Nietzsche and the Rebirth of the Tragic

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Nietzsche and the Rebirth of the Tragic

Introduction: Nietzsche as Tragic Poet and His Legacy

Mary Ann Frese Witt

Hellenism, or the west's idea of ancient greece's contribution to its culture and its attempts to appropriate that idea into its own creations, has been a prime component of European and Euro-American culture since the Renaissance. With the rediscovery of Aristotle's *Poetics* came the notion that the supreme literary form was tragedy, and that it was thus incumbent on the ''moderns'' to write tragedies on the model of the ''ancients.'' This form of imitation and adaptation reached its apogee in seventeenth-century France with the tragedies of Racine. The theories of the archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann, often encapsulated in his 1755 description of Greek statues as works of ''edle Einfalt, stille Grösse'' [noble simplicity, calm grandeur], helped to define the neoclassical ideal of Greek classical civilization. In his *Laocoön* (1766) Gotthold Lessing, emphasizing the differences more than the similarities between the arts of language and vision, challenges Winkelmann's overarching formula by demonstrating the horror and violence present in Greek tragedy, as opposed to sculpture.[1] Lessing nonetheless remained within the boundaries of neoclassical aesthetics, ultimately arguing that even tragedy overcame its representation of terror to conform to a rational and optimistic Greek view of life. Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller all wrote tragedies based to some extent on this notion of antiquity.

Hellenism did not die with the waning of neoclassicism. If the romantics preferred Shakespeare to Racine and the mixing of tones and genres to tragic purity, a longing for the cultural inspiration of the Greek ''motherland'' became, if anything, more pronounced. It was, however, the lyric poetry of such figures as Byron and Hölderlin, rather than drama, that most vividly expressed romantic Hellenism. It was only in midcentury Germany that Hellenism became in a

sense superseded by tragic theory and the desire to create tragedy for modernity. The great German philosophers of the nineteenth century—Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer—considered tragedy not only as a literary genre, but also as an ontological concept. The playwright Friedrich Hebbel defined himself as both a realist and a pessimist, defending in both theory and practice the genre of bourgeois tragedy, anchored in everyday life. A reaction against this view of tragedy was to come at the turn of the century, when we witnessed a widespread reflourishing of interest both in the writing of ''modern tragedies'' outside of the boundaries of realism and in a cultural notion of the tragic, influenced by a new kind of Hellenism. What accounts for the revival of interest in and rethinking of the theory and practice of tragedy? The writings and reputation of Friedrich Nietzsche, along with the music dramatist he first glorified and then vilified, Richard Wagner.

The first publication of *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* in 1872 was greeted by scorn and contempt from most of the young philologist's colleagues and superiors. During his productive years, Nietzsche was in fact read only by a small, if devoted, elite. Soon after his breakdown, however, it was as if all of Europe suddenly discovered the philosopher. Nietzsche's madness seemed to foster the idea that he had penetrated more deeply than anyone else into the secret of existence. Nietzscheanism prompted a popular cultural movement suggestive of the one spawned by Sartrean existentialism after World War II. Young proponents of what was called *Lebensphilosophie* affirmed their freedom from convention and their espousal of ''life'' in their dress, wild actions, and general revolt against the bourgeois lifestyle of their parents' generation. Dionysus had shattered decorum and ''noble stillness,'' and not only in theory. If *Lebensphilosophie* attracted even those who had not read Nietzsche, those who took his thought seriously were those who were implementing revolutionary cultural changes. All of the major turn-of-the-century and post–World War I avant-garde literary and artistic movements—symbolism, decadence, expressionism, futurism, dada, and surrealism—were influenced by Nietzsche. Bergson acknowledged his debt to his contemporary; Freud certainly felt his impact. In music, Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler wrote compositions inspired by Zarathustra and ''the spirit of music,'' and in modern dance Mary Wigman, in the 1920s, worked out a ''Dionysian'' style.[2]

Nietzsche's appropriation by the fascists and the Nazis and his postwar exculpation—the so-called Nazification and de-Nazification of Nietzsche—are by now well known.[3] So is his significant reception among postmodern thinkers such as Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, and de Man. Nietzsche's literary following has also received considerable attention, but his dramatic and theatrical descendants much less. This collection addresses a specific aspect of the Nietzschean legacy in literature: the presence of his insights on tragedy and the tragic in the actual writing of modern tragedy, in drama and in other genres such as lyric poetry, fiction, and film as well as in subsequent theories of the tragic. A succession of writers throughout Europe and elsewhere saw Nietzsche as one of their own, more poet than philosopher, while reading *The Birth of Tragedy* as it was intended, as a call for the production of modern tragedy. In some cases, the philosopher's later, fragmentary writings on tragedy and the tragic had an impact equal or superior to that of his first book. Nietzsche's interest in the art of Dionysus and Apollo, though never again systematically discussed, continued throughout his career, even, in a sense, into his final years, when he signed his letters "Dionysus."

Despite the "self-criticisms," about-faces, contradictions, and later developments, a certain constancy appears throughout Nietzsche's writing on the tragic. This may be defined as his anti-Aristotelian stance,[4] combined with what one can only term inspiration from his understanding of the significance of the figure of Dionysus. Although it is true that the "Apollinan" principle is equally important to understanding the formation and nature of Greek tragedy, at least in *The Birth of Tragedy,* it is tragedy's origin in Dionysian ritual and the fundamental importance of the music of the Dionysian chorus to the form that serve as the foundation of Nietzsche's reconceptualizing of the tragic form.[5] If tragedy is seen primarily as an aesthetic rendering of the sacrificial suffering of a god, then its essence is more lyrical, more rhapsodic, than what we conventionally call dramatic: more pathos than praxis, more lyric than mimetic. The primacy of plot or action apparent in Aristotle's *Poetics* becomes, for Nietzsche, of minimal importance to tragedy, even a degradation of the tragic. This theme appears as early as 1864 in a paper he wrote as a student titled "Primum Oedipodis regis carmen choricum." "The Greeks thought differently from us about the tragic effect; it was

brought about by way of the great *pathos scenes* . . . where action meant little but lyricism everything.''[6] The argument that in true (Aeschylean) tragedy action and plot exist, as it were, offstage, before and after what we witness, appears throughout *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche attributes the introduction of the emphasis of plot in tragedy to Euripides, under the influence of Socratic dialectics. It is what he terms ''the optimistic dialectic of dialogue,'' the stating and solving of problems, that will eventually lead to the destruction of tragedy, ''to the death-leap into the bourgeois drama'' [bis zum Todessprunge in's bürgerliche Schauspiel].[7] Much later, in 1888, Nietzsche makes the same point explicitly and philologically in a footnote in *The Case of Wagner*. Presumably glossing one of his many caustic remarks on his former idol and mentor, Nietzsche notes that it has been unfortunate for aesthetics that the Doric word *dran,* at the origin of drama, has been mistranslated as plot or action (*Handlung*). He reiterates the point that ancient drama consisted of scenes of pathos, with action relegated to the offstage. The original meaning of drama is rather ''event'' or ''story'' ''in the hieratic sense . . . not a doing but a happening.''[8] Nietzsche's thinking on this point is consistent, although a major transformation has occurred: Wagner's music dramas, rather than indicating the rebirth of a form of tragedy in which plot is secondary and a lyric ''event'' primary (something *Tristan and Isolde* surely does, as Nietzsche demonstrates in *The Birth of Tragedy*), now seem relegated to the dustbin of the bourgeois theater.

Nietzsche himself, in 1859, had attempted to write a lyric tragedy, *Prometheus,* in free verse with a chorus. Reflecting on why he chose Prometheus as his subject, the young man wrote: ''One would like to re-create the era of Aeschylus, or are there no humans left and we have to make the Titans appear once again!''[9] His fascination with the Titans continues in *The Birth of Tragedy,* where he at one point equates them with the Dionysian ''divine order of terror'' and the Olympians with the Apollinian ''divine order of joy'' and at another calls the nature of Aeschylus's Prometheus ''at the same time Dionysian and Apollinian.''[10] The story of Prometheus, in any case, exemplifies for him both the ''hieratic'' mode of drama and the Dionysian pathos of suffering.

The genesis of *The Birth of Tragedy* has become clearer in recent years through the publication of some of Nietzsche's early lectures and essays: ''Greek Music Drama,'' January 18, 1870; ''Socrates and Tragedy,'' February 1, 1870; and ''The Dionysian Worldview,'' re-

vised as ''The Birth of Tragic Thought,'' from the summer of 1870.[11] Although Nietzsche's twentieth-century literary descendants could not have been aware of these writings, they are of great value in understanding the originality of *The Birth of Tragedy* and so will receive some attention here. M. S. Silk and J. P. Stern, Giorgio Colli, Dennis Sweet, and Rüdiger Safranski, among others, give accounts of this genesis.[12] In ''Greek Music Drama,'' the young scholar expounded a thesis that was not in itself original, since it had already been generally accepted by classical philologists: Greek tragedy originated in Dionysian festival. It was Nietzsche's emphasis on the wild, orgiastic nature of these festivals, along with the suggestion of the loss of individuality in the primordial unity of the crowd, as opposed to the Aristotelian reintegration of the individual into the social mass, that was already controversial. Here we find as well his insistence that in early tragedy the music of the chorus dominated the language of the protagonist. It is another variation on the theme discussed above: the highest form of tragedy is formed from the sound and the spectacle of pathos; its demise and decadence begin with an emphasis on logos. In the second lecture, such decadence finds its embodiment in the figure of Socrates. The replacement of the original choral song with dialogue, of instinctual power with rational analysis, of wisdom with knowledge—implemented in the wake of Socrates—has led theater to the impasse in which it finds itself in the contemporary world, although Nietzsche suggests here as well the possibility of a rebirth of tragedy. In ''The Dionysian Worldview,'' written just after the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war, Nietzsche discusses the notion that war reveals the elemental, cruel, Dionysian foundation of civilization. He also begins to work out the sublimation that the tragic form accomplishes. In particular, he introduces his conception of the principle of Apollo and its aesthetic importance in containing Dionysian rapture through clarity, form, and individualization. Dionysian *Rausch* is defined in part as ''the drive of spring'' and identified as Asiatic, controlled by the Hellenic Apollo in ''the most beautiful brotherly bond.'' Although Nietzsche uses the word ''birth'' (''the birth of tragic thought'') here to describe the result of the union of Dionysos and Apollo, the metaphor is not at all developed as it will be in *The Birth of Tragedy* (Geuss and Speirs, 120, 121, 125). In contrast to that of Nietzsche's first book, the language of these early writings remains on the whole academic.

Another lecture by Nietzsche, ''Introduction to the Tragedy of Sophocles'' (1870), helps to clarify some of his thinking about both

ancient and modern tragedy. In discussing the latter, he refers specifically to Schiller and Grillparzer, but also mentions French tragedy. ''The origin of ancient tragedy is in the lyric, of newer [tragedy] . . . in the epic. In the former the emphasis is on suffering, in the latter on doing.''[13] The epic is fundamentally optimistic and immanent in that it wants to live in the world; the lyric is pessimistic and transcendent in that it expresses the pain felt over the dissonance between the real world and the world as it should be. Important themes to be developed in *The Birth of Tragedy* are mentioned here: Dionysian tragedy as a dissolution of the individual into a primordial unity and as a participatory spectacle without ''spectators,'' and the evolution of tragedy into an art form through the ''Apollinian'' Greeks' transformation of Asiatic Dionysian rites. What is missing in this academic lecture, as in the others, is the metaphorical language that will make *The Birth of Tragedy* such a radical departure.

