, by Tolstoy and almost every writer since) as relatively free from the
quintessentially modern, 'post-religious' problematic which attends man's life in
the metropolis. But this man has felt the need to leave the country and search
for the 'Law'. This clearly implies that he has felt the inadequacy of his existing
mode of life. Whether that mode be conceived of as Jewish, Christian or simply
rural-traditional is of no material importance: the crisis shared by K. and the
man from the country is the crisis of modern, post-religious, tradition-doubting,
urban man as such.

It seems me that this can give us the clue to an interpretation of the story.
Perhaps the root of the problem is the contradiction between the fact that the
man does come to the 'Law' - but does not, then, dare all to get in. He remains
in a half-way position, possessed by exactly those warring imperatives which
inhabit Josef K's soul: the wish for 'Klarheit' and the devotion to 'das
Gewohnte'.

16 Bridgwater, p.94.

17 Kafka, Brief an den Vater, p.146.
The fact that he has felt the need to come and seek the Law must suggest that he has somehow been confronted with the inadequacy of his life-as-it-is. The 'Law', the set of assumptions by which he runs his life, is no longer self-evidently true, but must be sought out and confirmed. The problem is that those assumptions are not dead, but only half-dead. The man remains incapable of conceiving of life without some form of absolute 'Law'. Unable to conceive of the 'Law' in other than received terms (as witness his surprise at the doorkeeper's attitude), all he can ask is for the 'Law' as he knows it to be reaffirmed.

But this means that he is, in fact, demanding affirmation of his life from the very source in whose power to affirm life he no longer trusts.

The 'Law' in which the man has so far trusted is, I would suggest, an 'ascetic' one in Nietzsche's terminology; one which promised an ordering of the universe such that there would be otherworldly rewards for mankind's suffering in this world. But now the man from the country, a half-'modern', half 'post-religious' man, can no longer accept such a promise on faith alone. He insists that his ascetic 'Law' prove itself by delivering its promised reward (i.e. entrance to the 'Law') -not in the hereafter but in the here-and-now.

The contradiction is, of course, total. The 'man from the country', this modern dilemma personified, is no longer 'ascetic' enough, 'religious' enough to accept that the 'Law' inhabits an entirely different, metaphysical plane - yet he is not 'post-religious' enough to do without the absolute promises of this 'Law' altogether. He ends up (quite literally ends up) with the worst of both worlds: trying to achieve the Absolute in the Immanent world, he succeeds only in wasting his whole life in the world of the here-and-now while still failing to attain the metaphysical justification of the 'Law'.

He is trapped between two inabilities: he is unable either to make that Kierkegaardian 'movement of faith' (which Kafka noted) into a life totally removed from the conceptions of the 'normal' world - but is just as unable to turn his back on the metaphysical glories of the 'Law' and live henceforth only in the reflective 'Abglanz' of life in the here-and-now. Kafka's diaries expound exactly this paradox: he fears becoming a 'Narr' in terms of the world-as-it-is - but 'Nicht-Narrheit' means to renounce the hope of attaining metaphysical justification, to pine away one's life at the threshold of the longed-for 'Law'.

The vital point about Kafka's portrayals (whether regarding marriage, writing or the dilemmas of Josef K. and the 'Man vom Lande') is that he sees no way of avoiding an impossible decision. To take either path - that of abandoning the 'real' world entirely or that of abandoning the 'really real' world of the Absolute entirely - will involve the possibility of destroying our capacity to live. But there can be no avoiding a choice. The alternative to a swift crisis is, for Kafka's 'man from the country' as it was to Nietzsche, a slow crisis: to stay on our present course means to embrace nihilism.

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Kafka's Cathedral (iv) Reaction to the Legend

Nihilism: no word can better describe Josef K.'s reaction to the chaplain's story. The stages of how he reacts are exactly in keeping with Nietzsche's analysis of

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18 Tagebuch, 23 Dec 1911: Kafka fears becoming a 'Narr' to his family due to going 'in eine allen Verwandten und Bekannten fremde Richtung'. Tagebuch, 4 Dec 1913, though, asks: 'Was ist dann die Nicht-Narrheit? Nicht-Narrheit ist, vor der Schwelle, zur Seite des Einganges betterhaft stehen, verwesen und umstürzen'. This is exactly the insoluble paradox in which the 'Man vom Lande' finds himself.
how 'religious' man will react to evidence of a morally neutral world-order. Nicolai has already stressed that the chaplain presents his picture of a universe based on necessity, not on morality, in a distinctly Nietzschean manner:

dem Satz Nietzsches 'also dass etwas für wahr gehalten werden muss ist notwendig, - *nicht*, dass etwas wahr ist' ist die Formulierung des Geistlichen 'man muss nicht alles für wahr halten, man muss es nur für notwendig halten' überraschend ähnlich.¹⁹

Nicolai's claim is surely fair; Kafka's chaplain does indeed sound very like Nietzsche on necessity. Now, according to Nietzsche, 'moral' man is heading for a sudden collapse into nihilism. This is because 'moral' man insists that for a thing to be 'true' (that is, an accurate depiction of the world) it must also be 'good' (that is, beneficial to man). Presented with a neutral world-order, he finds that such an order cannot fulfil his dual requirement of 'good/true', since that which is true within it is not necessarily beneficial to mankind. He thus has to condemn it as 'immoral', that is, as 'bad/false': 'so sei die Weltgeschichte Schuld, Selbstverurteilung und Selbstmord (Vliii,32).' This is just how Josef K. reacts: since the chaplain's story clearly does not inhabit a world arranged a priori for the benefit of mankind, K. declares: 'die Lüge wird zur Weltordnung gemacht (p.188).'

So we see Kafka confronting Josef K. with a thesis of 'necessity' which is (as Nicolai sees) almost verbatim a Nietzschean formulation, and then having his hero react to that thesis in just the way Nietzsche predicts a 'moral' man would react. K.'s longing for some moral 'Law' to apply to the world must end in nihilism because he is, in Nietzsche's words, attempting 'ihr eine Gesetzlichkeit einzuprägen die sie von vornherein nicht hat' (IVii,115).

¹⁹ Nicolai, p.113.
It is precisely this wish for 'Gesetzlichkeit' with which that legend is concerned. Josef K. (like the 'man from the country') refuses in chapter nine to accept the ultimate implications of the 'ascetic ideal' which appears to have informed his life so far - those of 'otherwordly' gratification at the cost of this life. It is not (pace Bridgwater) simply a question of a traditionally 'religious' view against a traditionally 'materialistic' one: both Josef K.'s 'materialistic' concern with power, with advancement and so on and his 'religious' longing for individual absolution are part of his 'ascetic' world-view. Both depend ultimately on the conviction that there is some logic to mankind's present suffering. But now, Josef K. has just seen a picture of God - guarantor of the 'ascetic ideal' - being buried. The hope of a logic to justify an unfulfilled life in the here-and-now has proved vain.

Yet while no longer able to accept without reservation the only 'Law' which is made manifest to him, he continues to long for a 'Law' of some kind to explain why his life is so unfulfilled. Since K. (like the 'man from the country') can no longer accept utterly the one ideal which has made sense of his existence on earth, his still-powerful 'religious' demand for some logic in the world must end (as indeed it does) by perceiving the world in a nihilistic light. Der Prozess, in short, addresses the same theme which Pasley has shown to lie at the heart of In der Strafkolonie: 'The story alludes to the apparent defeat of what Nietzsche called the 'ascetic ideals'. We might add that the stories deal not only with the apparent defeat of, but, perhaps even more importantly, with the lack of any replacement for, those 'ascetic ideals'.

I think if we compare one of Nietzsche's most famous statements of the modern crisis as he saw it with Kafka's depiction of Josef K.'s conundrum - here

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* Pasley, *Der Heizer/*In der Strafkolonie/*Der Bau*, p.17.
without any suggestion at all of a textual relationship being involved - we can show that Nietzsche's thought really may be employed to illuminate the intellectual structure of this most elusive of texts:

'Entweder schafft euere Verehrungen ab oder - euch selbst!'. Das Letztere wäre der Nihilismus; aber wäre nicht auch das Erstere - der Nihilismus? (Vii,263).

Josef K. has lived within a world whose dominant 'Verehrung' is the 'ascetic ideal'. That ideal has provided a rationale for living - but only at the cost of Life in the here-and-now itself. With the 'death of God' (i.e. with the cessation of belief in metaphysical justification) the ascetic ideal becomes reduced ad absurdum to an ontologically fatal judgement on mankind: 'Das Letztere wäre der Nihilismus'. But if Josef K. denies the 'Gericht' and thus abolishes the 'ascetic' ideal which (as we have had cause to suspect) is the secret dynamo of his existence, he will be deprived of any rationale for living - 'ware auch nicht das Erstere - der Nihilismus?'

It is this fundamental ambiguity with regard to man's search for absolutes which Kafka shares with Nietzsche, and which the 'Legend' enshrines. It is notable that the 'Legend' occurs not in the 'Gesetz' itself, but 'in den einleitenden Schriften zum Gesetz' (p.182) - that is, in the writings which establish the preconditions of the 'Gesetz'. The ideas of guilt and innocence which informed the discussion while the chaplain was in his pulpit are totally absent from this story. The precondition of the 'Gesetz' is not an absolute notion of guilt and innocence at all - but rather the human desire (perhaps, the human need) for the 'Law'. It is man who seeks the 'Gesetz': to see things the other way round (as K. does) is to be 'getäuscht'. I cannot, then, accept Robertson's statement that 'Kafka's court is concerned, not with any particular
set of laws, but with absolute good and evil'.

The court is, on the contrary, totally unconcerned with absolute good and evil as metaphysical entities: it exists and functions only by virtue of (indeed, as an expression of) the human desire that such concepts should exist.

So is this grotesque 'Gericht' the only possible result of man's longing for the absolute? Are the executioners Kafka's final judgement on the human quest for 'truth'? The answer is yes - and, of course, no.

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Kafka's Cathedral (v): The Ambiguity of Absolutism

In this chapter, then, Josef K. is not 'religious' enough to yield without question to the court, as does Block. Unlike Block, K. is 'modern' enough, secular enough, humanist enough to object to the unquestioning assumption of man's inherent guiltiness. Yet he is too 'religious' to take this stance to its logical conclusion and accept that no absolute judgement is possible - as we saw in his reaction to the 'Legend'. In the end, however, one side of this conundrum does win out: K., at the start of chapter ten, does, after all, give in to the court and allow himself to be led to execution.

The problem is that unless the 'quester' can find some persuasive alternative to this 'Law' it will function as if it were absolute; in a human sense it will be absolute, since there is nothing concrete to oppose its claim to enshrine eternal verity. Hence it is that Josef K.'s continued half-dwelling within moral preconceptions is fatal to him: such 'moral' attitudes prevent him finding his

\[\text{\textsuperscript{21} Robertson, p.107.}\]
own values. Both Kafka and Nietzsche repeat often the view that no-one can show us 'the Way'. The man who experiences the insufficiency of existing bases for life and embarks on a 'quest' for truth must, by definition, find a new way which no-one has gone before. If he cannot, he will remain ultimately in thrall to the supposedly absolute values of the society in which he lives - in this case, to its 'ascetic' ideology. Since the act of embarking on the 'quest' presumes that he has already perceived the inadequacy of existing values, such a yielding must end in nihilism. This is Josef K.'s fate: because he is unable to find his own 'Law' to guide his actions, he finally accepts the 'Law' of the court as a guide, however fatal its implications are to him. As Nietzsche puts it: 'lieber will noch der Mensch das Nichts wollen, als nicht wollen' (VIii,430).

In the legend and in his final statement in chapter nine, the chaplain makes the point that the 'Law' is there - for those who need it. As the 'Wächter' told K. at the start, the court 'wird von der Schuld angezogen' (p.11). The court is ultimately dependent on human volition: if we define 'Schuld' as the quasi-religious conception of the inadequacy of life in the here-and-now, the statement of the 'Wächter' takes on just the same meaning as the statement of the chaplain: the court is present to those who feel in need of outside, 'absolute' justification.

It is this which provides the secret attraction of the court to Josef K.: it claims to enshrine such an absolute 'Gesetz'. We can see this hidden collaboration of K. and the court in the structures of their arguments. Throughout the novel, Josef K. attempts to resist a prevailing 'theological' structure of judgement (the court's conviction of his ontological guilt) by invoking simple facticity (his immanent knowledge of his innocence). But this invocation is, in its turn, visibly 'theological' in its aspiration for necessary (that is, unmediated) truthfulness.
Kafka’s critique of this desire for metaphysical truth as ‘religious’, as fundamentally anti-life, is familiar ground to readers of Nietzsche.

This though, is only one side of Kafka’s conundrum (as it is of Nietzsche’s). For if there is no metaphysical truth, what matters is logically not the ‘rightness’ or ‘wrongness’ of an interpretation, but the success of an interpretation within the human world, in the ‘Welt, die uns angeht’. If this is so, then the prevailing interpretation is the only valid one, the received truth is absolute truth per se: the ‘Gericht’ is in command of power, therefore it is always right. If we accept the reductive argument that there are no absolutes, that the very search for them is itself ‘ascetic’ - is the logical conclusion not that we must yield with an easy conscience to the fatal embrace of the ‘Gericht’, just as Georg Bendemann yields to the arbitrary judgement of the Father in Das Urteil?

Now, I think, we see why it is vital for the reader not to fall for Kafka’s tempting snare: we must always recall that the novel has provided ample evidence that the ‘Gericht’ is brutal, corrupt, merciless. The ‘Law’ is simply not acceptable as it is.

Kafka, then, shows us a situation in which the need to confront existing structures of thought is not an option, but a question of life and death. Now that the metaphysical guarantee of the ‘ascetic ideal’ has run out, the structures of perception which were based on that ideal have become fatal to man. The ‘ascetic ideal’ has become, as witness the fate of the officer in In der Strafkolonie, simply a road to grotesque, meaningless suicide. Not to challenge such ideals is to dwell within an ongoing crisis. The dilemma was indicated in our comparison with Der Untertan: how can we challenge a structure of established thought when we ourselves, as humans in a purely human world, are trapped within them?
The ambiguity of Kafka's view of absolutist longings is based on the point that the 'Gericht' (like the father in Das Urteil and like Kafka's father in Brief an den Vater) applies its interpretative Will unhesitatingly and without recourse to truly absolute values ('Man muss es nur für notwendig halten'). The court merely operates as if its values were absolute. Josef K., though, feels the need always to seek a genuinely absolute conception of justice.

It is this ambiguity which informs Kafka's view of the 'religious' quest for truth and his portrait of Josef K. We can see this if we recall the difference between K. and Diederich Hessling. Hessling embraces the world of amoral power as the only world there is, whereas Josef K. continues to rebel against accepting this state of affairs.

Diederich Hessling's embracing of naked power-politics might well seem to be the practical enactment of the 'Übermensch' as set out in Heidegger's inimitable (though easily parodied) analysis of Nietzsche's analysis:

Der bisherige Mensch heisst nach der Metaphysik Nietzsche's der bisherige, weil sein Wesen vom Willen zur Macht als dem Grundzug alles Seienden zwar bestimmt ist, er aber gleichwohl den Willen zur Macht nicht als diesen Grundzug erfahren und übernommen hat.\(^2\)

Kafka's portrait of Josef K., on the other hand, is that of man who has indeed 'erfahren' a power-positivist modus operandi, but refuses to acknowledge its unchallengeable primacy. His 'ascetic' quest, the demand that 'justice' must be based on some absolute category of value, is thus by no means to be seen as wholly negative: in this situation, confronted with this Law, the demand for a revealed justice is vital.

Kafka's language itself enshrines the ambiguity with which this search for absolutes is presented. Throughout the novel, his merciless, pared-down words suggest - in a connection which conceivably bears Nietzsche's hallmark - that 'religious' longing is allied to physical decrepitude. K.'s tiredness is part of his trial (p.66); his mother's piety grows with her physical blindness and age (p.199); the 'man from the country' sees the great light of the Law only at the point of death - perhaps only because of his failing eyesight (p.183). And yet the text flares in a (hexametric?) glory for which nothing has prepared us when Kafka describes 'den Glanz, der unverlöslichlich aus der Tür des Gesetzes bricht' (p.183).

It is this ambiguity which confirms the dignity and necessity of Josef K.'s 'quest' in the face of Kafka's (highly Nietzschean) reductive argument. I would suggest that K.'s stature resides by implication in the very core of Kafka's reductive critique: how can a purely subjectivist, purely power-positivist structure of interpretation and judgement be countered - unless by reference to absolute values?