Although Nietzsche emphasizes, both in his 1886 preface to the revised edition, titled *Die Geburt der Tragödie oder Griechenthum und Pessimismus (The Birth of Tragedy or Hellenism and Pessimism*), and in *Ecce Homo,* that his first book was written when he was a medical orderly during the Franco-Prussian War, as if the event were important to its genesis, the war does not figure importantly in the text.[14] He was, according to Ronald Hayman, also writing notes for a play, *Empedokles,* at the time.[15] Certainly his acquaintance with the more gruesome aspects of war coalesced with his insights into horror, cruelty, and suffering at the heart of civilization, as well as of nature, viewed from a post-Darwinian perspective. The most immediate impetus to the original writing of the book was, of course, his relationship with Richard Wagner. No doubt seeing some potential benefits of Nietzsche's admiration to the promotion of his own work, Wagner urged his young friend to develop his brief pieces into what was to become modern Europe's first, and most influential, book-length philosophical meditation on tragedy. The young Nietzsche's aspirations to be a tragic poet may be seen as a subtext of his first book. One of the most original, and at the time of its publication the most shocking, aspects of *The Birth of Tragedy* is its highly charged metaphorical, erotic, and at times violent language. The working title for the first two-thirds of the manuscript (that is, minus the part on Wagner and the potential rebirth of tragedy), written in the summer of 1870, was ''Ursprung und Ziel der Tragödie'' (''The Origin and Purpose of Tragedy'').[16] (Early French and Italian translations of the work, not recognizing the importance of the metaphor in the title, were titled

Les origines de la tragédie and *Le origini della tragedia,* respectively.) Already, however, in developing his concepts of the Dionysian and Apollinian in this draft, Nietzsche is intrigued by a thought he attributes to Kant, suggested by what he seems to view as an eternal struggle between the sexes. This is the mystery of ''how from two antagonistic principles something new can develop.''[17] At some point before the publication of his book, Nietzsche must have realized the importance of the metaphor of birth, with its erotic ramifications, as opposed to the abstract or historical notion of ''origin,'' for his purposes. This is indeed clear in the first paragraph of *The Birth of Tragedy*. The development of art, Nietzsche argues, depends upon the duality (*Duplicität*) of the Apollinian and Dionysian, just as reproduction (*Generation*) depends on the duality (*Zweiheit*) of the sexes. Nietzsche's use of a Latinate and then a Germanic word for ''duality'' stresses the difference between the abstract and concrete terms of the metaphor. Furthermore, the Dionysian and the Apollinian, called different ''drives,'' go about ''exciting'' (*reizend*) each other to produce new ''births'' until at last in their coupling they generate or give birth to (*erzeugen*) the only equally Dionysian and Apollinian art form, tragedy.[18] Nietzsche does not specify which god or poetic principle represents the male and which the female in this mating, which produces several births before the culminating one, but it seems clear that Dionysus, the embodiment of orgiastic irrationality whose worship was usually associated with women, must play the female to Apollo, the god of calm control. Later in the text, when Dionysus figures more as an eternal principle than as a god, Dionysian art is said to be ''the primal mother, eternally creative beneath the surface of incessantly changing appearances, eternally forcing life into existence'' (Geuss and Speirs, 80). (In Nietzsche's later writing, some of Dionysus's feminine attributes will be displaced onto Ariadne.)

Sometimes Nietzsche uses a military metaphor to describe the relationship of Dionysus and Apollo. In section 4, for example, he describes Doric art as ''a permanent military encampment of the Apolline . . . in a state of unremitting resistance to the Titanic-barbaric nature of the Dionysiac'' (Geuss and Speirs, 28). ''The struggle between these two hostile principles,'' however, evolves immediately into an erotic one, at once agonistic and fecundating. Attic tragedy becomes ''the common goal of both drives whose mysterious marriage [*geheimnisvolles Ehebündnis*], after a long preceding struggle, was crowned with such a child—who is both Antigone and

Cassandra in one'' (28). A variation on the military metaphor represents the agon between the gods as a battle between East and West. To oriental, barbarian, uncontrolled orgiastic excess, the ''witches' brew'' of sensuality and cruelty, the Greek Apollo holds out the head of the Medusa, thus conquering an otherwise uncontrollable force by transforming it into art (20). This involves a ''peace treaty,'' with borders drawn up and an exchange of gifts. Yet even in this variation, the metaphor retains its sexual connotation, with Dionysus, like ''the Orient'' generally in much of late nineteenth-century discourse, displaying traditional female characteristics and Apollo traditional male ones. Taking the East-West and male-female tropes in another direction, Nietzsche describes the tragic myth of Prometheus represented by Aeschylus as a form of male, active sacrilege, a foundational notion for ''Aryan'' culture, in contrast to the story of the fall in Genesis, which figures the female, passive sin at the heart of ''Semitic'' culture. And yet, Nietzsche reminds us, if Prometheus, in his demand for justice, reveals ''his paternal descent from Apollo,'' the suffering of the Titan reminds us of his (presumably maternal) descent from Dionysos (50–51). The Hellenic male spirit, it would seem, did not simply conquer the ''Oriental'' female one, but rather incorporated it as a father begets a child on a mother.

The tangle of tropes of sex, birth, gender, and culture in Nietzsche's text is often bewildering. Dionysian man is also a satyr, a phallic symbol of the power of nature. But the chorus of original Dionysian drama is also composed of satyrs who serve their ''lord and master Dionysus'' in feminine fashion, their music and lyrics now becoming ''the womb'' that gave birth to . . . drama'' (Geuss and Speirs, 44). Dionysus, after all, is the urhero of tragedy, whose suffering stands behind the words and actions of all the great heroes of Attic tragedy. (These heroes can also, of course, be named Antigone or Cassandra.) In the final sections of the text, devoted primarily to the rebirth of tragedy, the relationship between Apollo and Dionysus takes on yet another form. In describing the effect, rather than the birth, of tragedy, Nietzsche uses the metaphor of a cloth being woven on the loom: the Apollinian ''veils'' the Dionysian, but the Dionysian nonetheless shines through. Erotic and martial struggle appear to have been replaced by a kind of peaceful coexistence in Nietzsche's return to an expression used in ''The Dionysian Worldview'': ''Thus the difficult relation of the Apolline and the Dionysiac in tragedy truly could be symbolized by a bond of brotherhood between the two deities: Dionysus speaks the language of

Apollo, but finally it is Apollo who speaks that of Dionysus. At which point the supreme goal of tragedy, and indeed of all art, is attained'' (Geuss and Speirs, 104). A bond of brotherhood? Has a homosexual embrace or a homosocial partnership made possible a transcendence of the eternal antagonism of the sexes? Has the sublimation of eros into logos, of music into dialogue, allowed Dionysus to present himself as a male whose relation to Apollo is one of equality and pure friendship? Is Dionysus no longer the *mother* of tragedy?

As Nietzsche stated in his critique of his youthful work, *The Birth of Tragedy* is indeed characterized by ''a rage for imagery'' and is often ''confused in its imagery'' (Geuss and Speirs, 5). Yet this particular confusion might be resolved if we consider Dionysus here as the prototype of a metaphorical creation Nietzsche will introduce in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft: Männliche Mütter* (*The Gay Science:* Male Mothers).[19] Preoccupied in several of his writings with the nature of pregnancy and its relationship to creativity, Nietzsche finds in the ''male mother'' an image for artistic creativity that does not carry the connotation of the passivity he sees as inherent in female pregnancy. We witness the process in Zarathustra, who famously declares, ''Everything about woman is a riddle and everything about woman has one solution: that is pregnancy.''[20] So much for women, but Zarathustra goes on to meditate on his own pregnancy and the birth of his thoughts. For Nietzsche, creative men as mothers become active rather than passive agents in producing their spiritual children. In the last part of *The Twilight of the Idols,* ''What I Owe to the Ancients,'' Nietzsche tells us that the mysteries of sex, celebrated in Dionysian rites, symbols, and myths, hold the key to the mystery of creativity. He emphasizes a new element as well: the spiritual male mother, like the physical female one, must also suffer pain in order to create. ''For the eternal joy of creation to exist, for the will to life to affirm itself eternally, the 'torment of the woman in labour' *must* also exist eternally. . . . The word 'Dionysus' means all of this.''[21]

If I have dwelt so long on the birth metaphor and its related erotic and agonistic imagery in *The Birth of Tragedy,* and as developed in Nietzsche's later works, it is not only because some of those writing under Nietzsche's spell take up these motifs in their own way, but also to emphasize the importance of metaphor, and of metaphorical thinking, in his understanding of tragedy.[22] We have seen how the abstract vocabulary in some of Nietzsche's earlier essays evolved into the *birth* of tragedy. Perhaps in order to justify his own approach in the midst of a densely metaphorical passage, Nietzsche remarks,

''For a genuine poet, metaphor is no rhetorical figure, but an image which takes the place of something else, something he can really see before him as a substitute for a concept'' (Geuss and Speirs, 43). Paul de Man's groundbreaking study in *Allegories of Reading* of Nietzsche's ''Rhetoric of Tropes'' discusses the significance of metaphor for Nietzsche while positioning him as a deconstructionist *avant la lettre*. Nietzsche's definition of language as ''a moving army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms'' in ''On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense'' (an essay written around the same time as *The Birth of Tragedy*) shows, for de Man, the philosopher's awareness of ''the figurality of all language'' and thus of language's illusory claim to transmit truth.[23] When de Man discusses Nietzsche's actual use of what he calls ''parental'' metaphors in *The Birth of Tragedy,* however, he curiously calls Dionysus ''the father of all art,''[24] apparently overlooking the significance of Dionysus as *mother*. For de Man the ''theatricality'' of Nietzsche's discourse, its use of two incompatible narrators, undercuts and deconstructs not only the genetic narrative it purports to recount, but also the ultimate ''melocentric'' authority of Dionysus as the ground of truth. Apollo and Dionysus finally become not only two voices but also two parts of a metaphor. De Man's view of Nietzsche as deconstructionist may be exaggerated—*The Birth of Tragedy* does, also, give a genetic account of the origins of tragedy in ancient Greece—but his argument is highly suggestive for an understanding of the book's style and form. Nietzsche's narration is indeed not primarily historical or chronological, but rather what he might have called ''hieratic,'' recounting again and again in various ways the mythopoeic encounter that engenders tragedy.