Josef K., then, searches for a desperately-needed alternative to the power-positivism of the court, but is unable to conceive of an alternative except in terms which are themselves secretly part of such a power-positivism; in terms, that is, of the 'ascetic ideal'. Kafka has here identified a problem which he will continue to address, most openly (and, according to Rignall, under the influence of Nietzsche) in his Chinesische Mauer. It is the same problem as we saw in Der Untertan: that of authority, and of the confrontation with authority, in a world without absolute moral standards.

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Josef K.'s Last Insight: 'Logik' and 'Leben'

Josef K. yields ultimately to the court. Whereas in chapter One he had to be forced into formal clothes, he now sits waiting in this 'Uniform der Gesittung' as Mann calls it in Der Tod in Venedig. Kafka thus clearly hints that Josef K.'s yielding to the court is somehow related to a yielding to the forms of established convention.

This yielding is death to him. How? Again, I suggest that the same Nietzschean logic as we have had cause to suspect in the previous pages can illuminate Kafka's apparently illogical world.

In a world shorn of the life-enhancing justification for 'asceticism' (i.e. the belief in a metaphysical order of the world, in God) the 'ascetic' ideology of the court (like that of the officer in In der Strafkolonie) becomes merely a mechanism for killing.

If Nietzsche hoped that the 'death of God' would allow the illumination previously wasted on the 'beyond' to glorify life in the here-and-now, his gravest worry was that in demolishing metaphysics (i.e. in 'killing God'), western man has destroyed something without which he cannot live, and without which life must seem devoid of all purpose. Worse: that the 'ascetic' demand for absolute truth will survive after its logic has gone lost, leading man ultimately to embrace 'das Nichts', active nihilism, rather than endure the unendurable pain of a senseless existence. There will no longer be any rationale for suffering, but suffering will become its own rationale. It is little wonder that Nietzsche is sometimes credited with having seen the death-camps looming on the horizon.

And if anyone else is so credited, it is often Kafka. I would suggest that Kafka's terrifying intimation of what might happen to Western man is partly
attained by his working within parameters established by Nietzsche. The ascetic 'Gericht' can no longer offer the life-enhancing sense of purpose which it (again, like the machine in Kafka's Strafkolonie) once offered as a reward for 'asceticism'. There is a textual basis in Der Prozess for this interpretation: we recall the talk in chapter Seven of the 'legends' wherein even the majority of cases once did attain the longed-for 'entgültige Freisprechung' which now appears so impossible (p.133). But if the 'Gericht' can no longer offer a psychologically life-enhancing 'Ziel' in return for the surface negation of life, it can still offer - the negation of life: suffering, torture and, ultimately, death.

In Josef K. the 'ascetic' ideology of the court is, from the start, displayed as something which has been internalized into the most private regions of modern man's being. Essential to that ideology is the conception that somewhere, somehow, someone else is running the universe on lines which may well appear inexplicable, but which lie outside our purview: it is, thus, thoroughly in keeping with our scenario that Josef K. should feel both the internalized desire to carry out the court's ontological sentence (i.e. to kill himself) and that he should blame his failure so to do on someone who 'ihm den Rest der dazu nötigen Kraft versagt hätte' (p.271). This is the logical conclusion of the 'religious' cast of thought seen in the cathedral, the ultimate distillation of K.'s nihilism: the existence of a godlike power is still insisted upon, but that power is now conceived of as having failed mankind.

At the last moment, however, Josef K. sees something that revives his resistance, causes him at last to perceive his dilemma clearly, and causes his shame at the recognition of what he has failed to do. What he sees is nothing less than a vision of the human community he has failed so conspicuously to attain:
Einer, der helfen wollte? War es ein einzelner? Waren es alle? War
noch hilfe? Gab es Einwände, die man vergessen hatte? Gewiss gab
es solche. (p.272)

How can K. be so sure that there are still 'Einwände' to be made, even after all
his failures? The answer is simple: 'Die Logik ist zwar unerschütterlich, aber
einem Menschen, der leben will, widersteht sie nicht.' (p.272)

One could present a number of quotations from Nietzsche on just this theme.
For example:

[Erkenntnis] führt zu einer Philosophie der logischen Weltverneinung;
welche übrigens sich mit einer praktischen Weltheijahung ebensogut
wie mit deren Gegenteil vereinigen lässt' (IVii,46)

Kafka’s formulation of Josef K.’s last insight, then, seems to concern exactly that
willed, extra-logical 'yes to life' which Nietzsche proclaims. The tree of
knowledge is not to be confused with the tree of life (IViii,178): if one has the
will to live, the logic of nihilism is powerless. The implication is that Josef K.
has not behaved like a man 'der leben will'. The point seems to be that he has
sought salvation in 'ascetic', absolutist, metaphysical rather than human terms.
Kafka’s diary formulates this in a lapidary (and strikingly Nietzschean) phrase:
'Metaphysisches Bedürfnis ist nur Todesbedürfnis'. But if Kafka’s depiction
seems to be remarkably close to Nietzsche's, there is a vital and fundamental
difference between his and Nietzsche’s analysis. This resides in their definition
of that most basic concept: 'Leben'. In this passage, Kafka clearly associates
'Leben' not with individualism - but, on the contrary, with precisely that
communality which Nietzsche so disparaged.

2 Kafka, Tagebuch, 1 April 1912.
And so it is that Kafka’s last-minute confronting of his character with this image of unattained human community reveals the central problem of Der Prozess for what it ultimately is: the relationship of striving individuality and social being.

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Contradictory Negations

Kafka certainly does not undervalue the part played by social compacts in validating human endeavour. As the executioners await, Josef K. looks through a window:

In einem beleuchteten Fenster des Stockwerkes spielten kleine Kinder hinter einem Gitter miteinander und tasteten, noch unfähig, sich von ihren Plätzen fortzubewegen, mit den Händchen nacheinander. (p.266)

The prison-imagery is familiar. The vital point is that the children are not kept apart by the bars, but are behind them together, trying instinctively to make contact. Human society, however limited and 'caged' is a precondition of human existence. And to challenge traditional jurisdiction is a great risk not only to the challenger. As Nietzsche puts it: 'Ob mehr zum Segen oder zum Fluch der allgemeinen Wohlfahrt, wer wüsste dass zu sagen?' (IVii,59). Thus there seems to be a rationale for the community to proceed against the quester both on the moral ground of his egoism and the practical ground that his - possibly dubious - quest may threaten the established laws which alone protect it from a moral vacuum.
This stance - the rejection of any challenge to 'die Ordnung' - is characteristic of some of Nietzsche's later thought; Kafka, as we have seen, seems to be well aware of the 'ascetic man' of Nietzsche's writings in whom such a dubious wish for change is personified.

But this is only one side of the problem as presented by Kafka. The other side of the coin is that the society Kafka presents here (and elsewhere) is clearly not unconditionally acceptable. The court never claims a truly moral authority (it only claims a traditional authority) and yet it is accorded obedience and belief. Like the inhabitants of Kafka's Chinesische Mauer corpus, the people of Der Prozess suffer and thereby sustain institutions without positive belief in their values. The burlesque domesticity of the early chapters of Der Prozess implies a critical depiction of a society which accepts without question an inherited structure, whose rationale is no longer comprehensible and whose efficiency is doubtful.

Kaufmann Block's wretchedness calls the quietist reaction to crisis into question. Similarly, the offers which the women make to K. all have implicitly radical elements; all involve offenses against prevailing morality and authority-figures. Altogether, there is much evidence that the world of Frau Grubach and the uncritically accepted court is not the best of all possible worlds. Josef K.'s quest must be seen in this positive light as well as in the negative light of an egoistic metaphysical striving which disparages all communal living. This, in its turn, is very much in the vein of a different Nietzsche, the 'critical' writer who knows that everything new has by definition been at some time 'unsittlich': again, Kafka would appear to use constructions which are strongly parallel to Nietzsche's critical depictions of how a 'Sittlichkeit der Sitte' functions in and controls social living.
What traps K. within this contradictory set of indications is his lack of 'Sachlichkeit', the vagueness of the terms of his quest. This is typified by the nebulous, question-ridden character of K.'s final vision. Like Georg in Das Urteil, Josef K. has no concrete alternative to the operations, however indecipherable or brutal, of existing authority.

And so K. remains trapped in the 'ascetic' modes of thought which, being the very modes thanks to which the 'Gericht' functions at all, must inevitably condemn him. Like the 'Mann vom Lande', Josef K. can only envisage escape from barren egoism and corrupt society in terms of personal salvation and bribery. Kafka's depictions are not existentialist moralising but essential conflict: Nietzsche's mutually exclusive imperatives of 'Klarheit' and 'Das Gewohnte' are always present in Josef K., 'beide als Macht, beide in demselben Menschen' (Vii,149).

Pasley recognizes the applicability of Nietzsche's framework to Kafka: 'Without turning Kafka into a disciple of Nietzsche, we must allow that the former's portrayals ... owe much to the latter's formulations'. This statement finds powerful support in an examination of Der Prozess. The novel uses imagery and even phraseology which sometimes - and at most important moments - seems closely related to Nietzsche's in criticising both social control and the individualist quest. I would suggest that Kafka's novel is indebted specifically to Nietzsche's (contradictory) critical exposés of 'Sittlichkeit der Sitte' as a form of social control and of 'ascetic' man as the opponent of the social order. In Kafka, as in Nietzsche, this would appear to present the reader with an impasse. Emrich relates the dilemma specifically to Nietzsche's terminology: Kafka

This, then, appears to be the end of all human possibility. But Pasley also stresses that Kafka tries 'to reveal what is positive by a process of negation'.

In this novel we find a dual process of negation which functions thus: the specific critique of K.'s individualism as 'ascetic' and theological implies the generalized validation of socially-predicated values - while, vice-versa, the specific critique of this particular social structure as one motivated by a now meaningless set of 'ascetic' values implies the generalized validation of individual value-creation in opposition to it. The implication of this dual negation is that both some form of autonomous morality and some form of truly interpersonal existence are necessary preconditions of fulfilled human living - and that both will have to be different from their existing, 'ascetic' forms:

The happiest lives are probably those in which neither interpersonal relationships nor impersonal interests are idealized as the only way to salvation. The desire and pursuit of the whole must comprehend both aspects of human nature.

The problem confronted by the novel is the difficulty or impossibility of fulfilling simultaneously our needs for individual 'questing' and for communal living. This

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26 Pasley, 'Kafka's Semi-Private Games', p.121.

problem is familiar to biographers of Kafka - it is the very stuff of his endlessly ambivalent attitude to marriage, for example - but is hardly unique; it is, after all, the ideal towards which Goethe's Faust directs his visionary death-speech. Faust's ideal is Josef K.'s predicament. Der Prozess proposes no solution to that predicament, but does succeed (as does Josef K., though too late) in defining it.

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Conclusions: Confrontation in the Depths

It would appear, then, that one might profitably have one's Nietzsche close to hand, or in mind, when reading Der Prozess. But which pages shall we recommend to the reader? Which elements in Nietzsche's contradictory oeuvre may best help to illuminate Kafka's text?

Kafka would appear to have no part in Musil's 'Nietzschean vision of the spiritual aristocrat remote in azure loneliness'. There is no indication that he was unduly worried by those ideas of a psychological-physiological 'decadence' which so troubled Thomas Mann - though he would appear, like Mann, to have been aware of an ambiguity in the relationship between spiritual refinement and physical decrepitude. Rilke's picture of an absolute yielding to the onslaught of the world - that picture which, as we saw, may be related to Nietzsche's extraordinary portrait of Christ as the ultimate extension of 'amor fati' - holds no attractions for a man so aware of what suffering really means. The Nietzschean light which, in my opinion, may most usefully be shone on Kafka is that of the critical Nietzsche, the voice charting the dilemma, the Nietzsche

who proclaims negation as investigation: 'Wir verneinen und müssen verneinen, weil etwas in uns leben und sich bejahen will, etwas, das wir vielleicht noch nicht sehen, noch nicht kennen' (IIIi,329).

Like the Heinrich Mann of Der Untertan, Kafka is concerned to investigate the problem of individual and communal justice and injustice in a world in which legitimacy appears to have been reduced (as Nietzsche foresaw it might be) simply to a question of who occupies power. Kafka would seem to argue very much in the vein of Nietzsche’s reductive critique - without ever ceasing to be aware that such arguments are (as they originally were for Nietzsche) merely tools to prove the pressing need for a new course in human affairs. Kafka refuses ever to fall into the trap into which Nietzsche himself (and, it would appear, much of German art) fell: that of taking such reductive arguments and images as prescriptions. What he does do is to attempt to define, though only by negation, the broad terms of that new course in human relationships with other humans (and thus) with ideas of the infinite. The lack of concrete proposals does not diminish the truth of Pasley’s insight that Kafka’s ‘explorations of darkness are guided and sustained by an indestructible positive urge’.

Within the text, the perception of this positive urge is conditional upon our seeing the ‘Gericht’ as something less (or at least, something other) than the representative of Absolute Justice. The comparison with Der Untertan provides a highlight - should one be thought necessary - for the existence in the text of Der Prozess of a critical thesis concerning power-structures which appears to be strongly parallel to Nietzsche’s particular ideas. That critical stance reveals a difference between the court’s claims and its reality. I would suggest that the

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'Gericht' is in fact the true, hidden 'symbolic order' of existing society: down in the engine-rooms of the liberal 'Rechtstaat' to which Josef K. mentally appeals in chapter One lurk older and harsher powers. I would thus certainly agree with Derrida's thesis that Kafka's story involves an analysis of what 'law' is, of 'ce qui fait que ces lois sont des lois, l'être-lois de ces lois'. I would argue, though, that this 'être-loi' consists for Kafka not in some Law-inherent quality of absolute unapproachability, but in the fact that the 'Law' is (like all 'laws' according to Nietzsche) simply (or rather: complexly) part and parcel of things-as-they-are. The 'law', in Kafka's depiction, is anything but metaphysical, anything but insulated from the world: it is the reification of the existing power-relationships of the world. Hence, perhaps, the unnerv ing way in which the court appears to inhabit not only a discrete 'legal' realm, but the 'ordinary' world as well, to exist in the most private corners of man's being as well as in its public offices. The existential element of the 'Gericht' is perfectly contiguous with - and thus indistinguishable from - its concrete operations of power-in-the-world. As such, it is utterly self-confident, carrying out its role of judging, condemning and executing with a self-belief which needs no reference to outside validation. It operates, in fact, like Nietzsche's early, uncritical depiction of 'Leben':

Es ist nicht die Gerechtigkeit, die hier zu Gericht sitzt; es ist noch weniger die Gnade, die hier das Urteil verkündet: sondern das Leben allein, jene dunkle, treibende, unersättlich sich selbst begehrende Macht. (IIIi,265)

But - as the 'critical' Nietzsche points out - this is precisely the way in which established power wishes to be seen. Every established power wants to be regarded (indeed, regards itself) as the incorporation of a necessary force (i.e.
as an agent of 'Life', or of 'History') rather than as a contingent (and thus mutable) phenomenon.

Kafka's 'Gericht' - like the Imperial authority in Der Untertan - acts in just this way: it claims to hold the keys to absolutely valid judgements of guilt and innocence, of life and death - while its actual operations betray a fallibility, brutality and corruption which anchor it firmly in the (contingent) human world.

But Kafka is also well aware of the other side of the coin - a side which, again, is one Nietzsche saw too: that such systems flourish only because man feels the desperate need for order of some sort, at almost any cost. The enigma of the work is centred on the fact that Josef K.'s rage for an order in the world means that he is himself involved in the very values he seeks to challenge. He can only confront the dominant 'ascetic' ideology of the power-positivist 'Gericht' in terms of a thoroughly traditional - and equally 'ascetic' - appeal to unmediated knowledge.

Kafka's appreciation of the need for some absolute reference-point to confront unacceptable social power should not, therefore, be conceived of as 'religious' in any metaphysical sense. Rather, he knows that we do indeed need a basis on which to judge the flaws of the human world-as-it-is; but he also sees that this basis of perception must be freed from the false lights of individualism and the 'ascetic ideal'. It is notable that the closest Kafka came to a concrete social programme was in sketching a 'besitzlose Arbeiterchaft' in which duty to the group, especially to the poor, old and sick, is very heavily stressed and in which material possessions are scorned.31 Certainly, this might appear to be a form of 'asceticism' - but not in the Nietzschean-psychological sense of that

31 Kafka, Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande, pp. 93-4.
word. It is one in which duty to (and privileges accorded by) the human group in the here-and-now are stressed, not the metaphysical pursuit of some individual advantage or salvation in the hereafter or the beyond. Pasley has shown how such themes of duty and vocation ('Berufung') come to dominate Kafka's later work.

Kafka's critique of individualism reaches its climax in the last paragraph of Der Prozess: there, he makes what appears to be a highly Nietzschean suggestion that his hero lacks the will to 'Leben' - but Kafka turns the Nietzschean analysis on its head by the clear suggestion that it is human, inter-human vitality that is missing in K., not some Nietzschean, individualistic, 'animal' (unreflective) vitality. Reed has noted this feature in the relationship of Kafka's and Nietzsche's writings:

For what is vitality? Undeniably Kafka was aware that he lacked it [...] but to assume that this awareness determined Kafka's thinking and artistic dispositions is to beg the question. Vitality in itself may be an insufficient ideal. Even for Nietzsche, it was only a beginning. Perceiving this, Kafka was closer to Nietzsche in one respect, even while at odds with him in others, than those numerous contemporaries were who believed in the age's and their own decadence and were consequently so ready to be shamed by the animal splendour with which Nietzsche's cultural criticism appears to have mesmerized them.

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32 See Malcolm Pasley, 'Kafka and the Theme of "Berufung"' in Oxford German Studies 1, (1966).

Nothing could be more vital than this last-minute confrontation between Kafka’s view of ‘Leben’ and his predecessor’s. The denial of individualism as a category of value alters Kafka’s entire perception of the world. Let us, as a textual comparison (or rather, contrast) look at Kafka’s depictions of ‘Freiheit’, that word which, as we saw, was of such totemic importance to Nietzsche.

It is clear that Kafka rejects utterly a ‘Byronic’, individualistic freedom - not on moral grounds so much as on the grounds that such a thing is simply meaningless: Josef K. longs to be ‘free’, but, like Kafka’s ‘Er’, he has ‘keine Vorstellung von Freiheit’. His idea of ‘freedom’ is thus purely negative. Elsewhere, one of Kafka’s mysterious authority-figures refers to just such a conception of ‘freedom’: ‘du bist frei und dadurch bist du verloren’.

In Der Prozess we cannot help but appreciate the young woman’s retreat from the meaningless of K.’s proffered ‘freedom’ into the known, established world, however wretched:

‘Und Sie wollen nicht befreit werden!’ schrie K. [...] ‘Nein’ rief die Frau, und wehrte K. mit beiden Händen ab, ‘nein, nein, nur das nicht [...]’. (p.53)

Kafka, in fact, has written the epitaph to the obsession with individual ‘freedom’ which, as we have seen, is at the root of much of Nietzsche’s thought - and, I would argue, of Nietzsche’s subsequent appeal.

To conclude on this note I suggest that the examination of Der Prozess in the light of Nietzsche’s writings indicates the following: that Nietzsche is indeed one of Kafka’s great sources of insight, a thinker he thinks through in both senses

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of that expression; that the closeness of some of Kafka's most important formulations to certain of Nietzsche's suggests that Nietzsche is a writer whose analysis Kafka understands intimately and at first hand, whose intimations of an epochal crisis he appreciates perhaps more deeply than any of his contemporaries. In the end, though, Kafka confronts Nietzsche at the very heart of the cultural-historical matter: Nietzsche's influence on Kafka is strong - but the later writer is the stronger.
CHAPTER 8: Nietzsche in Perspective(s)

(Schnitzler: Der Weg ins Freie)

Introduction

I have chosen to look finally at Schnitzler’s novel. Why this positioning? The obvious answer is: because I think this novel makes a particularly apposite conclusion to our discussions of Nietzsche’s influence on the works of this period. And yet, paradoxically, Schnitzler’s is the text which, in my opinion, demonstrates - and by some considerable margin - the least evidence of a specifically Nietzschean influence. Evidently, this situation needs some elucidation.

From the start, I have been looking at Nietzsche’s ‘influence’ (if any) with the ultimate intention of placing any intimations thereof in some historical perspective - in the perspective, that is, of texts-within-history. Now, it is immediately clear that Schnitzler’s novel, more than any other of our texts, is concerned to depict a physically concrete world. The geographical exactitude of the novel does not constitute such ‘realism’ so much as indicate the direction the novel is taking: here, we are given a world in which events could not simply be followed on a map of Vienna as context, as more or less coincidental ‘background’, but where events, in a very real sense, are part and parcel of that context. There is - as I hope to show - no hard-and-fast line between outer and inner experience. Where Kafka’s Prozess invokes this melting of barriers by focussing on the inner life of the hero, Schnitzler’s realism is the mirror-image of this: in Kafka the inner experience of the hero is reified in the outside world, while in Schnitzler the outer experience of the hero appears to constitute his
inner experience too. The technique is familiar from *Leutnant Gustl*, where the inner life of the character exists as a set of cultural co-ordinates and little, if anything, more. Fundamentally, then, Schnitzler's concern here would appear to be not so much with the state of the individual 'soul' as such, but with the state of the individual soul within (that is, as part of) a world in which 'the sum of our contexts, our circumstances, is what we are'.¹ Indeed, the context portrayed by Schnitzler in *Der Weg ins Freie* is so clearly wider than, so clearly pre-exists, the 'text' available to the main character (Georg von Wergenthin) that it encompasses the entirely different perspectives of a second main character (Heinrich Bermann).

It is this awareness of a contiguity between outer and inner experience, of the individual-within-a-culture which, to me, makes this novel a fitting one with which to usher in my conclusions regarding our 'texts-within-history'. I will argue that the text does indeed indicate an awareness of and use of Nietzsche's specific ideas in one very important section of the text; elsewhere we will find not Nietzsche's ideas, but certain themes and images which might be called 'Nietzschean' in the usual (i.e. inaccurate) sense of the world. Schnitzler, that is, registers (I will argue) both those modes of Nietzsche-reception which we saw in chapter Two: both the genuinely Nietzschean analysis and superficial, vaguely 'Nietzschean' (or 'Ibsenian', or 'vitalist' etc.) attitudes are to be found here. The distinction (or better, non-distinction) between them will, I think, provide an element in our discussions of Nietzsche's influence on this generation of writers. Moreover, this novel's 'realistic' convention may help to place such individual awarenesses of Nietzsche within a broader, cultural-historically identifiable framework.

¹ Tallis, p.230.
It is, as I have said from the start, precisely the relationship between the signs of an awareness of Nietzsche and the broader perspectives which interest me: the limit and (thus) the circumscription of the Nietzschean 'influence' is just as revealing as an omnipresence of Nietzschean 'influence' might otherwise be.

This entire proceeding, of course, assumes that there is indeed some degree of genuinely Nietzschean presence in the text against which to measure its non-presence and the presence of a superficial 'Nietzsche-and-Ibsenism' (a formula we might draw from Dr. Stauber's conflation of the two). The first task, then, will to argue that Schnitzler was indeed aware of, and his text affected by his awareness of, Nietzsche's writings.

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Schnitzler, Nietzsche and Reichert's Analysis

Herbert Reichert has long since claimed that there is indeed a recognisable Nietzschean element in *Per Weg ins Freie* (1908).² It is from his work that I shall take my starting point.

At the start of his seminal investigations into possible Nietzschean elements in Schnitzler's work, Reichert confesses boldly that the juxtaposition of these two authors might appear to be 'a strained and far-fetched' one. And indeed, Reichert finds little textual evidence for any Nietzschean influence on Schnitzler at all. There is an 'affinity in their outlooks' regarding the necessity of illusion to the maintenance of life, and a general sense that Schnitzler's egoistic

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artist-types may be 'akin' to Nietzsche's absolutely individualistic 'Übermensch' in that they are 'justified in remaining true to their own code of conduct'.

Where Reichert does find both references to Nietzsche by name and the principal evidence for his suggestion that 'a linkage with Nietzsche's philosophy, particularly with his theory of knowledge, may be established', is in the novel Der Weg ins Freie. It is from this work that Reichert brings out his most telling quotation. At the end of the book, Heinrich Bermann concludes that Georg von Wergenthin's actions in his relationship to Anna Rosner do not involve him in any guilt. For another man (such as Bermann himself) Georg's behaviour might indeed have been a cause for guilt. But not for Georg. (p.957)

Now, though Reichert has already suggested that Schnitzler shares the 'cognitive subjectivism' which is 'generally considered as belonging to the great contributions of Nietzsche', he sees in the above passage merely a 'tacit condemnation' of Georg's failure to become a great artist. I would now like to argue that Reichert's analysis of this material does not go far enough.

The reason for such concern with Reichert's judgement is that his article, now almost thirty years old, has, it would appear, been accepted as more or less definitive: no-one has since attempted (to my knowledge) to investigate this novel in the light of Nietzsche's writings. This is despite the fact that Reichert, in claiming there is no specific reference to Nietzsche outside Der Weg ins

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4 Reichert, p.105.

5 Reichert, p.106.

6 Reichert, p.96.

7 Reichert, p.105.
The task of carrying Reichert's investigations further is, then, an important one: what is at issue here is the re-opening of a critical 'case' which his article would appear long since to have closed.

Let us look again at the excerpt Reichert refers to concerning Bermann's judgement on Georg von Wergenthin. Bermann, we recall, absolves Georg from all guilt in the Rosner affair - not because there was no objective guilt involved, be it noted, but because Georg is Georg and not a man like Bermann.

Now, what this excerpt presents, in fact, is nothing less than a case for guilt itself being a floating, relative category. Typically enough (we shall see many more examples of this) Schnitzler does not trumpet the point he is about to make, but quietly brings the reader up against an extremely radical idea: that what is guilt in one man is not guilt in another. In other words, a man's actions are judged not by the result of what he does, nor yet by the motivation for what he does - but by what he is. Bermann, then, considers that Georg is not (genuinely 'is not') guilty simply because Georg is not the kind of man who feels guilt. The implication is clear and dizzying: that no act is of ethical import except inasmuch as the actor himself ascribes such import to it. The individual's feeling regarding his deeds is thus the sole and absolute measure of his every deed.

Bermann's radical conception of guilt is indeed very similar to that proposed by Nietzsche: 'Wenn der Mensch sich nicht mehr für böse hält, hört er auf, es zu sein!' (Vi,138). This conception, 'Der unschuldige Schuft' who is 'obschon ganz verrucht, doch in Unschuld' (IViii,46) is close to Nietzsche's heart from
early on, and will later become personified as the 'blonde Bestie', one of those 'aristocratic' types who 'seine Feinde, seine Unfälle, seine Untaten selbst nicht lange ernst nehmen' (VIII,287). I am not suggesting any direct relationship between these particular texts and Schnitzler's, but it seems to me that Bermann's whole position is radical enough - and more importantly for my case, idiosyncratic enough - for us to wonder whether the parallels to this thematic from Nietzsche's thought (not to some vague set of cultural assumptions) in this vital (because final) peroration on the hero should not give us pause for thought. It made Reichert do so, and I believe he was right.

Thus, with his subjectivist absolution of Georg from guilt, Heinrich Bermann proposes in a highly noteworthy manner that there is no value (whether positive or negative) inherent in any action itself, but that the individual's valuation of his own action gives it a (positive or negative) value.

Such individualism is, it would seem, not a matter of choice, but of necessity. Bermann's exposition of the Jewish problem slides over into a generalized depiction of this fact:


The insistence on a subjective approach to the solution, as well as the metaphor whereby that generalized 'freedom' is imagined as 'freedom to breathe' are very much threads which might lead back to Nietzsche.
Of course, neither the 'fresh air' imagery (one only has to think of *Götz von Berlichingen*) nor subjectivism are by any means exclusive to Nietzsche. However, the philosophical application of such thorough-going individualism to the field of value-judgements, especially to judgments on human guilt or innocence, is famously one of Nietzsche's particular themes. Here we come across the point which most strongly suggests a specific awareness of Nietzsche's ideas in Bermann: Georg's freedom from guilt is not, according to Bermann, rooted in an act of the individual's free will, but is simply a property inhering in him 'von Natur aus' (p.957).

Bermann's moral world-picture, then, seems to be dominated by the twin shadows of ineluctable subjectivism and equally ineluctable physiological determinism. This is very much the picture given by Nietzsche in his later works, where (as we saw) he often seems to say that freedom from guilt is not the result of some process of liberation but the result of (even, the definition of) having been born ontologically 'healthy'. If such subjectivism and determinism are really the case, then 'freedom' can only mean the untrammelled enacting of one's individual fate.

This perspective, then, seems to me to (as it did to Reichert) to be one which is strongly 'akin' to Nietzsche's thought. So far, then, we can agree wholeheartedly with Reichert. But here we come to the heart of the matter: the problem is whether we are to accept, as Reichert claims, that Schnitzler himself, Schnitzler as narrative voice, 'seems to have decided that the "Herrenmoral" is the correct and proper expression of the artistic personality.'

The question is, indeed, at the centre of the interpretative problem presented by *Der Weg ins Freie*: is Bermann (or any other character) endowed with any

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9 Reichert, p.106.
more authority than anyone else? Of the many voices and opinions, which, if any, does the work present as correct, acceptable, honest?

Reichert evidently assumes that Bermann is here speaking for his creator. I suggest, however, that we now dig deeper. In doing so we shall be trying to see what place such apparently Nietzschean thought occupies in this novel: is Bermann’s Nietzschean world-view (which Reichert, in my view, correctly divines) a presentation of authorial conviction or merely one of Schnitzler’s devices for characterization?

Bermann’s, we must recall, is the final statement made on Georg by anyone in the novel - except, that is, for the very last statement made by Georg’s own feelings regarding his situation: evidently, the passage is highly important. Is Bermann’s view of guilt and non-guilt correct? If so, then the final mood with which Georg regards his past and future - a rosily autumnal one - must be accepted as the only and final authorial judgement on the character. If Bermann is (as Reichert considers) speaking for his author, then Schnitzler must intend the reader to take Bermann’s hint and regard Georg’s essentially comfortable and self-satisfied view of the events and their implications as correct. In which case the reader will put down this novel with little more than a gentle sigh for the lost world of Old Vienna, a fleeting sadness for Anna Rosner and her dead child, a touch of sorrow for Bermann’s inevitable fate and the general conviction that things will be what things will be.

But what if Bermann is wrong? What if Schnitzler’s text gives clear grounds for suggesting that Bermann’s Nietzschean view of Georg is false? What a different feeling we would then be left with. So let us look at Bermann’s judgement on Georg with more care.

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Firstly, I think that we can strengthen Reichert's case that Bermann's judgement on Georg is indeed informed by Nietzschean ideas. Let us take, to begin with, Bermann's ideas regarding his own nation:

\[
\text{wir haben es nämlich notwendiger gehabt, euch verstehen zu lernen,}
\]
\[\text{als ihr uns. Diese Gabe des Verstehens hat sich ja im Laufe der Zeit}
\]
\[\text{bei uns entwickeln müssen ... nach den Gesetzen des Daseinskampfes,}
\]
\[\text{wenn Sie wollen (p,757).}
\]

Though Bermann refers here to the Jews, his analysis depends upon the conception that people (that is, not only Jews) are forced to understand each other as a result of being a chronically dangerous situation. This analysis is the same as that made by Nietzsche: man is forced to understand others (and thus himself) because he is the most endangered animal (Vii,372). Both Bermann's and Nietzsche's analyses also depend upon the sub-Darwinian idea that this environmentally-conditioned psychological phenomenon has been inherited.

If Bermann's ideas on the origins of rational understanding are thus reminiscent of Nietzsche's (i.e that it is merely another weapon in the 'Daseinskampf' which has developed out of man's physical 'endangeredness') then his opinion of the current value of that faculty is similar to one often evinced by Nietzsche:

\[
\text{[Das Verstehen] schützt uns nicht vor Leid, nicht vor Ekel, nicht vor}
\]
\[\text{Vernichtung. Es führt gar nirgends hin. Es ist eine Sackgasse}
\]
\[\text{gewissermassen. (p,842)}
\]
Not only the analysis, but also the presentation are in tune with Nietzsche's. Bermann's analytic concepts become metaphors as he speaks them: 'Verstehen' is not *wie eine Sackgasse gewissermassen*, but *ist eine Sackgasse gewissermassen*.

The alternatives to rational values as guides to 'Life' appear to be, in Bermann's case as in Nietzsche's, aesthetic values. Bermann says that Felician is the happiest man in the world because Felician's 'hauptsächliche Eigenschaft' is to be 'schön', and because 'Die Linie des Lebens ist sozusagen reiner, wenn mann schön ist, als wenn mann ein Genie ist' (p.666). He then says that this could be expressed better - and, of course, it already has been, in Nietzsche's countless variations on his theme that the world is justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon. Aesthetic beauty is thus - by Bermann, as often by Nietzsche - set up as a possible alternative mode of living to that of insight into the painful nature of life.