I submit that this first part of Nietzsche's text, through the beginning of section 11, may be read as a draft of a tragedy, or an anti-Aristotelian metatragedy, based on the reiteration of happening, on an event told several times in different ways, rather than on action. An agon between two gods, evoked lyrically as a source of both suffering and exaltation, itself produces the form that is the purest expression of suffering and exaltation. In the tragedy Nietzsche writes, tragedy, from its birth to its death, recounted synchronically, itself is the tragic hero. Greek tragedy, he tells us at the beginning of section 11, ''died by suicide, as the result of an irresolvable conflict, which is to say tragically'' (Geuss and Speirs, 54). A sound of mourning (as if sung by a chorus) resonates throughout the Hellenic world. ''Tragedy is dead! And with it we have lost poetry itself!'' (55). This

marks the end of the draft of the tragedy that the young philologist-poet would have wanted to write.[25]

In the following sections, through 15, which describe tragedy's demise in the hands of Euripides and Socrates and the direct line that leads from Euripides' introduction of mediocre everyday life and epic suspense onto the stage to nineteenth-century dramatic realism and naturalism, Nietzsche abruptly changes his style. Abandoning his metaphorical and emotional language, he writes as if the subject at hand were no longer worthy of the lyrical voice of a tragic poet. He becomes, if anything, a satirist with an eye for the realistic or comic detail. ''Euripides is the actor with the pounding heart, with his hair standing on end; he draws up his plan as a Socratic thinker; he executes it as a passionate actor. Neither in the planning nor in the execution is he a pure artist'' (Geuss and Speirs, 61).

What is wrong, in Nietzsche's opinion, with posttragic drama? Many of the same aspects that ''revolutionary'' dramatic writers and critics would come to criticize in the works of their contemporaries at the turn of the century. After the harmful interventions of Euripides, drama became fundamentally epic rather than lyric—emphasizing action, telling a story, and creating suspense rather than expressing a primordial suffering. Instead of participating in a ritual, the spectator, in modern drama, observes himself and his everyday problems on the stage. Realism leads to an imitation of ''bourgeois mediocrity'' (Geuss and Speirs, 56); [die bürgerliche Mittelmässigkeit] (Colli and Montinari, 77). This has political implications as well: common people, even slaves, come to power, and the dramatist must court their opinions. Nietzsche never acknowledges that the high point of Greek tragedy coincided with democracy in Greece. Or rather, he posits Aeschylean and Sophoclean tragedy as essentially aristocratic and Euripides as the representative of democratic decline. Neither does he here, as he does later on, discuss European aristocratic tragedy, such as that of seventeenth-century France, but seems to draw a direct filiation between Euripides and nineteenth-century realist and naturalist drama, a form suitable to democracy in that it courts the masses. Thus, he asks a question that will resonate with fin-de-siècle aesthetes: ''Why should the artist be obliged to accommodate himself to a force which is strong only by virtue of its numbers?'' (Geuss and Speirs, 57). Realist drama expels the Dionysian element with its *Rausch,* along with the chorus, and bases itself on words, dialogue, and logic, rather than on lyricism. The modern world has lost the fundamental connection with myth

(''the mythical maternal womb''); its drama replaces the depths of myth conveyed in shining images with the mere imitation of everyday life. Finally, realist drama, abandoning ''tragic pessimism,'' becomes fundamentally optimistic. Its worldview is not that of the suffering god-hero, annihilated and returning to fundamental unity for our pleasure, but rather that of problems which, through reasoning, can be solved. The modern stage, at least in its predominant bourgeois realism, reflects the limited and barren spiritual landscape of modernity.

The hopes for transcending this situation lie in a rebirth of tragedy through a reconnection with the spirit of music and with myth. For modernity, however, the gods have become aesthetic principles, art having in a sense replaced religion. The provocative and seminal phrase ''only as an aesthetic phenomenon is the world justified'' prepares Nietzsche's argument for the important—indeed, salvific—function of the rebirth of tragedy in modernity. Unlike Schopenhauer, and unlike much fin-de-siècle aestheticism, however, Nietzsche envisions tragedy and aesthetic form generally not as a refuge or flight from life, but rather as an affirmation of life through tragedy's ''pessimism of strength.''

If in the final ten sections of *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche sees German music and, especially, Richard Wagner as the primary catalysts for this rebirth, he also sees signs of the tragic spirit in other post-Hellenic tragic dramatists, including Shakespeare, Goethe, and Schiller. The agenda for and evidence of possibilities for the rebirth of tragedy are in fact not limited to the final sections, but are operative throughout *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche's interest in understanding the true nature of tragedy through its ''birth'' was not, to the horror of his critics, scientifically philological, but rather poetic, and intimately bound up with his search for the possible spiritual recovery of the modern world. The Dionysian, Nietzsche insists, did not completely die; it remains dormant and can resurface. The figure of Hamlet is comparable to that of the Dionysian man in that ''both have gazed into the true essence of things'' (Geuss and Speirs, 40), and Shakespeare's play is comparable to Greek tragedy in that it reveals a ''deeper wisdom'' beneath words (81). In order to characterize the Dionysian chorus, Nietzsche quotes from Goethe's *Faust:* ''an eternal sea, a changing, weaving, a glowing life'' (Geuss and Speirs, 46). As the ''modern man of culture,'' Faust is definitely

un-Greek, but his character also demonstrates the promising evidence ''that modern man is beginning to sense the limits of the Socratic lust for knowledge'' (86). Along with Kant and Schopenhauer, who have won a philosophical victory over optimism, Goethe and Schiller stand as precursors to a new tragic culture about to arise (87, 97). Schiller turns out to be a hero in what Nietzsche views as a modern struggle against realism, or illusionistic drama. As a poet, he appears Dionysian in that he writes from a ''musical mood'' (29). Nietzsche notes that in his preface to *The Bride of Messina,* Schiller fought against the prevailing aesthetic of illusionistic drama, and naturalism in art generally, by understanding the significance of the chorus as ''a living wall which tragedy draws about itself in order to shut itself off in purity from the real world'' (38).[26]

Another means of separating art from realistic impurity is through the creation of symbols. Along with his own figurative language, Nietzsche frequently uses the words *Symbol* or *Gleichnis* and *symbolisch* or *gleichnishaft*—an emphasis that must have delighted the symbolists and their followers. He views the creation of symbols as essential to poetry and poetic drama, and as both Dionysian and Apollinian. As a Dionysian phenomenon, music symbolizes the eternal contradiction at the heart of the world—the pain and pleasure of destruction—in ways that transcend language, and to which language is inadequate. On the other hand, symbol-making, the forming of sensations into artistic images, is an Apollinian function that allows us to access the Dionysian. Both connotations emphasize the importance of the symbolic as opposed to the mimetic nature of tragedy, and of all true art.

The final pages of *The Birth of Tragedy,* with their praise not only of Wagner and German music but of the ''rebirth of the German myth'' (Geuss and Speirs, 109) and the superiority of German culture, remain problematic for the modern reader. The revival of Dionysian *Rausch* in enraptured spectators here seems too close for comfort to rallies at Nuremberg and the ideology of the will of the *Volk.* There is even a call for a *Führer* to take the Germans back to their long-lost home. Walter Kaufmann, intent on de-Nazifying Nietzsche, states in his 1967 translation that *The Birth of Tragedy* should have ended after section 15, because the remainder, on the rebirth of tragedy, weakened it and was criticized by Nietzsche himself.[27] It is true that in his 1886 preface, ''An Attempt at Self-Criticism,'' Nietzsche denounces his invention of ''stories about the German character'' and his enthusiasm for German music, in partic-

ular that of Wagner, which he now sees as romantic and thoroughly un-Greek (Geuss and Speirs, 10). Yet Nietzsche did not, in his self-criticism, take back his call for and hope in a rebirth of tragedy in the modern world. Even when he finds his youthful work ''clumsy'' and ''embarrassing,'' he suggests that the problem lies in the fact that he had not dared to express himself completely as a poet, but had remained within the framework of a philologist. It is not his discovery of the Dionysian principle that is at fault, but ''it ought to have *sung,* this new soul, and not talked! '' (6; italics in original). The mature Nietzsche, it seems, understands the young, unfulfilled tragic poet who created the uneven *Birth of Tragedy*. He ends his self-criticism with the words of his poetic creation, the ''Dionysian monster'' Zarathustra: ''Lift up your hearts, my brothers, high, higher!'' (Geuss and Speirs, 12). These words are not far in tone from Nietzsche's impassioned apostrophe to his readers at the end of section 20 of *The Birth of Tragedy,* a call that resonated with his disciples throughout Europe and elsewhere as a stimulus to reawaken and recreate Dionysian tragedy for modernity. ''Yes, my friends, believe as I do in the Dionysiac life and in the rebirth of tragedy. The time of Socratic man is past. Put on wreaths of ivy, take up the *thyrsus* and do not be surprised if tigers and panthers lie down, purring and curling round your legs. Now you must only dare to be tragic human beings, for you will be released and redeemed. You will accompany the festive procession of Dionysos from India to Greece! Put on your armour for a hard fight, but believe in the miracles of your god!'' (Geuss and Speirs, 98).

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Among the many tangled threads of his text, Nietzsche also indicates a different path toward the creation of modern tragedy. Although his references to Socrates in *The Birth of Tragedy* are dominated by a tone of scorn, Nietzsche's attitude to the founder of reason, science, and logic is, in the end (as many commentators have observed), profoundly ambivalent. In two passages shortly before the one above (Geuss and Speirs, 75, 82), the time of Socrates seems not to be past, but rather to constitute the very essence of modernity. The ''hope for a rebirth of tragedy'' here lies not in overthrowing the spirit of Socrates but rather in carrying that spirit to its limits, ultimately fusing it with the spirit of Dionysus. The symbol of the future cultural form becomes ''the *music-making Socrates*''—the Socratic in a sense replacing the Apollinian as the possible partner

of the Dionysian. Nietzsche here lays the groundwork for a type of tragedy and tragic thinking that acknowledges the need to incorporate modern positivism while moving beyond it.

It could be argued that Nietzsche the tragic poet finally created the tragedy and the tragic hero he had in mind with *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* Michael Stern will develop this argument in his essay in this volume. Before Nietzsche could create his tragedy, however, he had to rethink his understanding of the possibility of modern tragedy after his great disappointment with Richard Wagner. His disillusionment with what had been for him the supreme example of modern musical drama in the spirit of the ancient Greeks seems to have occurred in July 1876 when he attended the first festival at Bayreuth. His artistic expectations were soon dampened by the mundaneness and the false grandeur of the event. According to Safranski, Nietzsche was ''horrified, annoyed, and even nauseated to witness the ostentatious arrival of Kaiser Wilhelm I, Richard Wagner's fawning demeanor on the festival hill . . . , the racket made about the mythical enterprise.''[28] He wrote in his diary that he now viewed the artist and the enterprise he had once seen as ideal as irreparably mediocre.[29] The experience was instrumental in Nietzsche's turning away from all idealism to focus on the purely human origins of thought and creativity, a turning away expressed in *Human, All Too Human.*

What has been called the ''middle period'' of Nietzsche's working life is characterized in part by his rejection of German culture and his adoption of Mediterranean, in particular French, cultural values, a development that was not lost on his later French readers. After attending a performance of Bizet's *Carmen* for the first time while staying in Genoa, in 1881, he claimed to have found an alternative to the musical, mythical drama of the *Ring* and of the highly disappointing *Parsifal.* In one of his last works, *The Case of Wagner* (1888), Nietzsche reflects on this experience in contrast to his erstwhile model for the rebirth of tragedy and on the German spirit generally. Nietzsche admires in *Carmen* its ''African'' cheerfulness and the clarity of the fate that hangs over it. He singles out—and contrasts with Wagner—its unsentimental, but tragic, portrayal of love: ''love as *fatum,* as fatality, cynical, innocent, cruel . . . at bottom the deadly hatred of the sexes!'' In order to return to nature, health, and cheerfulness, he says, ''Il faut méditerraniser la musique.''[30] Wagner's musical drama, on the other hand, remains obscured in northern fog. Nietzsche characterizes it as ''decadent,'' as representative of modernity rather than as the new tragedy that will save modernity with

the return of Dionysus. Wagner is denigrated, too, as ''theatrical,'' as a ''man of the theater,'' epithets by which Nietzsche seems to mean an emphasis on showmanship and a pandering to, rather than elevation of, the masses. Whereas Nietzsche had seen Wagner as reviving myth, the essential foundation of tragedy, for the modern stage and the modern world, he now sees that attempt as hollow, a merely aesthetic attempt to replace religion. Rather than becoming ecstatic participants in a Dionysian ritual, the spectators at Bayreuth seemed primarily interested in the show as spectacle, along with socializing and eating.