Bermann's opinions on what constitutes 'true' philosophy are also ones to which Nietzsche could have assented: all true philosophers - such as Kant and Schopenhauer - have actually been 'Dichter', like Shakespeare and Beethoven, whose satisfaction comes not from believing that they have produced 'eine entgültige "Wahrheit"', but from having placed 'ein Kunstwerk mehr auf der Welt'.(p.889)

Bermann castigates every

We recall Nietzsche’s fundamental and constantly repeated conviction that each individual is 'ein eigenes, nur einmaliges Ding [..] das zu allen Dingen eine neue, nie dagewesene Stellung einnimmt.' (IVii,237) Again, Bermann’s argument that all man's religions and philosophies are cowardly attempts to evade this ineluctable subjectivity is reminiscent of Nietzsche’s.

This does not, in this epoch, mean that it is strictly derived from Nietzsche, of course. Much then-modish 'Lebensphilosophie' would sound much the same. However, I would again suggest that Heinrich Bermann's perception of the depth of the dilemma indicates a more distinct debt to Nietzsche. The idea of seeing things in one's uniquely individualistic way naturally implies that one ignores, or if necessary destroys, any opinion which might stand in one's way - and Bermann is no more worried by this idea than Nietzsche.

Indeed, Bermann's statement of his passionate wish to be 'unjust', that is, to escape from the toils of critical knowledge, of seeing other people's points of view, is, I would suggest, a Nietzschean statement pur sang:

\[
\text{In Wirklichkeit hab ich gar keine Lust gerecht zu sein. Ich stell's mir sogar wunderschön vor ungerecht zu sein. Ich glaube, es wäre die allersündeste Seelengymnastik.}\]

(p.929)

This is just what Nietzsche says in many places: in Vii,150, for example, 'Leben' chooses 'Lieber zu urtheilen, als gerecht zu sein'. Bermann's metaphor of 'die allersündeste Seelengymnastik' is again reminiscent of Nietzsche's later writings, where physical and spiritual 'health' are regarded as practically interchangeable concepts. Thus, like Nietzsche, Bermann appears to hold that an overdose of 'Gerechtigkeit' (i.e. of 'objective' judgement) is 'anti-Life' and is to be cured by a physically-conceived programme of hardening exercises.
To conclude our look at Bermann's Nietzschean tendencies, we might fittingly use his own last speech about himself. His final words on the problems of his existence speak about the wish to be freed of his critical faculties (and of the consequent need to 'create his own world') and the longing to dwell comfortably in established values. The passage is so thoroughly Nietzschean in its analysis of the pain involved in such value-creation, in its religious imagery, its ironically-treated pathos and its concrete metaphor that it might almost be mistaken for one of Nietzsche's own last, moving letters:

Glauben sie mir, Georg, es gibt Momente, in denen ich die Menschen mit der sogennanten Weltanschauung beneide. Ich, wenn ich eine wohlgeordnete Welt haben will, ich muss mir immer selber erst eine schaffen. Das ist anstrengend für jemanden, der nicht der liebe Gott ist. (p.958)

It is worth noting that Schnitzler was demonstrably aware of and demonstrably interested in precisely the despairing, all but self-pitying side of Nietzsche's texts with which Bermann's words show such a similarity. Writing to Hofmannsthal, he reports:


Schnitzler, I would suggest, may well have had this section of Nietzsche's writings in mind as a model for Bermann's bemoaning of his ineluctable fate.

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10 See Hillebrand, vol. 1, p.112
Here, then, I suggest not that any one particular phrase of Schnitzler's is to be traced back to any one phrase of Nietzsche's, but that Schnitzler's portrait of Bermann and of Bermann's attitudes nevertheless exhibits a cumulative set of parallels with Nietzsche's writings that, all in all, suggests very strongly the underlying presence of the earlier writer rather than of a vague 'Zeitgeist'. Bermann displays a belief in subjectivity, in physiological determinism, in the uniqueness of each event. He has an analytic conviction that feeling is preferable to analysis and a considered opinion that to act is 'healthier' than to consider. He feels the torturing necessity for man to 'create his own world', that is, to play the value-creating role formerly assigned to God. He shares Nietzsche's critical stance to man's motivation - psychological insight being the hallmark of his art - and the tormenting feeling that this very insight is the fiery angel guarding the gates to 'healthy' life. Finally (as we saw with his 'Verstand = Sackgasse' image) Bermann communicates his insights in very much Nietzsche's fashion of using metaphor to vivify analytic concepts.

At the very least, I would argue, we have here a portrait of the psychologizing, critical intellectual which is very much in accordance with the specific parameters set up by Nietzsche: I would personally go further and agree with Reichert that Schnitzler is alluding consciously, if not in detail, to genuinely Nietzschean - i.e. to some of Nietzsche's actual - formulations.

The question (to repeat it) is whether Bermann's Nietzscheanism is Schnitzler's (as Reichert believes) or the character's. Certainly it is notable that Bermann's judgement on Georg - setting him up as the 'naturally' guilt-free aristocrat - is immediately followed by a counter-judgement from Georg on Bermann himself: 'Irgend einmal war ihm wohl bestimmt, von einer Turmspitze, auf die er in Spiralen hinaufgeringelt war, hinabzustürzen ins Leere' (p.958). If
Bermann sees Georg as fated to a lighthearted life without guilt, Georg sees Bermann as fated to a bad end through his critical intellect. Is Bermann right about Georg or vice versa? Or are both right? Or neither? To follow the clues up, we must proceed to examine the whole question of Schnitzler's portrayal of Georg von Wergenthin. Our answers will bear directly on Reichert's long-standing conclusion that Bermann is here the Nietzschean voice of the author himself.

We will not, in this process, come across much if anything which I would take to be indicative of a specifically Nietzschean presence. As I have already said, though, it is the perspective on a Nietzschean presence I am interested in, not in some attempt to demonstrate that it exists throughout this text (which it clearly does not). The route I am about to take, may, in consequence, seem somewhat circuitous. I can promise that we will return, and I hope not empty-handed, to this fundamental question of whether Reichert's interpretation of the evidence is sufficient. On the way, then, we shall bear in mind the following question: is Georg von Wergenthin (as Reichert holds) Schnitzler's portrait of a Nietzschean 'Herrenmensch'?

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Jews and Gentiles

The blond, aristocratic, naturally lighthearted, artistic Georg, who can merrily go about ruining other people's lives as if it were all a student prank, might indeed seem to be to be the sort of man the later Nietzsche would have liked to see (or be). But a close textual examination of Der Weg ins Freie will show, I think, that Georg is treated in such a way as to call him and his whole modus
vivendi into question in a manner at least as profound as is the case with the other characters. To examine this will inevitably involve the whole sphere of the relationships between Georg and the other characters of the book.

It has been noted that the structure of Der Weg ins Freie is one 'which would be functional only in a crowded city'. Georg flits from group to group, allowing them thus to come to life for a time, then leaving them to go elsewhere: there is no sense in which membership of a particular group impinges on Georg - as it must inevitably do in a village, for example. He feels it to be wie beruhigend, dass er zu keinem menschlichen Wesen in engerer Beziehung stand, und dass es doch manche gab, mit denen er wieder anknüpfen, in deren Kreis er wieder eintreten dürfte, sobald es ihm nur beliebte (p.640).

Membership of these groups seems, then to be entirely voluntary for Georg. Here, though, we come upon what appears to be a curious contradiction in Schnitzler's novel: if Georg is a perfect example of 'Ungebundenheit', then the Jewish circles he predominantly moves in are in a very different situation. They make up a many-layered picture of a group who are quite inescapably 'gebunden' to (or by) their Jewishness in one way or another.

We are thus presented with what appears to be a survey of 'Gebundenheit' in many forms through the eyes of a man who is thoroughly 'ungebunden'.

However, I want to argue that the distinction is a tempting illusion, and that Schnitzler's portrait of Georg builds subtly but powerfully towards the conclusion that he is anything but a free man, and that what he conceives to be (and defends as) 'freedom' is anything but that. Georg's dilemma, as I hope to show, is in fact very much the same as that of his Jewish friends. Swales puts it thus:

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11 Pascal, From Naturalism to Expressionism, p.148.
Schnitzler provides in Georg a figure who functions, as it were, as a non-Jewish touchstone vouching for the fact that the uncertainties of Bermann, Nürnberger, the Ehrenbergs and Golowskis are by no means confined to Jewish circles alone.\(^\text{12}\)

Georg's lurking uncertainty is in fact permanently hinted at by the very fact of his being in these Jewish circles. This may sound a strange comment to make, but it is one of the leitmotifs of the book that Jews - the 'homeless' nation - find the attraction of those who seem 'heimisch' impossible to resist. 'Nun ja, ein schöner, schlanker, blonder junger Mann; Freiherr, Germane, Christ - welcher Jude könnte diesem Zauber widerstehen?' (p.908). The fact is - and it would scarcely have escaped a contemporary audience - that in the prevailing atmosphere of Vienna, Georg is onto an easy winner whenever he decides to visit his Jewish friends.

The only two Gentiles to whom he is close are Anna and Felician; both voice worries about Georg's future in rather (and sometimes explicitly) parental fashion. The aristocracy are not universally loved (p.671) - not, for example, by populist antisemites of the Christian Socialist party. The question we are drawn to ask - and of which Schnitzler himself can scarcely have been unconscious - is: what kind of blond, Christian, apolitical German aristocrat moves so much in Jewish circles?

The first answer is, of course, an artistic one. However, there is also a suspicion that he does so because there - unlike in gentile circles - no-one will demand that he worry about his shrinking fortune, lack of career, drone-like existence and suchlike. Among the Jews his position is secure simply by virtue

of his being Freiherr Georg von Wergenthin-Recco: he has no obligation to 'become', he can just 'be'.

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Sons and Fathers

The above suggestion - which implies Georg's self-indulgence and petrification - might seem exaggerated, were it not for the fact that Schnitzler's very first theme hints at just this problem. There, Schnitzler allows us to know something of drives within Georg of which the character himself is not conscious. We know, that is, more about Georg than Georg does - the classic formula of authorial distance. The distancing knowledge we are given concerns Georg's parents.

The novel opens with Georg sitting 'ganz allein' in the paternal home. The centre of his thoughts is his father, dead for two months, who he feels as if he has seen 'noch vor einer Stunde' (p.635). He thinks of his last conversation with his father: there, the father's question 'Wohin, wohin?' is clearly intended to be read as more than just a comment on Georg's meandering piano-playing. That question is the leitmotif for the whole work. What is quite clear is that Schnitzler is using the figure of the father to carry a significance which extends beyond the realistic depiction of family or social life. This is made quite explicit by Dr. Stauber's association of Georg's father with old-established morality on pp.774-776. The figure of the father stands as the guarantor of existing relations, existing 'homes' in the broadest sense; Georg is clearly at a loss how to run his life without this ordering spirit.
We soon learn that even Georg's artistic 'career' is scarcely his own existential choice at all:

Der Vater selbst war es, der [Georg] nach einiger Zeit freistellte, die Universitätstudien aufzugeben ... was dieser erlöst und dankbar annahm. Doch auf diesem selbstgewählten Gebiete war seine Ausdauer nicht bedeutend. (p.637)

It seems to be more than a coincidence that we are given this equation of 'selbstgewählten Gebiete' and 'unbedeutende Ausdauer'. Georg is quite right to see 'dass seine Existenz seit dem Tode des Vaters bis zum heutigen Tag gleichsamunterbrochen gewesen war' (p.638-9). What he is not aware of, though, is how deep this break is.

The situation is a classic one: the father is dead and the son must now become a man. Georg reads first his father's and mother's love-letters and then his own early compositions. He feels both that these youthful works contain 'Versprechungen ... die er vielleicht niemals erfüllen sollte. Und doch spürte er gerade in der letzten Zeit, dass sich etwas in ihm vorbereitete' (p.638). Thus both threat and promise are present in his new position. As it turns out, he is quite right that something is about to change: he is about to get involved in the most serious relationship of his life.

A striking feature is that Georg's relationship with Anna is almost - but not quite - a reliving of his parent's marriage. It will involve a girl who is a singer (like his mother) and who (like his mother) is the poorer of the two and perhaps not called to art 'aus innerstem Beruf' (p.636). In case we miss the connection, Schnitzler has Georg drift directly from thoughts of his mother's voice to thoughts of Anna's (p.639). This connection between the mother's and Anna's voices is no coincidence: as we learn several times in the later pages of
the book, Anna is a natural mother. At one point (p.901) she is overtly 'müterlich' to Georg. But here lies the difference: unlike his father (and indeed, unlike Schnitzler himself) Georg does not marry the poor singer and have children.

On this subject, Schnitzler's distance from Georg is so pronounced that the first scene between Georg and Anna (far from being an approving portrait of a 'Herrenmensch' in action) could almost be out of Reigen. Georg wants to 'go away' (i.e. spend the night) with Anna somewhere (p.706) but immediately he 'erschrak über seine eigenen Worte' because he is afraid she might construe his words as a proposal of marriage. When she then asks if she can make a serious wish, he is 'beinahe ängstlich' (p.707).

Georg, though, successfully remains single and 'free'. Anna's and his child (which is openly associated with his creative work, p.753) dies in a very loaded manner - strangled on its own umbilical chord in the moment of trying to leave its 'home' in the womb and emerge into 'life'. We shall return to this matter later: for the moment it is enough to say that the comparison with his father's marriage thus casts a shadow of barrenness, impotence and failure over Georg's relationship with Anna. Like the fathers and father-figures we have seen in Rilke's and Kafka's stories, Georg's father, though dead, remains the figure against whom the son is compelled, consciously or not, to measure himself.

In its treatment of the father-son conflict, then, Schnitzler's novel exhibits 'one of the most striking features of the literature of this decade'. Within the internal workings of the novel, its importance lies in the fact that it is a problem Georg shares with his Jewish friends. Oscar Ehrenberg is virtually waiting for his father to die so that he can turn Christian, and only the father's control over

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13 Pasley, 'Modern German Literature', p.576.
the family fortune prevents him from doing so (p.642). Heinrich Bermann is so at odds with his father (a failed politician) that he sees the 'Niedergang des alternden Mannes anfangs wie mit Schadenfreude' (p.708).

The pattern is familiar from Kafka's *Das Urteil* and *Die Verwandlung*: the son cannot be free as long as the father is there - but has he the strength to take on the father's mantle? When Georg is faced with the prospect of paternity, his reaction is very close to fear: 'Vater! ... Schwer, beinahe düster sank das Wort in seine Seele' (p.738). Oscar Ehrenberg is driven directly by the battle with his father into a suicide attempt. Bermann's utter lack of sympathy with his father is so great that he is only interested in anecdotes concerning him inasmuch as they might be used for a 'politische Komödie' (p.847). Suicide or a 'humour' which clearly borders on nihilism: these, then, are two examples of the results of the father-son conflict. There is a third: Georg's passivity and inability to make anything of himself.

Georg's powerlessness on the death of his father, the vacuum of direction which he now feels, is full of wider significance. Just as the dominance of the father symbolizes established values in general, so the powerlessness of the son after the father's death - and faced with the impending break-up of the home - symbolizes a general inability to find or create autonomous values for living. Thus, for example, we learn of a trip 'zu der er sich nicht allein entschliessen könnte' (p.636). Georg is part of what one writer has called the 'Generationen, die vater- und heimatlos geworden sind'. The fact is that our supposedly 'Nietzschean' hero is beginning to appear as anything but a grand, free individual. Rather he appears crippled by the death of old certainties (the

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Father). Georg's dilemma on the death of his father, then, appears to be very much a representative version of the state of the age. His reaction (or rather, lack of it) is, I hope to show, a thoroughly sterile one: he can only move in the aimless circles of what Swales calls 'the atrophied individualism' of Schnitzler's Anatol;\(^{15}\) his life is indeed only 'ein Zögerndes "noch"'.\(^{16}\) The process by which Schnitzler reveals this in Georg is splendidly subtle, yet close textual reading makes it quite distinct - as I hope now to show.

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Manners Makyth Man?

However closely Schnitzler treads to outright condemnation of the hero, he never quite oversteps the border, depending instead on subtle juxtapositions, building up 'an accumulation of hints'\(^{17}\).