Nietzsche's new emphasis on ''cheerfulness'' may seem at odds with his admiration for cynical and cruel fate and also to be in direct opposition to his criticism of interpretations of the Greeks as ''cheerful'' in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Yet it may also be viewed as a development of the concept of Dionysian rapture and ''joy'' in his early work, the result of experiencing the contradictory pleasure and pain that stand at the heart of the tragic experience. In *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* joy evolves into laughter, or a new kind of cheerfulness. *The Gay Science* ends with, and Zarathustra begins with, *hic incipit tragoedia,* but both emphasize the importance of laughter. Zarathustra, who ''goes down'' to look into the abyss of life's meaninglessness, epitomized in the phrase ''God is dead,'' is perhaps both tragic hero and actor, attaining the joyful serenity of Oedipus at Colonnus and masking the terror of his metaphysical insight with comic play. He also ''gives birth to'' the idea of the modern Prometheus, the *Übermensch* who will transfigure human life through creation, the transvaluation of all values.

The doctrine of the ''eternal return'' developed in both of these works brings another dimension to tragedy and tragic fate. For Heidegger, ''by thinking the thought of eternal return, the tragic as such becomes the basic characteristic of beings.''[31] The thought that annihilation and suffering are what defines human life and that the inevitable return of what has already occurred controls our fate is unbearable. It can only be recuperated aesthetically; it has no moral significance. As in Greek tragedy, everything has already happened: it remains for the tragic hero to discover the truth and for the tragic poet to unite terror and beauty. Nietzsche never abandons his anti-Aristotelian stance, which privileges suffering over action and the aesthetic over the moral. His later works, however, tend to place more emphasis on the hero's struggle with fate, or the agonistic affirmation of his ''will to power.'' ''The *heroic* spirits are those who in

the midst of tragic horror say to themselves, 'Yes': they are hard enough to feel suffering as *pleasure*.''[32] This is the ''pessimism of strength,'' the subtitle Nietzsche gave his youthful book in 1886. The hero, transcending morality, beyond good and evil, enters into combat with fate knowing that he must ultimately lose. The *Übermensch* will presumably bring the combat into a new dimension. Nietzsche had, however, prefigured this dimension of the tragic hero with his discussion of Prometheus as lawbreaker (in contrast to the Judeo-Christian myth of the Fall and sin) in *The Birth of Tragedy*. He takes up the point again in *The Gay Science,* suggesting, with the example of Sophocles's Ajax, as well as with Prometheus, that tragedy was invented in order to give value to crime![33] In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), anticipating Artaud, Nietzsche emphasizes the importance of cruelty to culture generally and to tragedy specifically: ''Cruelty is what constitutes the painful sensuality of tragedy.''[34]

Nietzsche's final works also show a return to the figure of Dionysus and the Dionysian. *The Twilight of the Idols,* published, like *The Case of Wagner, The Antichrist,* and *The Dionysian Dithyrambs,* in 1888, the last year of Nietzsche's sanity, reiterates the importance of the heroic in tragedy, but places more emphasis on intoxication (*Rausch*), of which ''the oldest and most original form'' is sexual (*Twilight,* trans. Large, 47), and on a feeling of great-spirited generosity and fullness which induces a need to give freely out of one's strength. Although the Apollinian now plays a more minor role than in Nietzsche's first work, it is not abandoned but rather incorporated into the notion of *Rausch*. The aesthetic principles founded on the two ''art gods'' retain the basic characteristics given them in *The Birth of Tragedy,* but they are less differentiated in that both now appear as forms of intoxication: the Apollinian ''excites the eye'' whereas the Dionysian unites the emotions through music, dance, and lyric poetry. *Rausch* not only affirms the value of life in the face of metaphysical terror, it is also the essential precondition for aesthetic activity. The overflowing life and energy released by the tragic feeling were misunderstood by Aristotle, Nietzsche reiterates, as catharsis (91). But if Aristotle was wrong to privilege the moral over the aesthetic, this does not mean that art is sufficient unto itself. Interestingly, Nietzsche both defends and attacks the doctrine of art for art's sake here. Art should indeed divorce itself from moralizing, but not from purpose: ''Art is the great stimulant to life: how could one understand it as purposeless, as aimless, as *l'art pour l'art?*'' (65).

The last section of *The Twilight of the Idols* recapitulates the notion

that the essence of tragedy lies in the sacrifice of Dionysus. It also reaffirms the belief that the Dionysian spirit can live in modernity, and that indeed Nietzsche himself carries its flame: ''Saying yes to life, even in its strangest and hardest problems; the will to life rejoicing in the *sacrifice* of its highest types to its own inexhaustibility—*this* is what I call the Dionysian'' (80–81). Reiterating one of his bones of contention with Aristotle, he states his conviction that tragedy does not result in a release from pity and terror but rather in joy, ''joy which also encompasses the *joy of destruction*'' (81; italics in original). In the final sentence, Nietzsche acknowledges that he is returning to his first book and signs himself as he wishes to be remembered: ''I, the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus—I, the teacher of the eternal recurrence'' (81).

Perhaps Nietzsche felt that although he never succeeded in writing the work of tragic poetry he wished to write, as a teacher he might plant in his followers the seeds of such creation. Although it is true that his preoccupation with the tragic and its potential role in the healing of modern spiritual sickness, as well as the more specific call for the rebirth of tragedy to cure the ills of the modern theater, appears only in fragmentary form in his later writings, his thinking on these matters remains a subtext throughout his work. Still, *The Birth of Tragedy* was undoubtedly the primary source for the admirers of Nietzsche who sought to heed his call for a revival of tragedy in modernity. One of the first of these admirers was the French symbolist poet, critic, and occultist Edouard Schuré, who published a history-*cum*-manifesto, *Le drame musical*, in 1875, only four years after the publication of the (at the time still untranslated) *Birth of Tragedy*. Declaring that Apollo and Dionysus are ''the two poles of the Greek soul,'' Schuré notes that this thesis is developed ''with originality and daring'' in a recent book by M. Nietzsche called *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.[35] Deploring the state of the modern theater, which produces nothing but banal ''photographs of present society,'' Schuré, in accordance with Nietzsche's position at the time, proposes Wagner as the model for the revival of the unity of poetry and music for modernity. The renewal of great lyrical tragedy in festival will perform a redemptive function, ''transporting the soul of a people toward the ideal.''[36]

In the wake of Schuré, the French symbolists combined their discovery of Nietzsche and Wagner with an interest in the occult. *Le*

drame musical finds aspects of the occult and the theosophical in Wagner's operas. In a much later work, *Le théâtre initiateur: La genèse de la tragédie, le drame d'Eleusis,* Schuré maintains that Nietzsche's first book, which he now calls *L'enfantement de la tragédie,* was the most remarkable work he ever wrote. Nietzsche, he claims, understood that all great theater was born from dithyrambs based on the myth of Dionysus torn apart by the Titans, and thus on the purification of the soul through suffering. If Nietzsche had only pushed his ideas a step further, he would have discovered that the origins of tragedy also lie in ''the arcane depths of orphic mysteries and the mysteries of Eleusis.'' Thus, although Nietzsche's discovery is ''precious,'' he remained on the threshold of truth.[37] At the end of the book Schuré calls for a restoration of ''a synthetic work of art . . . a drama of initiation and salvation'' as an antidote to ''the materialist chaos'' in which culture is plunged.[38]

The popularity of Wagner's operas soared in France over the twenty years following the 1875 publication of Schuré's *Le drame musical,* conflating, in spite of Nietzsche's break with Wagner, with an interest in Nietzsche's theories of tragedy. The major symbolists published articles and manifestos in *La Revue Wagnerienne,* founded by Edouard Dujardin in 1885, two years after Wagner's death.[39] The symbolist idea of theater, espousing its own version of Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk,* is close to Nietzsche in its advocacy of a more or less plotless, ''hieratic'' drama founded on the musicality of the poetic word combined with a fundamental antitheatricality. Mallarmé's three unfinished dramatic works, ''Hérodiade,'' ''L'après-midi d'un faune,'' and ''Igitur,'' as well as Maeterlinck's ''Pelléas et Mélisande,'' may serve as examples. The director Lugné Poe, at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre, where Antonin Artaud served his apprenticeship, created symbolist stagings for dramas by Ibsen and Strindberg.

The symbolists undoubtedly pushed the theater, and other literary forms, further than Nietzsche would have wanted into a somewhat limited aestheticism. André Gide sensed this when he broke with symbolism, proclaiming an adherence to Nietzschean vitalism.[40] Gabriele D'Annunzio, heavily influenced by the symbolists in his search for a nonrealistic theater based on myth, ritual, and the poetic word, also wished to infuse his modern tragedies with Dionysian ecstasy. It was in reading and translating D'Annunzio that Arthur Symons, who wrote the first review of the French translation of *The Birth of Tragedy* in England and became the key figure for spreading Nietzscheanism there, first became interested in Nietzsche.[41]

Reading what was available of Nietzsche in French translations, D'Annunzio became the major advocate of Nietzscheanism in Italy. It was his understanding of Nietzsche's ideas on tragedy, along with the influences of Wagner and the symbolists, that inspired D'Annunzio to write for the theater. Yet while attempting to revive Dionysian ritual and to replace realist, plot-based drama with poetic enchantment, D'Annunzio was also aware of the necessity of grounding his tragedies in the contemporary world, of writing plays that would speak to modernity. My essay in this volume traces D'Annunzio's attempt to fuse these various elements in examples of his modern tragedies and in his writings on theatrical aesthetics. D'Annunzio is in a sense a literal reader of Nietzsche, for he applies the philosopher's theories both to the stage and to his concurrently developing political ideology. Perhaps his most original contribution to the theater, as well as to the novel, is his reading of Nietzsche's sexual and birth metaphors. In D'Annunzio's rendering, the Dionysian principle becomes incarnated in a woman, usually an actress, while the Apollinian inhabits a male poet. Sexual union thus engenders poetic and tragic creation. It is D'Annunzio's Dionysian women, especially as they were interpreted by such divas as Eleonora Duse and Sarah Bernhardt, who represent his most memorable contributions to the theater. D'Annunzio's greater rival on the early twentieth-century Italian stage, Luigi Pirandello, though not so explicitly inspired by Nietzsche, aspired to write a different kind of modern tragedy, declaring that his writings ''shook'' the Apollinian ''white statues'' to reveal the ''black abyss'' beneath.[42]