At one point, for example, Georg is glowing with the feeling that he, too, is somehow pregnant with the future, and looks forward to it. But Schnitzler follows Georg's elevated feelings with a sudden and (to the reader) almost comically jarring return to reality:

\[
\text{Das Leben lag vor ihm, als etwas ernst-geheimnisvolles, voll Aufgaben und Wundern.}
\]


\(^{17}\) Swales, 'Nürnberger's Novel', p.571.
Als er ins Kaffeehaus trat... (p.754)

This easy coming-and-going of elevated moods is as characteristic of Georg as it is of Anatol. Moreover, it is explicitly artificial: Georg approaches his long-dead mother's bed 'mit dem klar bewussten Willen, die Empfindungen, zu denen er sich verpflichtet fühlte, heraufzubeschwören' (p.793). As to his child, 'von diesem Wunder fühlte er sich nicht so mächtig aufgerufen, als es fordern durfte' (p.839). Georg is so 'innerlich gleichgültig' (to use another character's phrase on Vienna itself) that emotions can only be stirred by the conviction that one really ought to have them at certain moments. The emotions, then, are not 'authentic' individual responses, but are moods commanded by a form of rarefied (and self-regarding) social convention.

The neat parcelling-up involved in this is made delightfully clear at the end of Georg's visit to Tristan (p.921): Georg dreams of his future, convinced that he has a unique relationship to 'der geliebten Kunst' (even measuring himself against Wagner). Then: 'die letzten Töne verklangen, der Vorhang fiel. Georg warf einen Blick nach der Loge im ersten Stock.' Again, we have that unnervingly seamless transition from supposedly elevated, private emotions to the most stock conventions of social behaviour. So close is life to art here in the opera-house that Georg feels the arrival of the interval merely as his moving from 'von einem Traum in den andern' (pp.917-8).

Moreover, we are given hints early in the book that such conventionalisation of emotion - what Swales calls the 'erosion of human experiential capacity'18 - has darker consequences than just a sepia-tinted distance from 'Life'.

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Aristocratic Antisemitism

Georg goes walking in the Prater with Bermann. Bermann’s ‘pushiness’ in talking of Felician (whom he hardly knows, after all!), his failure to reply politely to Georg’s profound ‘Bemerkungen über die herbstliche Abendstimmung, über die Leute, die in den Wirtshäusern sassen, über die Militärkapellen, die in den Kiosken spielten’ (p.666), and the fact that he appears ‘höchst unelegant’ - all these weighty factors begin ‘Georg plötzlich empfindlich zu stören’ (p.667). So far this might still (just) be taken as read. Authorial distance, however, is quite unmistakeable in the following passage:

Zu rechter Zeit fiel es ihm ein, dass so ziemlich alles, was er von den schriftstellerischen Leistungen Heinrichs kannte, ihm wider den Strich gegangen war. (p.667)

Typically, Schnitzler thus gently confronts us with a striking fact: Georg’s artistic tastes arrange themselves ‘zu rechter Zeit’ according to someone’s manners and dress. Only now does he recall that Felician didn’t like Bermann’s plays, and that his friend Guido wants to ban all such Jewish pieces. These plays were one (presumably Naturalistic) play set among the lower orders, and one scandalous social satire (p.667). Not the sort of thing young aristocrats are likely to enjoy. In this section, then, Georg begins to appear as a man in whom the prejudices of his class lurk beneath - and not that far beneath - an apparent tolerance and charm.

The way those prejudices run is, with our hindsight, extraordinary evidence of Schnitzler’s feeling for the hidden, dire pulse of his society, with its undercurrents of aggression. The quite unwonted vehemence of Georg’s feelings,
the speed of his change from polite reserve to real enmity and the entire absence of proportion this displays, could almost be described as unbalanced:

Während Georg all dieses einfiel, steigerte sich sein Ärger über das manierlose Weiterlaufen und beharrliche Schweigen seines Begleiters zu einer wahren Feindseligkeit, und halb unbewusst begann er allen Insulten recht zu geben, die damals gegen Bermann vorgebracht worden waren. (p.667)

In the context of the book it is safe to assume that such insults made good use of Bermann's Jewishness. Here, then, Schnitzler carefully begins to reveal the way in which certain assumptions, 'halb unbewusst', rule Georg's mind. Schnitzler's awareness in Der Weg ins Freie of the violent unconscious forces at work has been seen by Swales in the theme of oscillations 'between scrupulously maintained indifference [...] and passionate surrender'19. That 'passionate surrender' is in this case not to an individual, but to the even more effectively depersonalizing embrace of social class.

Thus, if the word 'unbewusst' inevitably calls up the shadow of Freud, then the textual context favours the kind of interpretation advanced by Swales of Leutnant Gustl:

We would seem to be in artistic territory that is heavily indebted to Freud, to both his insights and his analytical methods. Yet what we hear is the voice of a particular social class [...] the flotsam and jetsam, the tissue of prejudice and 'idées reçues' that go with a particular form of social existence.20

20 Swales, 'Liberalism or Hedonism?', p.21.
There can be little doubt as to what class Schnitzler has in mind. Schwarz's depiction of the Baron in Schnitzler's Literatur might apply just as well (if more subtly) to Georg:

[es lassen sich] Snobismus, kompulsiver 'Eleganz', Standesdünkel, Antisemitismus und Feindseligkeit gegen den 'indeskreten' Literaturbetrieb unschwer als aristokratische Vorurteile erkennen.\(^1\)

One of the most revealing of the early sections shows both Georg's aristocratic and his latent antisemitic prejudices in action. We hear of his holiday with Graf Schönstein (the same man who advised the banning of Jewish plays) and of 'Oscar Ehrenberg, der - ohne angeborene alpine Neigungen - gern die Gelegenheit ergriffen hatte, sich zwei hochgeboren en Herren anzuschliessen' (p.639). The witticism openly displays snobbery and points to hidden and dubious assumptions - does Georg really think that his and Guido's 'alpine Neigungen' (unlike Oscar's) are 'angeboren'? A few paragraphs later we realize that Georg (wrongly) assumes that Oscar has converted since he is reserve-officer (p.642). On its own, this passage indicates that Georg's assumptions as to the extent of antisemitism are actually in advance of the facts; in conjunction with the earlier passage, it means that Georg's social and racial wit was applied to Oscar \emph{despite assuming him to be religiously assimilated}. Georg's latent antisemitism is thus part of that racial rather than religious sort which was relatively new in Schnitzler's day and which was to have such dire consequences.

The centre and symbol of such unspoken prejudices is Georg's exclusive aristocrats' club. It is instructive to examine how and why Georg decides to go back there after a long absence. He is walking through the park, considering

\(^1\) Schwarz, 'Arthur Schnitzler und die Aristokratie', p.61.
Bermann's fate deeply enough to have come to the insight that Heinrich's egoism 'ihm zugleich Rettung und Befreiung bedeutete' (p.709). This follows on from an exposition which explicitly relates Bermann's dilemma to the collapse of his family, particularly of his father, and thereby - to the reader, though not to Georg - associates Bermann's situation with Georg's own.

In a sense, then Georg's insight into Bermann is at the same time one into himself. The implications of this insight are pointed by the clock striking nine - the number of strokes for a burial.22

At this point Georg sees two other members of the critical-literary circles in a café. Abels examines the section in relation to the theme of 'Sprachkrise' and finds the dumb-show between Rapp and Gleissner to be filled with symbols indicating petrification, loss of reality, death.23 I would thoroughly agree.

Georg's attitude to the critical, Jewish circle is notable: he registers the 'blasse, häsisch-kluge Gesicht' of the short-sighted critic Rapp, the 'falscher Eleganz' and 'ins Leere gehende Gesten' of Gleissner. And suddenly 'fasste er es kaum, wie sie es ertragen konnten in dieser Wolke von Hass sich eine Viertelstunde gegenüber zu sitzen.' (p.709) The imagery of ill-health and falseness is striking; even more striking is Georg's apocalyptic vision of the 'Wolke von Hass' surrounding these figures. Hatred of what? Georg does not tell us, but the imagery hints clearly: of 'Life' itself.

Georg, having seen this vision of the 'Leben dieses ganzen Kreises' (pp.709-10) decides not to go into the café - the public meeting and debating place - but to his exclusive club. It is notable that Schnitzler contrasts the two - in Georg's


23 Abels, pp. 150-152.
mind - by physical depictions. In the club, instead of hatred-filled intellectual talk and oppressive atmospheres, he finds himself in 'lüftigen und hubsch ausgestatteten Räume ... in denen angenehme, gut angezogene junge Leute verkehrten'. Here (pp. 710-711) one speaks of warlike sports ('die Chancen der Kämpfer im bevorstehenden Turnier') or a duel over a woman in which a lieutenant Novotny has killed the industrialist Heidenfeld. Here, art is represented only by operetta and by portraits showing 'verdiente Klubmitglieder'. Georg, who chez the Jews plays the piano, here plays competitive billiards, and wins.

What gives the passage its underlying significance, though, is the relation in which it stands to Georg's considerations regarding Bermann (and, by implication, himself): the club is a place to which Georg flees when the insights into life get too unpleasant. His 'justification' for doing so is interestingly reminiscent of a vaguely 'Nietzschean' (in the usual, imprecise sense of the word) justification for abandoning investigation: the avoidance of a hate-filled, ugly, pallid and sterile group with bad air around them in favour of a lighthearted, aristocratic, military-sporting and 'healthy' atmosphere in which no analyses are required.

One only has to think of the famous passage on the 'Factory of Morals' in Zur Genealogie der Moral (e.g. 'Schlecht Luft! [...] diese Kellertiere voll Rache und Hass', Vii,296) to see that Schnitzler's imagery is very much in the vein of the imagery to which Nietzsche often appeals. Not that there is any question of a textual relationship here: Schnitzler, I think, is taking a critically distanced stance to an all-too-timely set of prejudices - one which Nietzsche (as we have seen) was himself prone to fall into (as were many others). Schnitzler is not referring to Nietzsche's actual texts in any way here: rather, this is a good
example of vaguely, uncritically disseminated 'Nietzschean' or 'vitalist' imagery (i.e. of the type which could be called 'Nietzschean' by people who had never read a word of Nietzsche) being placed in a social-historical perspective.

Georg's mental picture of the coffee-house literati calls up to Abels the imagery of the antisemite's 'jüdische Literatenpack'. But Schnitzler's implied criticism of Georg is not limited to such hints regarding the prejudices at work in his dislikes. The club itself, that 'healthy' atmosphere, is one which involves a deliberate eschewal of intellectual investigation and contains strong hints of a love for violence and death. From this insight, we can proceed to look at perhaps the darkest element in the make-up of Georg von Wergenthin.

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The Will to Death

In the above episode, we hear that the pictures of various 'verdiente Klubmitglieder aufgehängt werden sollten, vor allem das des jungen Labinski, der im vorigen Jahr durch Selbstmord geendet hatte (p.710). The juxtaposition of 'verdientes Klubmitglied' and 'Selbstmord' is pregnant: there is, indeed, no other indication at all of Labinski's 'Verdienst'. The subliminal implication is that Labinski's status resides precisely in his having committed suicide - for some unknowably private reason (p.639). This surprising idea is actually only one of several suggestions that Georg (and his social group) is haunted by something very like the will to death. Not least of these is the appearance of Labinski in Georg's dream (p.857) as the 'Steuermann'.

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* Abels, p.152.
One of the most revealing of these incidents combines the impression that Georg (as we have already had cause to suspect) automatically reflects the prejudices of his class with the suggestion that one of those prejudices regards suicide as fundamentally admirable. We saw how Oscar Ehrenberg is, in an earlier incident, the object of Georg's snobbery and possibly of his subconscious antisemitism. After Oscar's suicide attempt, however, things are suddenly different. Having just heard that he considers Bermann simply 'zu feig' to kill himself (p.829), we learn that Georg 'hatte für Oscar, seit das Unglück geschehen, wirkliche Sympathie gefasst'. (p.844) And Georg is in this respect clearly the voice of his whole class: Oscar may have lost an eye, but he thereby saved his 'Leutnantscharge' (p.825). Evidently, Oscar's act finds approval not only from Georg, but from the whole military-aristocratic group of which he is a member. As Schwarz says: 'Das Frappierende an diesem Fall ist, das es nicht den Adel selbst, sondern die Adelsideologie am Werk zeigt'.

The incident makes an interesting comparison with the depiction of Willy Eissler: he is so pugnaciously 'satisfaktionsfähig' (and blond!) as to appear almost 'one of us' to Georg. (p.643) Oscar's fate, however, shows the real basis of the aristocratic circle's distinctive ethic to be something suspiciously like a form of respectable suicide: the only way for Oscar or Willy to gain real acceptance from them is to conform to their secret 'thanatic' code - to prove, we might say, that a Jew too can be 'selbstmordfähig'.

Now that Oscar has shown this quality, Georg considers his story to be tragic, and is annoyed when Bermann calls it tragicomic (p.843). There is little doubt that the reader is drawn to agree with Bermann's interpretation, if only because Schnitzler does not permit Georg to back his case up at all. Nor is this the only

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25 Schwarz, p.62.
occasion when Georg is shown to prefer a melodramatic, sentimentally (and satisfyingly) 'tragic' version of a story: other examples would be regarding Nürnberger's sister (p.772) or Bermann's actress (p.892). This brings us to the whole question of Georg's aesthetic tastes: here, we will find more evidence of the will to death.

The first name which leaps to mind when thinking along these lines is Wagner's Tristan und Isolde, that 'canon of nineteenth century suicidal romanticism'. Wagner's extraordinary masterpiece is, indeed, one of the lurking motifs of Schnitzler's novel. It is Tristan which Georg has been studying on the day his child is born dead (p.880); the opera envelopes Georg and Anna in the togetherness of the early days away together - when, significantly enough, they were 'ineinander beruhigt wie sie's nie gewesen' (p.792); and it is Tristan which provides the most extended revelation of Georg's attitude to his own art-form. He feels that 'alle Menschen für die Dauer ihres Hierseins in geheimnisvoller Weise gegen allen Schmerz und allen Schmutz des Lebens gefeit waren' (p.918). He wonders if he will ever share Wagner's lot 'Sieger zu werden über das Bedenkliche, Klägliche, Jammervolle des Alltags' (p.921). These attitudes, in fact, recall Georg's feelings concerning his own work, which, when it is going well, leaves him 'beruhigt wie einer, dem niemals im Leben etwas Übles begegnet kann, und für den weder Einsamkeit, noch Armut, noch Tod irgendwelche Schrecken haben' (p.684).

Georg clearly sees music as a protection or escape from a life which is fraught with 'Schmerz', 'Schmutz', 'Jammer', 'Schrecken' and so on. This quality of 'Beruhigung' in Georg's art - or in his relationship to Anna its best moments

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(p.792) - hints at that Schopenhauerman (and proto-Freudian) aesthetic, wherein art is supposed to calm the individual will and thus bring pleasure - defined as the cessation of life's pain. Thus we read that the happiest time of Georg's life is precisely when he can say 'Nie hatte er sich so wunschlos, in Voraussicht und Erinnerung so beruhigt gefühlt als hier'. (p.798)

The point is, I think, clear: nothing could be further from the Nietzschean 'Herrenmoral'-artist which Reichert sees in Georg. In one splendid passage the narrative form glides effortlessly into 'erlebte Rede' as we hear of Georg's day with Sissy, of love and her instant forgetting of him, of music, the evening, entering the water 'was für eine Wonne auch das! Und dann die Nacht.... die Nacht....' (p.862). This is virtually a programmatic depiction of dissolution of personality, of entering the symbolic 'Weltall', of the longing for an easeful death which would be, as it is in Hofmannsthal's haunting lines, 'So leicht und feierlich und ohne Grauen'.

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A Crepuscular Class

Though Schnitzler is thus demonstrably aware of the Eros-Thanatos connection (Anna says that Stanzides is 'zum Totschiessen schön' on p.702), I do not believe that he presents the death-wish as part of the ontology of the human psyche. Rather, his presentation of Georg shows that even this supposedly ultimate bedrock of desire is in fact simply - or rather, complexly - part and parcel of the social dilemma we have witnessed in the book. I would suggest that the 'death-wish' is no more than the most extreme symptom of Georg's aversion to individual responsibility.
This aversion leads Georg to believe in something like predestination (p.882), to take 'a false reassurance from the notion that fate - and not any inadequacy on their part - has prevented the relationship'. Such an attitude was mocked earlier in the poetry of Winternitz - which Georg secretly rather liked (p.754) - and in Oscar's affected description of why his affair has to end: 'Es muss sein' (p.676). That Oscar of all people should use such a turn of phrase is revealing. He is, as always, trying to ape the aristocracy, and his choice of a ludicrously cheapened form of Beethovian 'iron necessity' to justify ending his fling with a lower-class girl is part of this. Appeals to 'necessity' (such as Georg's on pp.890-1) would thus seem to be an identifiable favourite of the aristocratic class.