One of the most important centers of interest in Nietzsche, and of Nietzsche's impact on tragic theory and literature, in the late nineteenth century was Scandinavia. Inspired by Georg Brandes's 1888 lectures and his subsequent writings on Nietzsche, the major figures of the new Scandinavian drama, Ibsen and Strindberg, incorporated aspects of the German philosopher's thought into their plays and other writings. In theorizing and creating his own ''modern tragedy,'' Ibsen, it could be argued, followed the line suggested in *The Birth of Tragedy* that looks toward the creation of a tragedy fusing Dionysian ritual with an awareness of modernity. In *Hedda Gabler,* Ibsen does not fail to have his desperate heroine seek to crown her lover with ''wreaths of ivy'' in her hope for a Dionysian escape from the stultification of modern life. Although Ibsen was touted in his Parisian productions as a symbolist and an anarchist, his reputation elsewhere became that of a naturalist opposed to the purified,

static, antirealist drama practiced by the symbolists and other aesthetes. According to David Thatcher, ''*The Birth of Tragedy* seems to have provided Arthur Symons with a theoretic basis for his dislike (shared by Yeats and Synge) of the realist Ibsenite stage.'' Symons's attack on Ibsen in fact resembles Nietzsche's on Euripides.[43]

It was Brandes, as Michael Stern explains in his essay on August Strindberg, who fostered the short but intense relationship between Nietzsche and Strindberg, based on an exchange of books and letters. As if adopting Nietzsche's birth metaphor in *The Birth of Tragedy* in a more explicit sense, Strindberg wrote: ''Meanwhile, my intellectual life has received a terrible stream of seed from Friedrich Nietzsche, so that I fell intoxicated like a bitch in heat.''[44] Strindberg's tragedy *The Father* ''deeply moved'' Nietzsche, and Strindberg found a confirmation of his own theatrical aesthetic in the footnote in *The Case of Wagner* discussed above that defines the original meaning of drama as scenes of pathos, rather than action. Rather than concentrating on Strindberg's drama, however, Stern explores the Swedish author's experiments with Nietzschean tragic concepts in works much less well known in the English-speaking world: the autobiographical work *Son of a Servant* and the novel *On the Open Sea.* For Stern, Nietzsche's approach to genealogy is crucial both to Nietzsche's own later tragic thinking and to Strindberg's working out of tragedy in terms of subjectivity. He reads *Son of a Servant* as an essentially performative work, a genealogy of the self that results in a tragedy of the simultaneous affirmation and demise of the individual. Strindberg's novel, which its author claimed would ''stage the Nietzsche problem,'' features as its hero a Promethean figure who makes the decision to replace the Christmas star with that of Hercules, thus bringing light to the human race. Caught in a constant agon between modern and mythological concepts of time, or between linear progression and eternal return, the protagonist finally experiences a Dionysian loss of individuation that is both tragic and salvific. Stern's essay also complements my introductory remarks above in that it discusses at some length aspects of Nietzsche's tragic thought in works not treated here, such as *The Gay Science, The Genealogy of Morals,* and *The Will to Power.*

Through Strindberg, as well as directly, Nietzsche's tragic thought had an important impact on German dramatists and other writers such as Gerhart Hauptmann, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Franz Wedekind, Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, and even Bertolt Brecht.[45] In Great Britain, Nietzsche had a significant effect on novelists such as

D. H. Lawrence and was particularly well received by Irish writers. George Bernard Shaw gave Nietzschean tragedy a comic twist, Oscar Wilde took Nietzsche's insights into tragedy to heart (especially during the time of his trial and imprisonment), and William Butler Yeats and John Synge attempted to create a rebirth of tragedy for the Irish National Theatre. Yeats's poetic dramas have been studied in connection to Nietzsche's theories of tragedy;[46] in this volume, John Burt Foster examines Nietzschean tragic thinking as rendered in Yeats's poetry, and his autobiography, within the context of the poet's involvement in the Irish cultural and political scene. Foster traces the thread throughout Yeats's poetic career that transforms the contradictory pain and pleasure that Nietzsche finds at the heart of Dionysian ecstasy into the poet's own expression of ''tragic joy.'' According to Foster, what fascinated Yeats most was the reaction of the audience—what Nietzsche called the aesthetic spectator—to tragedy, understood both as Apollinian dramatic form and as cosmic and historical spectacle. Thus, Yeats rewrites Nietzsche's Apollinian-Dionysian image of ''luminous spots to cure eyes damaged by gruesome night'' into poetry of ''lidless eyes, stony places, and vibrant spectators,'' emphasizing finally the exhilarating and tonic effects of the tragic experience, both public and private. Yeats transforms Nietzsche's vision for the twentieth century, adapting it into a poetic confrontation with the horror of the Great War and its aftermath.

Nietzsche's later impact in the English-speaking world was widespread. The other major poet of the early twentieth century, T. S. Eliot, seemed to respond to Nietzsche's challenge to re-create tragedy for modernity by reviving elements of the Dionysian chorus in his verse dramas. Eliot, who knew of Nietzsche's theories primarily through his readings in the Cambridge School of Anthropologists, ironically (from a Nietzschean perspective) rewrites ritual drama, with Dionysian chorus and Apollinian characters, within a Christian context, most notably in *Murder in the Cathedral.* The Nietzschean desire to return tragedy to its ritual, sacrificial origins in a modern context also appears in the verse dramas without chorus such as *The Cocktail Party.* Mark Pizzato, who has contributed an essay on Thornton Wilder to this volume, has written extensively on the presence of Nietzsche in Eliot's theater elsewhere.[47]

Another English-speaking writer who adapted Nietzsche's theories of tragedy not only in the creation of his plays but also in his writings on dramatic theory is the Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka. Soyinka's essay ''Morality and Aesthetics in the Ritual Archetype'' and

his adaptation of Euripides' *Bacchae* make use of Nietzschean readings of Greek mythology and dramaturgy within a traditional and modern African framework. American dramatists who were moved to create modern tragedy under the impact of *The Birth of Tragedy* include Tennessee Williams, Eugene O'Neill (most explicitly), and Peter Schaffer. Thornton Wilder is not among those who come immediately to mind as a Nietzschean, but Mark Pizzato here makes a convincing case for an Apollinian-Dionysian foundation to *Our Town,* which he rescues from its quaint, sentimental reputation to read as a modern and postmodern Nietzschean tragicomedy. Arguing that recent neuroscientific research, with its discoveries of the contrasting and complementary functions of the left and right sides of the human brain, has provided a material basis for Nietzsche's Apollo-Dionysus dialectic, Pizzato goes on to analyze not only the text but also modern and postmodern performances of *Our Town* as they reveal various configurations of this duality. Whereas the 1940 film of the play tended to suppress Dionysian elements such as the group of baseball players that, like a satyr chorus, taunts with sexual innuendos, the 2003 film featuring Paul Newman betrays a post-9/11 sense of vulnerability, an awareness of the Dionysian ''substratum of suffering and of knowledge,'' as formulated by Nietzsche, along with that of the necessity of Apollinian containment. Nietzsche's insights into Greek tragedy receive confirmation in twenty-first-century science and performance.

The impact of Nietzsche as tragic philosopher was also felt in Russia and other Slavic nations, in some cases quite early. The Russian symbolist Viascheslav Ivanov, who like many Russian intellectuals studied in Germany, discovered and wrote on *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1891, and symbolist poets such as Aleksandr Blok responded deeply to their reading of Nietzsche. Edith W. Clowes, in her essay on ''groundlessness,'' discusses this literary reception but concentrates on the development of an existentialist type of philosophy conceived as tragedy in the wake of Nietzsche in Russia, primarily in the work of Lev Shestov. Although he was influenced by Nietzsche's late works as well, the Dionysian and Apollinian as portrayed in Nietzsche's first book had particular resonance in Shestov's concept of the philosophical enterprise. The encounter with Dionysian horror, the existential understanding of the reality of the tragic, appear to him more fundamental to philosophy than the building of logical argument. Following Shestov, Nicolai Berdiaev called himself a ''Dionysian philosopher'' but attempted to reconcile his Nietzschean

approach with Christianity. The notion of philosophy as tragedy has extended even to philosophers of the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, during which several thinkers have continued to view philosophy as a kind of Apollinian form-giving to a Dionysian experience of despair.

Readers of this volume will probably be much less familiar with the reception of Nietzsche in Czechoslovakia, where, according to Bettina Kaibach, it was poets, novelists, and literary critics who played a role superior to that of philosophers. Whereas philosophers tended to portray Nietzsche as a ''Teutonic'' advocate of ruthless individualism and, later, as the forerunner of Nazism, creative writers from the turn of the century through the 1930s and 1940s were deeply affected by a fuller understanding of Nietzsche. The novelist Jiří Weil, who remained to some extent a Communist in spite of being persecuted by the Soviets, nevertheless refused to accept the official doctrine of Nietzsche as proto-Nazi, reading him instead as a philosopher of tragedy. Drawing on the theories of the tragic of Walter Benjamin, George Steiner, and Paul Ricoeur, as well as those of Nietzsche, Kaibach analyzes the role of tragedy and the tragic in Weil's *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof,* set in Nazi-occupied Prague. In part a critical dialogue with *The Birth of Tragedy,* echoing Benjamin's critique of that book, Weil's novel also embraces Nietzsche's view of ideal culture as the harmonious existence of the art drives of sculpture and music manifested in prewar Prague. Still, Weil, like Benjamin, refuses to accept Nietzsche's aesthetic justification of the tragic view of life, arguing instead for the necessity of moral outrage against the ''evil Gods'' who here take the form of Nazi occupiers. Weil thus develops an understanding of the tragic as metaphysical insight in a historical framework.

The interaction of the Nietzschean tragic sense with contemporary history was also operative in France, from before World War I through World War II. Through their involvement in the Chinese revolutionary movement, André Malraux's characters in *La condition humaine* (*Man's Fate*) confront Dionysian terror to emerge with tragic affirmation. In his writings on art, Malraux meditates on the encounters between a Dionysian East and an Apollinian West.[48] On the right, Charles Maurras admitted that the German ''barbarian'' had not only reinforced his own case against democracy, but might also give his young French followers the desire to read the tragedies of Racine again. Thierry Maulnier, who admired the ''tragic spirit'' of young Nazis, considering them a ''worthy enemy,'' wrote a book

on Nietzsche based on his theory of tragedy and a Nietzschean interpretation of Racine that ends by calling for a rebirth of French tragedy. Drieu La Rochelle, Robert Brasillach, and other French fascists interested in reforming French theater used Nietzsche for their own purposes, claiming that the German thinker had shown tragedy to be an ''Aryan'' form and that commercial, popular plays and bourgeois dramas represented a ''Jewish'' and ''democratic-capitalist'' deformation of the theater's true mission. Their call for a rebirth of tragedy in the theater, in the wake of Nietzsche, thus fused the aesthetic with the political.[49] On the other side, *The Flies,* Sartre's attempt at writing a modern ''tragedy of liberty'' and even a tragedy of resistance, is full of citations from Nietzsche; and Camus, whose interest in creating a modern tragedy was more developed, and who wrote a number of essays on Nietzsche, created a protagonist who encounters Dionysian horror in his *Caligula.*[50]

A more generalized conception of ''tragic politics'' emerges from Artaud's *The Theater and Its Double* when read in tandem with *The Birth of Tragedy,* as Geoffrey Baker argues in his contribution here. Following Adorno, Baker interprets the political here as working at the level of fundamental changes in both attitudes and aesthetics. Although Artaud does not acknowledge a debt to Nietzsche, something resembling the Dionysian-Apollinian opposition permeates his writings on the theater. The opposition to bourgeois subjectivity, and to ''Socratic,'' psychological, text-based, mimetic drama, is central to both thinkers. Both Nietzsche and Artaud in a sense write manifestos calling not only for a radical change in the tradition of occidental theater, but for change at a deeper cultural level as well. Artaud develops Nietzsche's call for a return to the collective and the Dionysian with his advocacy of mass spectacle and the poetry of festival, and he fleshes out Nietzsche's passing remark on the ''epidemic'' nature of theater with his equation of theater and plague. Although the collectivization and spiritualization of tragedy espoused by both thinkers might be (and were) interpreted in terms consonant with fascist ideology, these can also, Baker argues, open paths to progressive forms of resistance to bourgeois democracy. Through Artaud, in any case, Nietzsche's hopes for the rebirth of Dionysian tragedy in modernity have been to some extent implemented by later twentieth-century playwrights and directors such as Jean Genet, Roger Blin, and Peter Brook.