Stanzides, for example, gives up his investigation of antisemitism in the army with the famous lines 'Es ist wirklich, wie wenn die Leute wahnsinnig wären' (p.818). He claims that Sefranek is 'so wenig Antisemit als Sie und ich. Er verkehrt in jüdischen Häusern...' (p.818). This is all very well - but is Sefranek not suspiciously like the types depicted by Willy Eissler right at the start of the book, who 'sich bei den Juden anfressen und schon auf der Treppe über sie zu schimpfen anfangen' (p.642)? It would seem that Stanzides' blaming of a general 'Wahnsinn' in society which exculpates individuals like Sefranek (and, by his own extension, like himself and Georg) is really not sufficient. We have already seen how, in Georg's own case, the visiting of Jewish houses by no means destroys latent antisemitism. In fact, Georg's famous conclusion - often taken as Schnitzler's voice - that 'reine Beziehungen auch zwischen einzelnen reinen Menschen in einer Atmosphäre von Torheit, Unrecht und Unaufrichtigkeit nicht gedeihen können' (p.730) is remarkably similar to Stanzides' view. Both these

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27 Swales, Arthur Schnitzler, p.47.
aristocratic types abandon their investigations into the problem with appeals to their own supposed innocence and to the lack of any individual responsibility for the evils of society. Even a Sefranek (who declares himself to be 'eine Bestie in Menschengestalt' on p.716) is to be excused on the ground that we are all subject to supra-personal 'atmospheres', beyond any individual's ken or purview.

A sociological indication as to the roots of this aversion to responsibility (one so strong that it culminates in a death-wish) could easily be suggested. Georg's inability to 'take charge' of his life is characteristic of his society, in which the upper middle classes and enlightened aristocracy (these, not the great magnates of the higher aristocracy, are Schnitzler's men) failed entirely to play the role which they had done in, say England or France. In Austria-Hungary, as Swales shows, their liberalism 'atrophies into passivity and scepticism'.

Schnitzler's text mirrors this state of affairs exactly: in Georg's world the aristocracy has neither maintained its independent wealth nor provided political leadership to the newly-enfranchised classes. A Jewish manufacturer like Ehrenberg is richer by far than a Wergenthin-Recco and the lower-middle class Joseph Rosner seeks other leaders - one thinks inevitably of Karl Lueger, Christian-Socialist demagogue and Hitler's first political hero. The only thing we learn about Georg's family's property is that it includes 'den Besitz eines alten längst unbewohnbaren Schlösschens' (p.636).

Having yielded (through an inability to adapt) the bastions of wealth and political influence, the aristocracy's definition of itself (without which it would simply cease to exist) is forced into narrower and more arcane regions. At the last - and for the Austro-Hungarian aristocracy it really is at the last - the 'Duft von uralter Vornehmheit, kaltblütiger Verführung und eleganter

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Todesverachtung' which Else sees in Felician (p.645), is all it has left - and is thus the one definition of 'aristocracy'.

To someone like Oscar (or, for that matter, Leutnant Gustl) who is not of the aristocracy, but is 'homeless' and longs to 'belong' to that apparently most secure of classes, the price of entrance is to conform to its now largely meaningless norms. But - as in Kafka's Strafkolonie - because such norms are meaningless does not mean that they are not deadly serious. The scorn of death which is the most important of the aristocracy's tenets is meant quite literally. Why? Perhaps because it is the one preserve of aristocracy which may still have a (military) application. Perhaps because the higher the price of entrance the more exclusive the club. Perhaps because this aimless class would rather, in Nietzsche's words, 'das Nichts wollen als nicht wollen' (Viii,430). Whatever the reason, it is the case that Oscar may dress like a lord, he may ape the Viennese aristocracy's attitude to the 'süsses Mädel', but in the end the only way he can really be accepted is by conforming to the most fatal, absurd - and thus most exclusive - of the aristocracy's codes.

That code has become so extreme that, as in the case of Labinski, death does not even have to be justified by any particular cause. Suicide has become almost a virtue in itself. Demeter Stanzides - supposedly the epitome of aristocratic distinction and untroubled male beauty - expresses the crepuscular feelings of his group. He is off to 'wo sich die Füchs' gute Nacht sagen ... An der ungarisch-kroatischen Grenze' (p.812). The location reminds us of where Therese Golowski's too-liberal judge was sent: 'irgendwohin an die russische Grenze, von wo es keine Wiederkehr gibt' (p.655). Stanzides' awareness of age and melancholy, his greying hair and consciousness that it is all downhill now (p.813), provide dark overtones of transience, decay and final destination to his
'heroic' public face.

Georg's death-wish is thus characteristic of a class which would (quite literally) rather die than adjust to the realities and responsibilities of a changing society. The best evidence for this relationship between the wish to avoid responsibility and the death-wish in the character of Georg is perhaps to be found in one of the most important sections of the book. The section in question is Georg's confrontation with Dr Stauber (pp.774-6). There, we shall see a direct and causal connection between Georg's thanatic tendencies and the central theme of a 'fatherless' world.

The section is of great importance inasmuch as it is the only place where anyone voices a moral disquiet regarding Georg's relationship to Anna. Stauber (like his creator) does not attack Georg directly, but does so by a splendid display of tightrope-walking innuendo:

Im ersten Moment, wie Annerl mir die Geschichte erzählt hat, da haben Gewisse unangenehme Worte, die seinerzeit ihre feststehende Bedeutung gehabt haben, in meinem alten Kopf ganz mit ihrem alten Ton zu klingen angefangen, dumme, überlebte Worte wie ... Wüstling ... Verführung ... sitzen lassen, und so weiter [...] überlegen Sie nur einmal, wie sich ihr seliger Herr Vater zu der Sache gestellt hätte.

Stauber's politeness should not fool us any more than the politeness of the vengeful husband in Liebelei: he is sailing very close to the wind indeed. His words, if said in front of witnesses - and by a Jew to a Baron! - would almost certainly have been felt by a contemporary audience to be grounds for Georg's demanding satisfaction. Moreover, the question as to what Georg's father would have thought is one to which the reader (and Georg) already knows the answer: the father, after all, did indeed marry his singer. Thus the figure of the father
is made representative of the times when words were not Nietzsche's wandering armies of metaphors, but 'ihre feststehende Bedeutung'. Again, without drawing attention to the fact, Schnitzler is here taking on the great problem of the 'Sprachkrise' which so obsessed Viennese culture at the time.

In this passage Nietzsche (paired with Ibsen) is twice called up in association with a modern 'Gedankenintensität' (p.775) which does not contain any really new teachings. Yet Stauber himself recognizes that such 'Gedankenintensität' leaves his ideas quite out of tune with those of the new age. Moreover, his conditional tenses, his relative clauses, his ironic denials, all point to that very erosion of certainties of which he speaks. And certainly, his appeal to such certainties has no visible impact on Georg: it is all (as far as we can tell) water off a duck's back to him - until Stauber mentions his father. This is the one part of the doctor's talk which moves him - and it would seem to be this which is primarily responsible for the 'erhöhte Bewusstsein seiner Verpflichtungen' (p.776) with which the meeting leaves him.

Thus the association of his father and his own responsibilities - the need, that is, to take on the mantle of the 'father' in the broadest sense of being responsible both for himself and for others - dawns on Georg. He feels 'dem Dahingeschiedenen gegenüber seltsam schuldvoll' (p.776). But Georg's immediate reaction to this feeling of guilt and duty is highly revealing. He does not, as we might imagine, wonder if he really ought to marry Anna in order to safeguard her and the child. Far from it: 'Er dachte zuerst daran, ein Testament zu machen und es bei einem Notar zu hinterlegen'(p.776-777). The likelihood of Georg dying is one at which Felician smiles - it is purely academic (p.779); this highlights the fact that the motive for Georg's train of thought is psychological rather practical.
In other words, Georg is threatened with impending (paternal) responsibility and with paternally-sanctioned guilt if the responsibility is not discharged. His immediate and unconscious reaction to this is not (as Reichert's 'Herrenmoral' interpretation would assume) some blithe shaking-off of guilt-feelings, but rather the distinctly un-blithe idea that the responsibility is to be discharged through his own death.

Georg's 'death-wish' would seem, then, to be a product (not the cause) of his inability to face up to his 'Verpflichtungen' in life - which, in its turn, seems rooted in his social class. It is, then, both further evidence of his ineluctable connection with his class and another symptom of the whole 'fatherless and homeless' situation. In this sense Georg's 'thanaticism' is the mirror image of Bermann's spiralling self-consciousness: his inability to 'replace his father' (on both the literal and the symbolic level) represents the same crisis of valuelessness which leads Bermann's thought into the ever-decreasing spirals of a hopelessly self-referential cogitation, bereft of any authentic bedrock.

Schnitzler thus clearly does not subscribe to the rather crude imagery so beloved of Thomas Mann and others (including, notoriously, Nietzsche) in which 'blondness' is made to carry an aesthetic value-judgement whereby the nordic type is 'mysteriously free from all problems'. If Bermann's fate indicates the crisis of the critical intellect in this era and place, then Georg indicates the crisis of those who are doomed not by the excess of intellectual conscience, but by the absence of it: the dead-end is not the exclusive preserve of the Jewish intellectual, but is Georg's too, 'Freiherr, Germane, Christ' though he may be. Again, it seems highly doubtful whether Georg is a 'Herrenmensch' after all.

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The Wrong Road

I suspect that Schnitzler has made Georg an aristocrat in order deliberately to suggest an analogy between Georg's aristocracy and the 'aristocracy' of being Jewish. This analogy is, indeed, suggested by Bermann himself when discussing Georg's class: he says that being Jewish might actually be 'der besserer Adel' (p.671). Certainly, we must assume that Schnitzler has good reason for establishing early on that Georg is originally from another area (the Rhineland), not from Vienna (p.636). The problems facing the aristocracy are perhaps not so different to those facing the Jews: how can they 'assimilate' themselves to a radically new social reality? Do they remain Jews/aristocrats - and thus cut themselves off from this new reality; or do they embrace it - and thus cease to be Jews/aristocrats? For both Jews and aristocrats, then, refusal to change entails dire consequences in social relations, but acceptance of change involves the 'un-naming' of oneself with the attendant destruction of the psychological basis of selfhood. Do aristocrats and Jews abolish the 'myths' which define them, or do they attempt to preserve these 'myths' by an impossible secession from history?

Without suggesting that there is any 'influence' here, we can, I think, say that both Jews and aristocrats are involved in a cultural-sociological crisis of which Nietzsche is the most trenchant analyst:

Entweder schafft euere Verehrungen ab - oder euch selbst!'. Das Letztere wäre der Nihilismus; aber wäre nicht auch das Erstere - der Nihilismus? (Vii,263).
Of all the 'Verehrungen' in this novel, none link the various characters so much as the worship of the word 'freedom' - that high-liberal icon. What they think they want and they really need are separated by a fatal gap between language and meaning. This, perhaps, was what Schnitzler's first biographer intimated, when he wrote that this novel's title sounded 'beinahe wie eine Falschmeldung'.

That 'Falschmeldung', I would suggest, concerns the misconception that 'freedom' means an escape from limitations. To Bermann, it means the freedom from his torturing critical intellect; to Oscar, from his Jewishness; to Willy, from insults; to Leo, from the army; to Therese, from capitalism; to the young Nürnberger, from illusions about mankind; to Saloman Ehrenberg, from the gentile world; to Georg, from responsibility. And so on. What none of them can answer is what they do want.

In Georg's case it is quite clear that Schnitzler is highlighting the inadequacies of this concept of freedom. Throughout the book Schnitzler has Georg consciously demand freedom as a need of life - and yet we repeatedly surprise him in a longing for a 'Heimat': 'es fiel ihm plötzlich auf die Seele, dass, dass hier nicht mehr seine Heimat war, dass er nun überhaupt keine mehr hatte' (p.936); 'Und bis man wider ein Heim hatte, ein wirkliches Heim haben würde, wie lang mochte das dauern!' (p.866). The desire for 'freedom' is well-articulated - but that for a 'Heimat' wells suddenly up into sight from the unconscious depths. Georg is convinced that he is seeking freedom, while what he really seeks is admission to some form of human community.

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The resulting confusion is not simply due to the convenience with which the concept of 'freedom' can be used to glorify a mere fleeing of responsibility (as Schnitzler points out in the Aphorismen). At a deeper level of social psychology the word 'freedom' retains a sort of posthumous totemic status among these heirs of a failed liberalism.

In this sense of being bound by dead language, Schnitzler's characters Georg and Bermann can be illuminatingly compared with Pascal's depictions of other contemporary 'heroes'. Their 'absence of obligation' (Rilke's Malte), their 'complete freedom' (Musil's Ulrich) means that ultimately such men are so free as to be 'almost deprived of other characteristics' (Kafka's heroes).31 The fatal gap between the modern individual's obsession with 'freedom' and the communal meaning which that word once enshrined (in 1848, for example) is perhaps clearest in the first chapter of Kafka's Das Schloss:

'Ich will immer frei sein.' [sagte K.]

'Du kennst das Schloss nicht' sagte der Wirt leise.32

And so, for K., things remain: possessed by the concept of individual 'freedom' he remains unable to gain what he really desires - admission to the community. This is exactly what happens to Georg von Wergenthin.

Georg's inability to recognize the true direction in which his 'freedom' would lie is decisively shown in Schnitzler's text by the fact that Georg is demonstrably inaccurate in assessing what he needs to spark his creativity. In his daydreams, he sees himself composing 'in begliickter Einsamkeit' (p.763) but this vision occurs as he thinks of a the journey he is to make with Anna, not alone. In the early pages of the book it is made clear that Georg's most successful

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31 Pascal, From Naturalism to Expressionism, p.158.

32 Kafka, Das Schloss, p.11.
work was done not while he was alone at all, but 'während Felician in der Hängematte lag und der Vater auf der kühlten Terrasse im Lehnstuhl arbeitete' (p.638). In other words, Georg's productivity seems to demand that he be physically with people and that he be permitted self-absorption at the same time. Such a feeling - that of a companionship which is so deep it need not make itself obtrusive - is quintessentially that of the family, the home, the 'Heimat' in the broadest sense. Thus the only time we see Georg actually involved in what is to him successful and satisfying composition is in the paternal home, just after we have seen the bond between himself and Felician restored and strengthened by shared thoughts of the father. It is not 'freedom' that Georg needs if he is to develop, but a new (i.e. post-paternal) 'home'.

For Georg the search is fulfilled but inevitably goes unnoticed. He thinks of seeing Anna and feels 'als käme er von einer weiten Reise heim' (p.730); after an evening at Anna's house (her voice, significantly enough, has grown 'merklich an Fülle und Kraft') he is 'erschrocken' to find that 'er sich so behaglich gefühlt hatte wie in einem neu gewonnenen Heim' (p.765). But the fear and distaste of a 'bürgerlich' (i.e. un-'free') life soon return; the dead word of the novel's ironic title continues to hold him in its sway. He is left only the dull feeling that he was near 'mit teilzuhaben am allgemeinen Menschenlos' (p.893).

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Dual Negation: Individual and Social 'Roads to Freedom'

So far, then, it would seem that this text upholds the individual's need to 'assimilate' in the sense of adapting one's egocentric concern with individual 'freedom' (one might say 'leaving the ghetto of the ego') to include other,
foreign' people. But, just as clearly, Schnitzler does not mean to say that one should embrace 'Geborgenheit' at any cost and on any terms. Far from it.

Indeed Georg, as we have seen, suffers not from a lack of 'Geborgenheit', but from a surfeit of involvement in his narrow, threatened class and its prejudices. Likewise the Jewish characters do indeed possess a social milieu (the Jewish community) which is just as closed as the aristocracy. The mere membership of a group, of any group, is thus evidently not a sufficient definition of this new 'freedom' which will go beyond the ego and create a true 'Heimat'.

Rather, Schnitzler seems to say that individual critical awareness is needed just as much as communal feeling. He does so, however, by a process not of positive appraisal, but of dual negation. This appears in an interesting - and certainly deliberate - juxtaposition of investigative programmes in the novel.

Bermann proclaims that man's 'Wanderungen ins Freie' will only succeed if they lead the individual into his personal realms, into 'seine verborgensten Winkel' (p.833). A few pages later we read that Therese Golowski, too, wants to penetrate 'in die verborgensten Winkel' - not, however, of her soul, but of the city (p.841). What Schnitzler does is to criticize both Bermann's proposal (exclusive concern with one's private soul) and Therese's scheme (exclusive concern with the world outside). Thus Bermann's private paths appear to lead not to freedom, but to his fatal 'Turmspitze', to an absolute divorce from the conditions which make human life possible; on the other hand, Therese is forced to admit that her purely outward-oriented, socio-critical path may be 'alles nur eine Flucht vor mir selbst' (p.938).