The Nietzschean elements in Artaud's work resemble other modernist receptions of *The Birth of Tragedy.* If modernists tended to look

toward Nietzsche as the champion of Dionysian ecstasy, and of a refoundation in myth as a form of salvation for the materialistic modern world, postmodernists, in the general opinion, are much more interested in the later Nietzsche, the skeptical, antireligious, antimetaphysical philosopher who proclaimed the nonexistence of truth as well as the death of God. Yet Nietzsche's first work figures among the postmodernists as well. Paul de Man, as we have seen, and even Michel Foucault also showed interest in *The Birth of Tragedy*.[51] Gilles Deleuze, about whom Ronald Bogue has written extensively, bases his theory of the functions of music in sound cinema on Nietzsche's concept of ''the spirit of music,'' according to Bogue's essay ''Tragedy, Sight and Sound,'' which concludes this volume. Writing on ''the birth of Godard's *Prénom Carmen* from the Nietzschean spirit of music,'' Bogue brings the impact of Nietzsche's tragic theory and poetry into the cinema. In cinema, according to Deleuze, music creates immediate, Dionysian images, while visuals mediate Apollinian images. Yet their relationship is not one of correspondence, ''for the *direct* expression (music) and the *indirect* expression (visual images) of the Whole are incommensurable.'' Bogue applies this theory to his analysis of Jean-Luc Godard's film, showing, for example, how the story, ''a parodic disarticulation of the Carmen myth,'' and the visual images function differently from the musical score, which consists largely of Beethoven quartets rather than the predictable Bizet opera. Citing in the film a line from Rilke's first *Duino Elegy,* ''You know, beauty is the beginning of the terror we are capable of enduring,'' Godard also uses language to suggest another insight into the relation of the Dionysian and the Apollinian. Although the playful, parodic aspect of *Prénom Carmen* prevents it from being a tragedy, the film is nonetheless, Bogue concludes, born of a Nietzschean spirit of music.

The essays that follow present a sampling of the many legacies of Nietzsche's concept of tragedy and his call for a rebirth of the tragic both in the dramatic form and in culture generally, for these figure not only in *The Birth of Tragedy* but also in his later work. The authors discuss receptions of Nietzsche's writings on tragedy and the tragic as they appear in poetry, philosophy, politics, science, prose fiction, autobiography, theory, and cinema, as well as in drama for the stage, in diverse languages and cultures. If Nietzsche wearing the mask of Dionysus hoped himself to be the mother of tragedies reborn, he may have, in a way he could not have foreseen when he wrote his first book, given birth to centaurs.

Notes

1. Dennis Sweet, in ''The Birth of *The Birth of Tragedy,*'' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60, no. 2 (1999): 345–59, points out the importance of Lessing's insights for Nietzsche.

2. Much of this information comes from Rüdiger Safranski, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography,* trans. Shelley Frisch (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), 317–27.

3. For an account of the reading of Nietzsche by fascist intellectuals in Italy and France, particularly in the context of theater, see Mary Ann Frese Witt, *The Search for Modern Tragedy: Aesthetic Fascism in Italy and France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001). For a concise summary of the ''Nazification'' of Nietzsche, see Rudolf E. Kuenzli, ''The Nazi Appropriation of Nietzsche.'' (*Nietzsche Studien,* 1983; 12:428–35.) The prime instigator of the ''de-Nazification'' of Nietzsche was, of course, his postwar American translator, Walter Kaufmann.

4. In spite of Nietzsche's contention with Aristotle, emphasized here, his theory of tragedy retained much similarity with that of the Greek philosopher. See M. S. Silk and J. P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 225–38; Michael Davis, ''Tragedy in the Philosophic Age of the Greeks: Aristotle's Reply to Nietzsche,'' in *The Impact of Aristotelianism on Modern Philosophy,* ed. Riccardo Pozzo (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 210–30.

5. Following Walter Kaufmann's reasoning that Nietzsche used the word ''Apollinisch,'' not ''Apollonisch'' (Friedrich Nietzsche, *''The Birth of Tragedy'' and ''The Case of Wagner,''* ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann [New York: Vintage Books, 1967], 9 n. 9), I use the English translation ''Apollinian.'' Some other writers on and translators of Nietzsche use ''Apollonian''; British writers, including the most recent translator of *The Birth of Tragedy,* Ronald Speirs, use ''Apolline.''

6. In Friedrich Nietzsche, *Historisch-kritische Gesamt-ausgabe* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1933), 2:375, translated and cited by Kurt Weinberg in ''Nietzsche's Paradox of Tragedy,'' in *YFS 96: 50 Years of Yale French Studies; A Commemorative Anthology,* ed. Charles A. Porter and Alyson Waters (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 93.

7. Nietzsche, *''Birth of Tragedy,''* and *''Case of Wagner,''* trans. Kaufmann, 91. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie: Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen I–IV; Nachgelassene Schriften, 1870–1873,* ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 94. All subsequent references to the original German will be from this edition and will be given in the text. Normally, I will refer to the English translation by Ronald Speirs (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings,* ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, trans. Ronald Speirs [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999]); subsequent references to this translation will be given parenthetically in the text. In this case, Speirs has ''domestic tragedy'' (70), which seems a distortion.

8. Nietzsche, *''Birth of Tragedy'' and ''Case of Wagner,''* trans. Kaufmann, 174.

9. Cit. Safranski, *Nietzsche,* 33.

10. Nietzsche, *''Birth of Tragedy''* and *''Case of Wagner,''* trans. Kaufmann, 42, 72.

11. ''Das griechische Musikdrama,'' ''Socrates und die Tragödie,'' ''Die dionysche Weltanschauung,'' and ''Die Geburt des tragischen Gedankens,'' all unpublished in Nietzsche's lifetime, were critically edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino

Montinari in their edition of Nietzsche's works. All of these appear in the recent paperback edition, cited in n. 7 ''The Dionysiac Worldview'' appears in English translation in Nietzsche, ed. Geuss and Speirs, *Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings,* 129–38.

12. Silk and Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy,* 31–61; Colli, ''Nachwort,'' in *Friedrich Nietzsche,* 901–19; Sweet, ''Birth''; Safranski, *Nietzsche,* 59–84.

13. ''Der Ursprung der antiken Tragödie aus der Lyrik, der neueren . . . aus dem Epos. Dort der Accent auf dem Leiden, hier auf dem Thun.'' Nietzsche, ''Einleitung in die Tragödie des Sophocles,'' in Colli and Montinari, 2:3, 10; my translation.

14. According to Safranski, the role of war—seen in Schopenhauer's terms as a manifestation of the will—was much more prominent in Nietzsche's original plan for the book (*Nietzsche,* 68–71).

15. Ronald Hayman, *Nietzsche: A Critical Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 131.

16. The full title is *Ursprung und Ziel der Tragödie: Eine aesthetische Abhandlung mit einem Vorwort an Richard Wagner.* It has been edited and published in Nietzsche, *Werke,* Abt. 3, Bd. 5, Halbbd. 1, 142–203.

17. ''Wie aus zwei einander feindlichen Prinzipien etwas neues entstehen könne.'' Ibid., 165; my translation.

18. Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie,* ed. Colli and Montinari, 25–26.

19. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Press, 1974), 317.

20. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), 66.

21. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols or How to Philosophize with a Hammer,* trans. Duncan Large (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 80. Subsequent references will be given in the text.

22. The classic study of metaphor in Nietzsche's work generally is Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor,* trans. Duncan Large (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993).

23. Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 110–11.

24. Ibid., 92.

25. Ironically, the most severe early critic of *The Birth of Tragedy,* the young philologist Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, perceived that perhaps what Nietzsche really wanted was to create a Dionysian-Apollinian work of his own (Silk and Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy,* 96).

26. Curiously, Geuss and Speirs presume that Nietzsche misreads Schiller here by thinking that he is discussing the ancient Greek, rather than the modern chorus (in Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings,* ed. Geuss and Speirs, 38 n. 62). It seems clear, however, that Nietzsche is discussing the ideal properties of theater generally, and that he is well aware of Schiller's use of the chorus as a means of rejecting naturalism and reviving ''true tragedy.'' Benjamin Bennett, *Modern Drama and German Classicism: Renaissance from Lessing to Brecht* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), argues convincingly that in *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche in fact bases much of his dramatic theory on Schiller's.

27. Walter Kaufmann, in Nietzsche, *"Birth of Tragedy" and "Case of Wagner,"* ed. Kaufmann, 98–99 n. 11.

28. Safranski, *Nietzsche,* 106.

29. Ibid., 135.

30. Nietzsche, *"Birth of Tragedy"* and *"Case of Wagner,"* trans. Kaufmann, 158–59.

31. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche,* in *Gesamtausgabe,* ed. Brigitte Schillibach (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996), 61:247; my translation.

32. Nietzsche, *Die Wille zur Mecht (The Will to Power),* 852, qtd. in ibid., 30; my translation, italics in original.

33. ''Dem frevel Würde anzudichten und einzuverleiben die Tragödie erfunden.'' Nietzsche, *Die fröliche Wissenschaft,* 135, in Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *Werke in Zwei Bänden,* ed. Karl Schlecta (Munich: Hanser, 1967), 2:132.

34. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 120.

35. Edouard Schuré, *Le Drame musical* (Paris: Sandoz and Fischbacher, 1875), 1, 72.

36. Ibid., 419.

37. Edouard Schuré, *Le théâtre initiateur* (Paris: Perrin, 1926), 171.

38. Ibid., 316.

39. See Leon Surette, *The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, and the Occult* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1993), 199–209.

40. Ernst Behler, ''Nietzsche in the Twentieth Century,'' in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche,* ed. Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 281–322.

41. David S. Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England, 1890–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 126.

42. Luigi Pirandello, interview in *Quadrivio,* November 15, 1936; cited in Witt, *Search for Modern Tragedy,* 97.

43. Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England,* 127. He refers to Symons's essay ''Henrik Ibsen,'' in *Figures of Several Centuries* (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1916), 222–67.

44. *Strindbergs Brev Vii. Februari 1888–December 1889,* ed. Torsten Eklund (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1961), letter no. 1632, quoted and translated by Stern in the present volume, p. □□□.

45. See Reinhold Grimm, ''The Hidden Heritage: Repercussions of Nietzsche in Modern Theater and Its Theory,'' *Nietzsche Studien* 12 (1983): 355ff. On Nietzsche and Mann, see John Burt Foster, *Heirs to Dionysus: A Nietzschean Current in Literary Modernism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

46. See Frances Nesbitt Oppel, *Mask and Tragedy: Yeats and Nietzsche, 1902–1910* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987).

47. In Mark Pizzato, *Edges of Loss: From Modern Drama to Postmodern Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 23–59. See also Linda Leavall, ''Nietzsche's Theory of Tragedy in the Plays of T. S. Eliot,'' *Twentieth-Century Literature* 31, no. 1 (1985): 111–26.

48. See Foster, *Heirs of Dionysus.*

49. See Witt, *Search for Modern Tragedy.*

50. See Jean-François Louette, *Sartre contra Nietzsche (Les mouches, Huis clos, Les mots)* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1996), 39–46.

51. See Andrew Cutrofello, ''Foucault on Tragedy,'' *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 31, nos. 5–6 (2005): 573–84.

Pausing before Being: Nietzsche, Strindberg, and the Idea of Tragedy

Michael Stern

> At every point in the hero's fate, he is met with the unity of salvation and annihilation, a fundamental trait of everything tragic.
>
> —Peter Szondi, *An Essay on the Tragic*

> If a temple is to be erected a temple must be destroyed: that is the law—let anyone who can show me a case in which it is not fulfilled.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

IN HIS ESSAY ON THE TRAGIC, PETER SZONDI REMINDS US OF A DISTINCTION. He states that we have had a poetics of tragedy since Aristotle, but ''only since Schelling has there been a philosophy of the tragic.'' For Szondi, the object of Aristotle's inquiry is tragedy itself and ''not the idea of tragedy.''[1] He asserts that while tragedy's poetics remain within the shadow of the Aristotelian notions of mimesis and catharsis, the philosophy of tragedy is a much more diverse corpus that cannot be easily distilled. However, no matter how one draws the line between the poetics and the idea of tragedy, the distinction between the issues raised by a theory dependent upon notions of recognizable representation of action (mimesis) and the audience's subsequent collective emotional discharge (Aristotelian catharsis) and those raised by an idea of tragedy as a theory of the historical conditions of possibility for subjectivity become grist for the mill of Nietzsche's disagreement with Aristotle.

This disagreement is most prominently expressed in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1871). In this moment, Nietzsche's concerns included both the historical development of tragedy and a tragic philosophy. His theoretical apparatus, which makes use of the terms Apollinian and Dionysian both as a conceptual binary and as an explanation for the development of tragic form, straddles the borderline of Szondi's di-

vision between poetics and philosophy. However, with the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy,* Nietzsche's philological work gave way to a critical philosophical project wearing the cloak of scholarly and historical inquiry. Although Nietzsche would never again forward a sustained analysis of the poetics and origination of tragic art, his concern with the tragic would never disappear entirely from his work. One could say that Nietzsche's concern for tragedy itself merged performatively with his idea of tragedy. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–85), which begins with Zarathustra's *Untergang* and ends in an inconclusively circular manner with Zarathustra once again pausing before going down from his mountain, exemplifies this aspect of his authorship.[2] I will explicate this claim below.

In 1886, Friedrich Nietzsche wrote a series of prefaces for the second editions of his work. These prefaces can be seen as a turning point in the philosopher's later production. Nietzsche turns in two ways: he returns to his own thought with these deferred introductions by reevaluating his own intellectual history, and these introductions turn as tropes turn—they are a series of self-referential palinodes. Nietzsche plays with the irony that they both precede and follow the works they introduce, and certainly this irony sheds light on the meaningful circularity of the eternal return of the same.

''Attempt at a Self-Criticism,'' the retrospective introduction to *The Birth of Tragedy* that Nietzsche describes as ''this late foreword (or afterword)'' [diese späte Vorrede (oder Nachrede])] is rather atypical and yet quite typical of these prefaces. It is atypical in that Nietzsche criticizes his work for being ''immature'' and ''overrich,'' yet it is typical in that it affirms its principal thesis as being consistent with a tragic philosophy and refers to Nietzsche's own tragic poetic production, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.*[3]

This self-criticism is significant for several reasons. First, after *The Birth of Tragedy,* Nietzsche abandons any sustained attempt to construct a poetics that functions as a sustained critique of Aristotelian notions of tragic art. His aesthetic commentary turns more seriously to processes as opposed to recipes with production values. He is concerned with aesthetics as embodied knowledge and not as autonomous art. In the 1886 preface, Nietzsche states clearly that with *The Birth of Tragedy* it ''was *against* morality that my instinct turned,'' even if he still lacked an ''individual language'' of his own. Nietzsche claims to have found this language after the writing of his *Zarathusthra*, for he has found a name for the ''Anti-Christ—in the name of a Greek god; I called it Dionysian.''[4] Therefore his quarrel with Aris-

totle, which had a broad philological and cultural significance when *The Birth of Tragedy* was first written, gives way to the valorization of Zarathustra as a more recent mask for the Dionysian, which for the older Nietzsche represented the clash between Dionysus and Christ.

For the Nietzsche of 1886, who considers himself to be ''the last disciple of Dionysus'' and as such a tragic philosopher,[5] the concern for the decline of tragedy as inspired by Socrates drops away from the limelight and another polemical stalking horse, namely Christianity, replaces Socratic rationalism.[6] In other words, the thesis that the productive opposition between Apollo and Dionysus was interrupted by the rise of post-Socratic thinking is no longer Nietzsche's primary concern. This shift in concern also marks the return of a motif raised in *The Birth of Tragedy:* the opposition between the Promethean and Adamic myths, between a myth of culture-bearing transgression and a tale of the fall from innocence to a state of sinfulness.[7] The opposition between the form-giving power of the dreamworld and the fearsome energy of Dionysian intoxication is supplanted by a concern for two types of recurrence, and two gods who recur. The issue becomes Dionysus versus the Crucified. It is for these reasons that *The Gay Science,* where the announcement of the death of God first appears and where the notion of eternal recurrence and Zarathustra are introduced will be the entry point for my inquiry. The issue commutes from a concern with cultural renewal to the emergence of the individual embedded in the historical mesh of nihilism. For Nietzsche, this emergence had a tragic valence.

Let us now return to our epigraphs. Szondi, in his analysis of the tragic, extends the tradition of associating tragedy with subjectivity. Nietzsche's understanding of tragedy (from *The Birth of Tragedy* onward) is based on a notion of the genre as a dramatization of the emergence of the individual and the collision of the protagonist with his fate. For Nietzsche, post-Socratic tragedy marginalized the chorus and undercut the wisdom of Silenus that it is best ''not to be born, not to *be,* to be *nothing,* But the second best for you is—to die soon.''[8] Although Nietzsche was to soon abandon this radical pessimism, it is no accident that his understanding of tragic collision involved the annihilation of a subject position. The difference in his later stance lies in his understanding of subject construction itself as agonistic, and as a result of a process of active forgetting or erasure (*Selbstüberwindung*).[9] For the mature Nietzsche, the subject is a site of competing narratives, a fiction that is annihilated by its own construction.

However, it is important to remember that Nietzsche never aban-

doned his skepticism toward the notion of being,[10] and that his paradoxical formulations of endless becoming, nature's lawlessness, and *amor fati* deserve greater consideration than a mere relegation to the category of contradiction. It is my contention that the Nietzschean notion of subjectivity can best be understood as a ''genealogy of self,'' and that the existential gesture of his text can be understood as an arrested genealogical moment, a pause before being. In other words, tragedy for the mature Nietzsche is the collision between inherited narratives (narratives of religion, family, and culture) and the construction of a narrative of self. In an existential gesture, the Nietzschean narrative stops before it concludes, and, paradoxically, ends where it begins. Nietzschean tragedy, in the end, is the story of the ironic subject of modernity.

''Incipit Tragoedia''

> It is the fault of the ugliest man: he has awakened him again. And if he says that he once killed him: with gods, *death* is always only a prejudice.
>
> —Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

In the aphorism that opens the first book of *The Gay Science,* entitled ''The Teachers of the Purpose of Existence'' Nietzsche discusses the future of laughter and speculates upon a time when it might conjoin with wisdom. He remarks that while this *gay science* can arise as the remainder in an age that has exhausted its fictive notion of purpose, ''[f]or the present, we still live in the age of tragedy, the age of moralities and religions.''[11] Nietzsche continues by commenting upon the cyclical aspects of our history, the constant appearance and reappearance of ''these founders of moralities and religions,'' and upon the staging of these tragic heroes by poets, ''who were always the valets of some morality.'' He goes on to argue that poets, despite themselves, serve something other than morality: they serve life by creating a notion of faith or purpose. This purpose is the mask, the amnesic screen under which lie ''instinct, drive, folly, lack of reason.''[12] Poets created the figure of the ethical teacher and brought ''him on stage in order to give existence a purpose by creating a second existence'' and by taking away laughter about a sacred object. These tragedies, however, were always part of a cycle, for ''the short tragedy always gave way again and returned to the eternal comedy of existence.''[13] This, according to Nietzsche, necessitated and

necessitates the reappearance of these teachers, these tragic poets, again and again. The aphorism ends with a question followed by a statement: ''Do you not understand this new law of ebb and flow? There is a time for us too.''[14]

Nietzsche's question calls for an understanding that concerns an ''ebb and flow,'' a back-and-forth; in other words, the question presupposes a differentiated repetition: the movement of tragedy toward comedy and back again. Tragedy, the ''dark'' festival that grew out of a sacrifice to and the dithyrambic celebration of the death of Dionysus commutes to comedy, which arose from the phallic dances and songs celebrating the fecundity of the very same god.[15] According to Carl Kerényi, ''Comedy was both younger and older than tragedy, older in its formless beginnings, younger as a set form. And it occupied an earlier position in the calendar.''[16] Nietzsche suggests that this ''law'' of the back-and-forth refers to the aesthetic form that celebrated the death of the god and the form that celebrated his reemergence. Perhaps we can go so far as to claim that Dionysus, a god that dies and returns, who is celebrated originally in a formless ecstatic activity, is intensified in the aspect of his destruction, and expands in the re-formation of his origination. In other words, that which is formless finds its demise in the emergence of its form and its rebirth in the comedy of its dissemination. Tragedy, from this perspective, is the emergence and the demise of the individual wearing the mask or persona, while comedy is the celebration of the reemergence of this ''individuality,'' this mask, as movement, as dance. Let us now turn to the historical conditions for the possibility of tragedy in modernity and thereby try to address Nietzsche's question about the ebb and flow between comedy and tragedy at the end of this aphorism by asking another question: What are the conditions of possibility for the modern tragic poet?

In aphorism 108, found at the beginning of the third book of *The Gay Science,* Nietzsche announces the death of God and asserts that like the dying Buddha, this deity would project his shadow on the walls of his cave for centuries to come.[17] With this statement comes the articulation of the historical conditions of possibility for the construction of the tragic narratives. For, certainly, one might ask: With the absence of a God or gods, what is the status of tragic poetry? And what can be discerned as a regulating agent of fatedness in the shadows of the cave?