Schnitzler, then, shows both purely 'outward' and purely 'inward' paths to 'freedom' to be inadequate. This dual negation suggests that we are again faced with the need to cater for both sides, to attain a balance between individual
authenticity and human communality. This is just the balance which Georg needs for his work. Once again, in fact, we are talking about that unique blend of privacy and communality offered by the family, by the 'Heimat'. Which is, of course, what none of them are able to obtain or, once lost, regain.

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The Ambiguity of Realism

Ultimately this novel provides answers neither to the dilemma of freedom and 'Heimat' nor, to the reader, to the dilemma of how we are to read the work. The weight of this chapter has been concentrated on the corrective attempt to show that Georg von Wergenthin, contrary to Reichert's view, is subjected to a subtle but eventually powerful process of criticism. Yet, however much we see Schnitzler criticizing Georg, it is clearly fatuous to claim that Der Weg ins Freie depicts anything so drastic, so utterly disastrous as does, say, Der Prozess. Whatever he reveals about Georg von Wergenthin, Schnitzler does not cry out the need for judgement and existential reckoning upon him. We may suspect - and even be fairly clearly told - that Georg's great hopes as an artist are unlikely to be fulfilled - but this hardly means that he is going to, or ought to, end up in a quarry with a butcher's knife in his heart. Georg, it is true, can be self-pitying in a pretty ghastly way (he is, for example, upset at one point - p.940 - that Else pities only Anna; not him) but Schnitzler does not suggest that this is a case for capital punishment. Maybe Georg does lack contact with reality, but is there any moral element in Anna Rosner's undeniable contact with reality (she has given 'eine wirkliche, das heisst bezahlte Stunde', p.694) or is this not simply economic slavery? Can we really say, with hands on hearts, that Georg
would have been happier dismissing his longings for 'eine Zukunft voll Arbeit, Ruhm und Liebe' (p.710) in favour of Anna's dream of 'ein beständiges und ruhevolles Glück' (p.710)? Schnitzler deliberately makes the contrast, and suggests no answer.

So has Georg really missed the existential boat and doomed himself to isolation? Is Austria finished, or is there not rather still the hope that 'Es kann doch einmal etwas Vernünftiges geschehen' (p.923), both for Georg and for Austria as a whole?

But what, then, of the latent antisemitism that lurks within Georg? What of his utter inability to feel for or with fellow men or women? What of the hints that speak of Georg's being trapped in a class obsessed with death, and condemned to search vainly for a new 'Heimat'? What of Leo's and Bermann's terrifying intuition that, contrary to all surface appearances, the faggots might again be lit in Austria. (p.724) And what of Bermann's fate, 'hinabzustürzen ins Leere'?

In the end, it is just as impossible to take Schnitzler simply as the chronicler of autumnal, frisson-ridden erotic encounters and leavetakings as it is to proclaim him the brooding, apocalyptic prophet of a dire fate.

The ambiguity in the mood with which the novel leaves us is, I would suggest, a function of Schnitzler's realism. Whatever moral stance one takes, it remains a simple fact that it is easier to get by in life without being crushed entirely if you are a Baron von Wergenthin-Recco. Young, charming and - for Georg clearly is - talented Barons may indeed have existential problems, but they are not subjected to the daily grinding-down of having to give music-lessons in order to eat. Such comments may seem fatuous, yet they are exactly the sort of real factors which critics seem remarkably able to ignore. Why should we be
surprised to accept as the conclusion of a novel the rather obvious fact that barons (as Bermann points out) may be in an analogous position to, say, Jews, but will never really have to go through the mill the same way (p.671)? Schnitzler is so thoroughly a realist that he recognizes not only the physical reality of, say, the city, but the utterly concrete, almost measurable, psychological effect of social structures. He can portray the factors which lead to Bermann or Oscar Ehrenberg going through hell on earth and yet allow Georg to walk through the same valley apparently unscathed: this does not compromise his realism, but proclaims it. The Viennese world he draws has much in common with the metropolitan purgatories of Josef K. or Malte, but Schnitzler the realist knows that barons can indeed go boldly in where disinherited artists or bank-clerks may rightly fear to tread. There is nothing superficial at all about the way characters like Georg or Anatol can survive emotional crises: Schnitzler knows that even the emotions are subject to social factors. He shows us that when all is said and done it does indeed make a difference whether (to use his own social geography) one lives in town or in the suburbs. Despite all the evidence we have seen, one is left with the vague conviction that Georg will have another chance. And another. And we are right - in the non-moral sense of a correct observation - to feel so: Barons got more chances in Vienna then. They do in Vienna or London now. The only people who will find this conclusion offensive are those who feel, like Georg, 'ein wenig gekränkt' at the suggestion that one might conceivably suffer less harshly in life through a privileged social position (p.671).

The result of Schnitzler's refusal to play the judge himself is to create a remarkable book which is genuinely capable of being read on two levels. It really is possible for one reader (a baron, for example, or Reichert) to read this
novel and feel that Schnitzler is giving us another autumnal chunk of good olde Vienna, where 'Herrenmoral'-preaching artists go their individualistic, fated ways and dancing-girls weep. From Georg's point of view it really is like that. But a different reader might reflect that if Schnitzler never judges, few authors have so effectively supplied their contemporaries with grounds for a Bermannesque judgement of deep foreboding.

That foreboding is centred upon the apparent impossibility of this generation, which is 'vater-und heimatlos' in the broadest sense, finding a reliable basis for living. Such a 'Heimat' would be characterized by a rebirth of the moral conviction which is so notably lacking in the Vienna described by Schnitzler. Anna Rosner perfectly personifies the dilemma involved. At one point we see her roundly rejecting Gleissner's plan to make a whore into an innocent and vice-versa: 'Eine nette Gesellschaft'(p.809). This, then, is the good side of her firm grounding in reality - that ability (so mourned by Dr. Stauber) to call a moral spade a spade. But she has just used a similar turn of phrase in what appears to be an endorsement of the 'Christliche Volksbote' campaign against the Ehrenbergs: 'Nette Familie', she declares 'mit Überzeugung'.(p.808) In Anna, then, Schnitzler shows both the admirable and the problematic sides of possessing moral conviction: it may give us the ability to judge inhumanity effectively - but does this mean we will judge justly? Not always, it would seem, even in so generally sympathetic a character as Anna. But then, if we have no such firmly-grounded morality, how are we to criticize the inhumanity of the Gleissners or Berthold Staubers of this world? And so on.

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Conclusions: Nietzsche in Perspective(s)

This dilemma of a world without absolute reference-points brings us back full circle to its most urgent commentator, Nietzsche. It may seem as if we have got a long way away from the original problem of whether or not Schnitzler’s novel betrays the influence of Nietzsche, and if so, in what way. In fact, we have arrived unseen at the answer, or very nearly.

We began by asking whether Bermann’s view of Georg - in which he sets him up as a Nietzschean hero, ontologically free from guilt - is to be taken (as it is by Reichert) as authorial comment. Our examination of Georg has shown (I hope) again and again that he is anything but a free-spirited aristocrat in the sense Nietzsche meant. Schnitzler’s text quietly builds up into a potent and critical picture of a man to whom the socially-predicated, essentially negative ideology of ‘aristocratic freedom’ is a barrier to the attainment of any meaningful freedom (i.e. freedom to create within a new ‘family’ or ‘Heimat’).

At last, then, we can answer our initial question. Schnitzler’s critique of Georg means that Bermann’s Nietzschean view of Georg is thoroughly and demonstrably inadequate. Which means that Reichert’s interpretation (i.e. that Bermann is Schnitzler’s mouthpiece concerning Georg) is likewise inadequate. Schnitzler has not ‘decided that the “Herrenmoral” is the correct and proper expression of the artistic personality’. On the contrary, he has recognised the argument, aired it in the person of Bermann - and found it wanting.

I would suggest that, to Schnitzler (and the same would not hold true for René Rilke or for the youthful Musil) Nietzsche is clearly a presence whom one acknowledges (and even does so by name), whose challenging attitudes one may
use as a device for characterisation - but, equally clearly, not someone to whom one appeals as an ultimate authority.

In turn, this speaks volumes about Schnitzler's text in its relationship to its contemporary world. For Schnitzler - and this distinguishes him from so many of his contemporaries - Nietzsche as such is not regarded as central to the problematic of the age. For Schnitzler, Nietzsche would seem to represent a sort of ammunition-box open to all and sundry. Bermann's view of Georg is conditioned from their first encounter by the very fair notion that Georg has it easier because he is an aristocrat. (p.671) At the end of the book, a distinctly Nietzschean analysis of guilt and freedom from guilt is merely pressed into the service of Bermann's already-established views. Bermann's use of Nietzschean ideas is thus placed in perspective: it is the sort of use to which Nietzsche is put by artistic intellectuals.

When Georg feels the need to surrender to the comfortable embrace of social group in the club, his appeal to anti-intellectual imagery (his 'Wolke von Hass') involves vaguely vitalist/ 'Nietzschean' attitudes (of the sort Stauber files under 'Ibsen und Nietzsche') which merely provide the excuse for doing so. This, then, is the sort of use 'Nietzscheanisms' are put to by aristocrats.

Dr. Stauber - who, if anyone is, appears to be loaded with Schnitzler's private sympathies - puts his finger on it in his big speech to Georg (pp.774-6): Nietzsche is no more (and no less) than one of the great 'names', the almost undifferentiated 'influences' which are generally swarming about in the considerations of the modern-day mind. One mind in which these ideas are clearly present is that of his son Berthold. The young man has decided to devote himself to 'Fragen der öffentlichen Gesundheitspflege' in a way whose logic (as he admits) would ultimately imply measures 'kranke Menschen zu vernichten'
and 'den Mord der Schädlichen und Überflüssigen zu predigen' (p.906). Berthold's view that 'Mitleid ... führt notwendig zu Sentimentalität, zu Schwäche' (p.906) would, I think one might reasonably argue, call Nietzsche to mind more than any other individual propagator of 'Lebensphilosophie'. Such superficial 'Nietzscheanism', then, is pressed into the service of Berthold's ambitions. Schnitzler holds those ambitions up to ridicule on the following page by revealing the unregenerate Victorianism of Berthold's 'radical' views on 'Reinheit' when applied to the fallen Anna Rosner.(p.907) Here, then, what would surely have been identified by his contemporaries as supposedly 'Nietzschean' ideas are given to a most unattractive character: such is the use ambitious, young, post-liberal 'radicals' make of 'Nietzscheanism'.

Schnitzler's novel, then, shows what Dr. Stauber claims: that 'Nietzschean' ideas are there to be used by anyone who comes along. One man who was coming along, there and then, was young Adolf Hitler, whose disastrous 'Weltbild' was in principle simply 'die Summe der gängigen Klischees aus dem Wien der Jahrhundertwende'. Hitler himself was that paradoxical thing, a man who professed admiration for Nietzsche without (it seems) ever having read his work.

The apparent paradox, though, is revealed by Schnitzler as social fact. 'Nietzschean' ideas have become part of the general set of assumptions of the day, part of the corpus of thought encountered, unremarked and almost unattributed (unless to 'Nietzsche und Ibsen') in everyday life. Schnitzler treats these ideas as he treats everything else: his investigative style - the more or less subtle unmasking of practically everything said by everybody - is certainly not spared just because the character uses 'Nietzschean' ideas or images. On the

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contrary, the one character who (as I have argued and as Reichert argued before me) displays a really distinctive and specific Nietzschean viewpoint - Bermann - is shown to use his Nietzschean analysis to reach a quite inadequate conclusion about Georg.

Whether thoroughgoing and accurately-derived (Bermann) or blatantly superficial (Berthold Stauber), 'Nietzschean' ideas are thus presented by Schnitzler as part of the discourse of the society he dissects.

The very precision with which this novel reflects the physical and psychological reality of a certain place at a certain time thus fixes the 'influence of Nietzsche' firmly to its historical surroundings. Nietzsche's fate has been to become a cliché because the dilemma he saw - and to which he failed to find a truly positive solution - is now everywhere to be felt: the 'Wetterprophet' has been borne out in a generation who can find no 'Vater', no 'Heimat', no set of reliable guiding values. To Schnitzler, Nietzsche is just another, if notable, commentator of such a problematic: there is no sense in which any of Nietzsche's 'solutions' are accepted by Schnitzler - certainly not that of the 'Herrenmoral' as a morality for artists.

And is this not, perhaps, a position with which we, from our historical perspective, can agree? Nietzsche as part and parcel of the problems of an age; Nietzsche as an important part, a part which deserves mentioning by name, but a part which, in the end, must be treated in the context of that age as a whole, as one historical phenomenon among, and in relation to, others? The other writers with whom we have concerned ourselves may have concerned themselves with Nietzsche's thought in far more detail than Schnitzler, but is it not just possible that Schnitzler's realism may provide, in the end, the most truly judicious of all the reactions to Nietzsche which we have seen?
CHAPTER 9
Conclusions: Literature as History

Nietzsche, then, is everywhere in the years leading up to the first world war. If that description of this period smacks of teleology, then so be it. With the benefit (or rather, in the inevitable perspective) of our hindsight, these years are massively overshadowed by the coming crisis. To the historian of the future, the second world war in Europe will be seen much as we now see the second Punic war: as a continuation of the first. We live in a Europe whose structures are those inherited from the fall-out of that second German war. In a very real sense then, the period with which we are dealing is decisive for our own experiences of the world.

This is history, not literature. So far I have tried to show how an acknowledgment of Nietzsche's influence, when combined with a critically differentiated awareness of the themes and treatments in Nietzsche's thought, can help us better to understand the works of the authors in question. Now, however, it is time to state the conclusions which such understanding has helped to reach: comprehension, in other words, must now give way to judgement. I believe that in making such a judgement we must proceed (to repeat Reed's formula) "from the relatively low court of literary criticism to a higher one with broader jurisdiction".1

Near the start of this thesis we saw how one popular history accorded Nietzsche precisely that 'world-historical' significance which he craved and claimed. As a starting-point for our conclusions we might take the words of a weightier historical essay. These words both confirm the first view and indicate

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1 Reed, 'Nietzsche's Animals', p.179.
that literature is indeed a suitable - an indispensable - witness to call before that 'higher court' of history:

The sense of inevitability and the sense of relief, as the crisis mounted and as war came, were partly due [...] to the technical sequence of mobilisation plans and to the fact that politicians, even if they wanted to, could not stop the military machine once it was in motion; and partly due to the fact that many of Europe's leaders saw in the international crisis a distraction from internal problems. But it is also due, I suggest, to the fact that by 1914 the ideas of Darwin and of Nietzsche had become widely assimilated, so that there were many people in Europe, both among rulers and ruled, who thought of life in terms of the struggle for survival, or who were looking for the opportunity to transcend the limitations of their ordinary lives and to find a new set of values in what they believed would be a new and enriching experience.²

Joll here refers to that 'sense of inevitability' which we saw documented in the retrospective view of Hitler's Mein Kampf. In the historical introduction to this thesis I suggested that Germany and Austria-Hungary both, in different ways, presented a picture of tension-filled stasis in the years before the outbreak of war. I believe that in judging the literary works of this period, our 'higher court' 'must call this state of affairs to witness. In a state of coming crisis, to do nothing is literally impossible: by 'doing nothing' we remain in the position which is encouraging calamity.

This, indeed, is exactly the state of affairs which Nietzsche perceived and analyses. This comparison puts those two main streams of Nietzsche's thought (investigation and non-investigation) into a historical perspective. The fact is that non-investigation is not a neutral stance unless society is in a state of utter stasis, of perfection: it never yet has been - though many regimes (Hitler's and Stalin's, for example) have claimed to represent the End of History in this sense. To abandon investigation is certainly not a neutral stance in a man who (like Nietzsche) has investigated culture closely enough to have seen, as no other man had then seen, that a crisis of some kind was in the offing.

The problem is that no-one listened while Nietzsche's brilliant analysis of the 'death of God' and of its consequences for Western culture was being made. One can hardly blame the public, or the incompetence of Nietzsche's publishers, for this. Nietzsche's reductive argument was, after, all, no more than a reductive argument - it proposed no working alternative. Nietzsche was thus faced with the need to propose something which would attract people to what was, in the end, a programme designed to effect a change upon the world. But without the concrete programme (for Nietzsche never had one), the business of attracting people would have appeared to gain the upper hand: Nietzsche launches his splendid barrages of imagery and language with less and less regard for the possible consequences. Psychologically speaking, one might say that such lack of regard for the consequences of one's words depends upon the subliminal conviction (in Nietzsche's case, one backed by empirical evidence) that no-one is listening anyway. I have suggested that demagogic 'misinterpretations' of Nietzsche were thus to some extent merely following the author's invitation to conceive of a paradoxical (or rather, obfuscatory) 'democratic elitism' by virtue of which anyone who read a few lines of Zarathustra could consider themselves
accepted into Nietzsche's supposedly exclusive 'wir'.

What Nietzsche actually achieved was brilliantly effective on one level: he managed to assimilate so many of the rising currents of German thought that, once noticed, his works were found to have a quite unique resonance by many (and very different) people. But the price of this accessibility was that Nietzsche's writings become progressively more (though never completely) parallel to certain themes which, with our hindsight, have clear implications in the broad field of politics - implications which we may now call undesirable with little hesitation: authoritarianism, racial elitism, and that strange attempt to claim that unthinking brutality and spiritual distinction can go somehow hand in hand. Nietzsche did not 'cause' such developments, but in sharing the vulnerability of much of German culture to them, he is implicated in their rise and eventual triumph. Instead of registering and analyzing the readings on his cultural seismograph, he became more and more prone merely to depict what he saw, and to proclaim its inevitability in a manner which sometimes seems to welcome disaster not as a prelude to anything else, but simply as such.

Looking back to this time of incipient crisis, then, we are entitled to suggest that critical investigation may be used, in dealing with the works of that epoch, as a category of value-judgement: not to investigate meant allowing the crisis to develop further. This is especially true of that particularly (though, of course, not exclusively) German epochal tendency to 'apolitical' thought. 'To be "non-political" in this sense is to believe that politics has no bearing on the essential areas of human experience, that it is a peripheral affair.'3 Pascal puts the case with typical clarity when discussing Thomas Mann's cultural criteria in Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen:

3 Williams, p.7.
It is only too plain that it is not a question of commitment or non-commitment to society, but rather of a choice between one form of society as opposed to another.  

A choice: there is the vital point about Nietzsche’s influence on our writers. It is immediately obvious that none of the works which we have examined display an unthinking, undifferentiated ‘Nietzscheanism’ of the sort to which Joll refers:

If we want to understand the presuppositions of the men of 1914, to reconstruct, so to speak, their ideological furniture, it is to the ideas of a generation earlier, as filtered through vulgarisers and populariser, that we must look.  

In every case there is extra-textual evidence (of widely varying degrees) that these authors had actually read works by Nietzsche. They knew him, that is, at first hand, not ‘filtered through vulgarisers and populariser’. The choice of just what to take from Nietzsche’s stall remained open and, for these writers, a matter of conscious and (at least relatively) informed choice. I would, therefore, suggest that the way in which our writers react to Nietzsche is characteristic of their attitudes in general.

Another notable fact is that whatever choice was made, was made in the knowledge, or at least the creative intimation, of just how real the crisis illustrated by Nietzsche was. Judging by these works, the years between his authorship and theirs had proved that his foreboding was well grounded, had made the threat more deeply evident. Hollingdale writes that

Nietzsche failed to appreciate the depth of sordidness to which Europe would descend [...] That the twentieth century would be

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4 Pascal, From Naturalism to Expressionism, p.290.

violent, amoral and nihilistic he foresaw quite clearly, but that some
of its characteristic features would also resemble those of a
pornographic novel was beyond his power of imagination.6

Such was not beyond the power of these writers' imaginations. Every one of
these books except for Malte (which certainly dwells on the sordidness of
Parisian life) depicts those 'pornographic' depths in one way or another: Josef
K.'s sado-masochistic 'Rumpelkammer'; Törless's 'red room'; Aschenbach's
'Unzucht und Raserei des Unterganges'; Hessling's furtive whippings; Sefranek,
the 'Bestie in Menschengestalt' who tortures recruits. All, that is, seem well able
to perceive the possibility of a situation in which man 'breaks out of the
confinement of humanism and degenerates into a beast'.7

The difference between these works, I would suggest, is to be found in this
area: just how deep, and how imminent, do they see this crisis as being? I do
not, of course, suggest that a perception of incipient crises is the only category
of literary worth - but that in this culture, in this time, it is one which must be
borne in mind: we know, and can hardly forget, that we will soon be hearing
'Hölderlin among the gas ovens'.8

Musil in Törless seems to assume that there is indeed a safe zone from which
the artistic intellectual can survey and consider the lurid possibilities of the
human soul: Nietzsche is his authority in placing such an individual above the
throng, exempt from traditional concepts of morality - and from the
consequences of his actions. It might be reasonably objected that Törless is the
earliest of the works we have looked at, and that the coming crises of war and

6 Hollingdale, Nietzsche, p.7.

7 Glaser, p.97.

8 Glaser, pp.54-55.
inhumanity were thus that much further away. This is a fair point, but one could counter with suggesting that the position detailed above is very much the one Musil was to maintain as late as 1935, proposing still that the artist could somehow ignore politics as a daily concern. Musil is well aware of the dark forces beneath 'normality', and even acknowledges their sordidness rather than elevating them grandly to the status of 'Evil' - but he then makes the bold (one is tempted to say, the deliberately 'shocking') claim that some people may safely experiment with these forces. Just how many people may be permitted crime without punishment is a question which may justifiably worry us. The suggestion is that anyone who reads the book receives Musil's licence to torture, for, in the narrator's constant interpolations, Musil is making very much the same open (and, to the unwary reader, flattering) invitation to join his 'elite' as Nietzsche made.

Rilke, on the other hand, shows that Malte Laurids Brigge longs for such a safe zone where Artistic Contemplation may exist - but cannot find one. Nietzsche would appear to be germane both to Rilke's conception of the problems of the artist in the modern, urban environment and to those of his ideas which propose a complete repression of investigation - indeed, even of consciousness - of the world as the only remaining modus vivendi. Rilke's narrative (if it can be called that any more) expresses the workings of this process exactly: this is not surprising, since the development of the 'Schreibakt' is the progression of the 'narrative' itself. The increasing length and opacity of Malte's appeals to the world of the 'Kunst-Ding' express, and arouse in the reader, the increasing sense that the search is hopeless. For Musil, the crisis is distant enough from his hero's person for Törless to remain secure. For Rilke,

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the crisis is so absolute and terrifying that Malte is almost literally paralysed, objectified and frozen like a rabbit in the headlights of modernity: 'Automobile gehen über mich hin'. The invitation this strange novel makes to the reader is one to embrace a total withdrawal from analysis - not from a position of strength, but from one of almost utter powerlessness; not from a denial of the new, threatening metropolitan reality, but from the overwhelming consciousness of it. In the face of such mighty power, the only thing to do is let it roll over you in a 'negative-Dionysian' dance of personal dissolution.

Thomas Mann in Der Tod in Venedig, takes up neither or both of these positions. He shows that there is no such safe area for the artist: 'decadence' will either become manifest through investigation, or will creep up through non-investigation. Either way, the artist is doomed - and, by Mann's own extension, so is his society. All are 'unhealthy' in Nietzsche's sense of an ontological flaw: Mann's entire thesis on art and health is 'a mystical assumption on Nietzsche's authority'\(^{10}\) - we might add, on the authority of the late Nietzsche. Yet the very mercilessness of Mann's two-front war against The Artist demonstrates the psychological insight and ruthless self-assessment which is Nietzsche's other bequest to Mann and the other, less often noted contribution which Nietzsche's thought made to the workings of this novella. The sovereign control and perfection of the novella argues subliminally that something might still be done if we try hard enough, with enough insight, with enough control, with reference to our whole cultural heritage - and that The Artist may be the man to do it. Mann was well aware of this side of Nietzsche's thought: fitingly enough, he supports his case by quoting not the Nietzsche of Der Fall Wagner,

\(^{10}\) Reed, Thomas Mann, p.48.
but an earlier, 'developmental' incarnation of Nietzsche's thought from 
_Menschliches. Allzumenschliches:

Alle guten Dinge sind starke Reizmittel zum Leben, selbst jedes gute

Buch, das gegen das Leben geschrieben ist' (IViii,22)."\[11]

Mann's novella, then, is a Nietzschean prophecy of disaster - but also enshrines, 
by implication, an equally Nietzschean suggestion of strenuous artistic hope.

Thomas Mann is aware of looming disaster for Europe and the European spirit,
but does not quite completely despair of controlling it through a mixture of
watchful investigation and creative determination.

Heinrich Mann's _Der Untertan_ is uniquely concrete in its critique of 
Wilhelmine Germany and in its warnings that war is coming. Everything in
society is held up to mockery, with the one exception being an ideal of the
'Geist der Menschheit' which is personified in a dying man. There is a pathos
in Mann's presentation of this theme which is not fully in tune with the rest of
the book: it is almost as if he is trying to win over by sentimental appeal the
reader to whom he can offer no really attractive alternative. The abandoning of
his Nietzschean aestheticism (which, of course, depended on amoral
'attractiveness' above all) would appear to have left something of a hole in
Mann's artistic musculature: how can he now 'attract' the reader to a positive
analysis? Here, Mann analyses the 'ascetic' psychology of power in a thoroughly
Nietzschean manner - while appealing to his readers with that very traditional
device of 'the good old man'. The book's incisive critique and comedy is
compromised slightly at the end by what is rather more of an invitation to a sad
'tut-tut' than to critical appreciation. _Der Untertan_ falls minutely short of
black-comic perfection, but it is a splendid and much under-rated achievement,

\[11\] Quoted in Reed, _Thomas Mann_, p.51f.
not only as contemporary social criticism, but in more subtle ways too. Its subtlety, I would argue, is underpinned by a grasp of and employment of the socio-critical Nietzsche which would appear to be almost unique in the serious literature of the era.

Almost, but not quite unique, because Kafka grasps and employs the same Nietzsche. Kafka uses Nietzsche's concepts of 'Sittlichkeit der Sitte' and of the 'ascetic' search for absolute truth - or something so like these concepts in image, wording and meaning that to deny any connection is tantamount to suggesting that such images, words and ideas are objective depictions of the world which may be arrived at, independently, by any thinking writer. Nor is it merely a question of unconnected words, images, ideas: Kafka, like Nietzsche, uses a technique of negation by which mutually opposing views of man's relationship to society are set up and knocked down. The contradiction between the need to embrace communal values (non-investigation) and the need to pursue the individual 'quest' (investigation) is a problem with which Kafka remained concerned until the end; it is one of the great issues of our (and particularly, of German) experience in this century - and it is exactly that dilemma which we find resonating throughout the profoundest depths of Nietzsche's thought. Of all our writers, it is Kafka whose understanding of the dilemma most nearly matches Nietzsche's reductive analysis - and whose own (if only implicit) proposals most tellingly confront Nietzsche's attitudes.

And of all our witnesses to Nietzsche's influence, none shows more clearly than Schnitzler's Der Weg ins Freie just how widespread it had become. Nietzsche's influence does not stop at Schnitzler's peppering of his text with 'Nietzscheanisms': just as the characters of the book use 'Nietzschean' thoughts for their own ends, so Schnitzler (here following the modus operandi of his
writer-character Bermann) takes a highly Nietzschean 'perspectivism' and elevates it into a creative programme. The effect is an immensely unsettling portrait of a society which is genuinely at ease, genuinely secure - and yet, even more genuinely, on the brink. One is reminded of nothing so much as of the dizzy perspectivism of Kafka's impossible comparison 'eigentlich - aber noch eigentlicher'. And this, is after all, just the historical position which we saw in the introduction to this thesis: a world in which old values and new realities are equally to be found, and in which the conflict of these twin forces is in the process of splitting-up man's perception of reality. Schnitzler's realism manages to encompass (not unite) different realities, each as real as the other; if the cumulative effect is one which leaves the reader longing for something decisive to be said, or done, or experienced - then the reader has been taken, as far as any author can be reasonably expected to conduct us, into the heart of an age.

Whatever their reactions or programmes all the works provide the reader with cause for unease regarding the tendencies of that age. All are aware of, and are influenced to one degree or other by their awareness of, that most powerful cultural voice of their age - Nietzsche's writings. But unlike Nietzsche's writings, these are all substantial artistic creations, however influenced by abstract philosophy. All have to, and do, create a world of some sort in which the characters and actions reside: but characters and actions affect each other, and the creative writer has to recognize and acknowledge such collisions in a way the philosopher - however 'artistic' - does not. To put it in a nutshell: Nietzsche can say that the 'blond beast' treats murder and pillage as a student prank - but any substantial act of creative writing on this theme will have to tell us about the blood, whatever it then tells us.

12 Kafka, Das Urteil, in Sämtliche Erzählungen, p.32.
And these writers do. They tell us about the blood, the disease, the torture, the execution. They tell us about the courts, hospitals and gutters of the world and of the human psyche. From Nietzsche, the analyst and later the ecstatic prophet of a millennial crisis in European culture - a crisis which indeed came to pass - these writers take words, images and ideas: what they do with these borrowings is very different, for they borrow each according to his own lights, but all and any of them are witnesses to the dilemma which Nietzsche predicted would come to dominate his culture. As such, they are witnesses not only to their own era, but reach out beyond it, into our own age:

Art betrays its age in the sense that it bears the imprint of the historical circumstances in which it was created. But it also betrays its age in the sense that it transgresses (and transcends) the public consciousness of its time by exploring that consciousness with an urgency and radicalism which is not vouchsafed to society as a whole.\footnote{Martin Swales, \textit{Thomas Mann}, p.114.}

It is this capacity which makes of these works the most perceptive witnesses we have of history-in-the-making, arguably finer than any 'historical documents'.

One distinguished peruser of such documents writes of our period:

What I describe here is the pre-war Germany of my own youth. All my life I have remembered this period as a sunny one, which seemed only to have been overcast by the outbreak of war in 1914. And now at the end of my life, using the eye of the researcher, I have been able to see much darker shadows than were seen by my own generation - let alone by my own academic teachers.\footnote{Gerhard Ritter, quoted in Karl-Heinz Jansen, 'Gerhard Ritter: A Patriotic Historian's Justification', in Koch (ed.) \textit{The Origins of the First World War},
To which the student of literature can only reply: what on earth was this future professor of history reading in his cloudless Wilhelmine youth? What were his academic teachers reading and teaching? Any of the books which we have examined would have given them cause to look anxiously at the skies. The historical researcher may look back and stand aghast in retrospect: but some of his contemporaries saw what was coming.
The principal primary texts referred to are:


__________ Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande, ed. Brod, Fischer Taschenbuch, Frankfurt/Main, 1980


MANN, Heinrich, Der Untertan, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, Berlin, 1964

MANN, Thomas, Gesammelte Werke in dreizehn Bänden, Frankfurt/Main, 1960, vols. VIII & IX


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Secondary sources referred to in the text and footnotes

Note: I am, of course, aware that the following represents only a tiny fraction of the existing corpus. A full bibliography concerning any one of the authors dealt with would fill an entire volume of its own. Clearly, there is a delicate and difficult balance to be struck between acknowledging (and taking advantage of) the work of previous commentators and being buried under the sheer weight of their collective scholarship. Since complete registration of all that has been written in the field of this thesis quite impossible, I would hope that reference to a reasonable selection of the more widely-available and more frequently referred-to works might be accepted as adequate critical contextualisation. I am well aware that such a selection (for that is what it must inevitably be) will not only not please everybody, but will thoroughly please nobody: each individual reader will, no doubt, find works left out which he or she considers important. There is no defence against this except to point out that the same will be true of any thesis concerned with several works which have each been the subject of so many earlier studies.

The difference in size between the individual author-lists partly reflects the disproportion in the secondary literature devoted to these works: there are far more (and, more importantly, far more widely differing) interpretations of Der Prozess, for example, than of Malte Laurids Brigge or Der Untertan. The non-author-specific works in section 8 of this bibliography contain far more material relating to Nietzsche and certain authors (for example, Rilke or Thomas Mann) than to others (for example, Kafka or Musil). Finally there is the possibility that certain works may so thoroughly bring together earlier criticism as to make knowing them tantamount to knowing the work of many previous commentators.
Since this is not a critical bibliography, I have excluded not only those uncounted books, articles and theses which I have not come across, but also a large number which I have come across and of which, for whatever reason, I have not made use. All works which have affected the argument of the text in any way have been noted as they occur and are gathered together here.

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2. Heinrich Mann


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3. Thomas Mann


4. Musil


5. Nietzsche/Nietzsche and literature.


____________________ Nietzsche in Anglosaxony, Leicester University, 1972.


____________________ 'Nietzsches Wort "Gott ist Tot"' in Holzwege, Frankfurt/Main, 1950.


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7. Schnitzler


8. Studies of literature, historical studies and other works quoted variously in the text.


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