Our first indication comes when we remember the distinction that Nietzsche makes both in this text and in *The Birth of Tragedy,* the dis-

tinction between competing narratives of what he calls the Judeo-Christian tradition and of the Greek one. According to Nietzsche, Judeo-Christian morality and the repression it brings hinge on the notion of sin and the fall of man, while the Greek notion of tragedy was a result of ''their desire to invent some dignity for sacrilege and to incorporate nobility into it.''[18] Certainly the implications of this opposition are many, and they resound throughout Nietzsche's authorship from the development of his notion of ressentiment to the oppositional pairing of Dionysus and the Crucified that ends his productive life. But to avoid getting ahead of ourselves, let us for the moment note simply that tragedy contains collisions; in classical form, it is the collision of a protagonist and his fate. So my preliminary thesis can read: for Nietzsche, tragedy contains a collision of narrative regimes, the Greek and the Christian, and it involves a repetition.

The first edition of *The Gay Science,* published in 1882, ends with two aphorisms. These two aphorisms return and elaborate upon the volume's first aphorism by providing a theoretical framework and an example. Aphorism 341, entitled ''The Greatest Weight,'' inaugurates Nietzsche's speculation on the notion of the eternal return of the same, and aphorism 342, entitled ''Incipit Tragoedia,'' introduces Zarathustra and depicts the beginning of his ''downgoing,'' or perhaps his demise—in Nietzsche's word, his *Untergang.* The introduction of the eternal return reads as follows:

> *The Greatest Weight*—What if someday or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: ''This life as you live it and have lived it, you will have to live it once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and myself. This eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust.'' Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you have answered him: ''You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.''[19]

Certainly the eternal return is proposed as a ''what if,'' an experiment, a dangerous perhaps. We might ask why it is placed next to the introduction of Zarathustra. There are several reasons for this juxtaposition, the easiest to discern being that Zarathustra is the teacher of the ''eternal return.'' The harder questions come when

we ask: What is Zarathustra's status as teacher? For he is a poet and he says that poets lie, and we know from our previous discussion of the opening of *The Gay Science* that poets create tragedy as the handmaidens of a morality in an attempt to give life a fictional purpose. This is further complicated by the labeling of Zarathustra's introduction as ''Incipit Tragoedia,'' the beginning of the tragedy. So not only does Zarathustra represent the authorial power of the poet, the creator, but he is a character in a tragedy—a tragedy written in the shadow of the death of God, a tragedy about the tragic teachings of one who has no pupils, perhaps even the mask of tragedy's god, Dionysus, in the form of teaching. This leads to a further question: How is the necessity of tragic fate to be realized in a world that has no divine direction? How can one declare *amor fati* with Nietzsche and at the same time share his view that the world is lawless, an arena of chance and becoming?

These questions are amplified when we consider a note dated spring–fall 1887 in a sketch entitled ''Against Determinism and Teleology,'' number 552 in the collection called *The Will to Power*.[20] After a discussion that begins, ''From the fact that something ensues regularly and ensues calculably, it does not follow that it ensues necessarily,'' Nietzsche forwards a critique of these two forms of preordination that ends with a statement about how the introduction of the ''doer'' or subject has obscured the issue. The issue of the doer and the deed arises time and time again in Nietzsche's work. In a section entitled ''Of the Despisers of the Body,'' Zarathustra opines that the body ''does not say 'I' but performs 'I.' ''[21] One year later, in *Beyond Good and Evil,* Nietzsche remarks that the body is structured like a society, implying that its multiplicity was ordered politically, by rank.[22] Two years after that, he again addresses the issue of the subject in *On the Genealogy of Morals,* where he connects the designations of good and evil to what he regards to be a fabling of being. In the thirteenth section of the first essay he polemicizes: ''[T]here is no substratum, there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything.''[23] The German phrasing allows us a more acute insight: it reads that ''der Thäter'' is ''zum Thun bloss hinzugedichtet'';[24] in other words, the doer is merely poeticized back into the deed. The Kaufmann translation misses part of the point. Subjectivity is intimately tied to poiesis or making, and subjectivity is a retrospective activity poeticized into experience. This helps to explain the implicit claim made in note 552 that the fiction of the subject fits hand in

glove with the fiction of cause and effect. Nietzsche concludes this entry by stating, ''Necessity is not a fact but an interpretation.''[25] This complicates the possibility of tragedy, for certainly tragic collisions involve the necessary under the sign of fate.

In any case, Nietzsche's claim that necessity is an interpretation calls for further clarification. One of the second-edition prefaces (namely, that of 1886) again facilitates our enterprise. Let us turn to a Nietzschean self-interpretation, in this case in the form of a return to the subject of Zarathustra. In his retrospective *Vorrede* or preface to *The Gay Science,* Nietzsche again addresses the introduction of Zarathustra at the end of this text. Here he claims that although he originally announced Zarathustra's *Untergang* as ''Incipit Tragoedia,'' perhaps it would have beeen more fitting to exclaim ''incipit parodia.''[26] Tragic necessity is reinterpreted as parody. Parody or the colonization (the inhabitation or rewriting) of a preexisting narrative provides us with the historically contingent form of modern tragedy.

These four aphorisms, this note, and this late-born introduction lead us to a reframing of our issues. First, Nietzsche announces the death of God. This leads to the question of what Nietzsche means by tragedy, and how a notion of fate or inevitability can stand in a world that is not regulated by metaphysical or mechanistic/deterministic principles. Second, seeing that the Nietzschean understanding of tragedy is not dependent on a notion of divinely directed destiny, and remembering that the beginning of the tragedy of Zarathustra is both juxtaposed to the introduction of the eternal return, and repeated textually,[27] a question arises: What role does repetition play in the Nietzschean notion of tragedy? Next, we have the issue of ''incipit parodia.'' Parody designates a poem that stands besides another poem, and the marking of Zarathustra as parody comes at a point of self-interpretation, a preface written after the fact, a displacement of the ''pre'' with the ''post,'' the *vor* with the *nach.* So how does repetition function as a form of self-interpretation and what is the relation of self-description to the notion of tragedy? Let's turn to these issues.

Issue the first: For Nietzsche the shadow of the death of God signifies the historical environment of nihilism. It is in this environment that he posits two seemingly incompatible thoughts: that the world is lawless, that is, we are subject to the vicissitudes of chance and becoming; and the notion of *amor fati,* love of one's fate. So if necessity is an interpretation, then *amor fati* is one possible interpretive position vis-à-vis the eternal return, and a tragic interpretation at

that. This leads us to issue number two: what could fate be if it is not fixed by a pantheon or a pantocrator? It is here that the experimental status of the eternal return congrues. For in the absence of a god or gods, tragedy necessitates a form of repetitive self-selection, a description and a redescription enacted in the form of an engagement with the past. In other words, an agent of this congealing notion of inevitability, a doer, must be poeticized into the deed (*Hinzudichtung*). For in the absence of an all-knowing creator who has predestined, who has foreknowledge, the tragedian must retrospectate; he must see his fate as a reconstruction in the present tense. Tragedy for Nietzsche is the idea of fate as a form of self-selection grounded by the will to power as an interpreting agency, and ironically as a pathos.[28] This is ironic because pathos, an individual address, supplants the collectivity of an ethos, which had served as the basic building block in the understanding of tragedy since Aristotle,

However, one problem remains: Nietzsche writes that necessity is an interpretation, so how can a tragedy begin? For how could fate be affirmed if there is no guiding principle to shape it? How could pure contingency create a narrative without falling into the abyss of infinite regress? I believe the answer can be found in the phrase ''incipit parodia.''

Note 552, discussed above on page 10 of this essay, indicates that things that follow cannot be explained through a notion of cause and effect; even the comedy that follows a tragic teaching is not a necessity. Perhaps our parody is not a farce, but a poem beside a poem. How then does *parodia,* this *ode para ode,* the poem beside the poem, work? Nietzsche bares this device in his genealogy of self*, Ecce Homo: Wie man wird, was man ist.* It is here that Nietzsche uses parody to reinterpret the main narrative of Christianity, the Crucifixion.

How is one to regard *Ecce Homo?* Published posthumously, it is often read as a sad and puzzling document of Nietzsche's imminent mental collapse or as a beautifully written but curiously flawed autobiography. If we read *Ecce Homo* as an autobiography, we are left with Nietzsche's hyperbolic claims, little information about his life, some self-commentary, and a series of paradoxical statements. Read as autobiography, the title smacks of hubris, and the last line as a simple statement of Nietzsche's opposition to Christianity. But if we read this text as a genealogy of self, as a hermeneutic construction based on retrospection, as the tragedy of the emergence and destruction of the self, as colliding modes of valuation, and the subsequent *Hinzudichtung,* then the picture changes shape. In order to illustrate my claims, I will take three points of entry for this text: the title, the last line, and a riddle.

The full title translates as *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is.* The title and the subtitle each provide us with a clue. The first part, Ecce Homo, is a biblical citation. It comes from the Vulgate translation of John 19:5 and can be translated as ''Behold the man'' or ''Here is the man.'' Pilate utters the phrase in the context of Jesus's having been beaten and given a crown of thorns to wear. He is ''arrayed in a purple robe'' and presented to the people. Pilate presents Jesus and says that he finds ''no crime in him,'' but the priests cry out for his crucifixion. After a short discussion, Jesus begins his walk to Golgotha. In John, the phrase ''Ecce homo'' signifies Pilate's presentation of Christ for judgment. By citing the biblical citation in his title, Nietzsche presents himself as a substitution for Christ. The subtitle is of some importance, given Nietzsche's famous attachment to the notion of becoming and his hostility to the concept of being. His statement in *On the Genealogy of Morals* that the origin of a thing and its ultimate meaning lack congruence makes the subtitle a bit problematic. However, a clear parallel is established by the title and the subtitle: Christ becomes what he is by walking the road to Golgotha. What awaits him at the end of his journey is crucifixion and resurrection, demise and return, annihilation merging with salvation. Nietzsche titles his genealogy of self so as to write himself into the position of Christ, only to oppose him tragically as Antichrist.[29]

This textual *via dolorosa* leads to the last line of the book: ''Have I been understood—Dionysus versus the Crucified.'' The standard reading of this last line is that Nietzsche, the self-proclaimed philosopher of Dionysus, has, as a result of his approaching madness, created an opposition, where he, now himself Dionysus, in an expression of megalomania opposes the moral order of the Christian world on his own. My reading is different. It is my claim that this last line signifies that Nietzsche has written himself into both positions. As a historical creature, he is Dionysus and Christ internalized as narrative, and the story of the self is metaphorically represented by the internalization of both positions by virtue of their agon. The reenchantment of a world abandoned by God is performed by the writing of the self into the position of the dead God in opposition to that which has replaced him. The self is constructed simultaneously as the death of God is announced, the Nietzschean variation of Szondi's tragic unity of salvation and annihilation. But this claim needs further elaboration.

A paradox of dual origins explains the connection between the title and the last line: ''The fortunateness of my existence, its uniqueness perhaps, lies in its fatality: to express it in the form of a riddle, as my father I have already died, as my mother I still live and

grow old. This twofold origin, as it were, from the highest and lowest rung of the ladder of life, at once decadent and a beginning.''[30] Nietzsche goes on to write that as a result of this dual origin, he is both a decadent and its opposite, claiming that this dual origin is the source of his unique perspective and that it acts as his ''energetic stimulus to life.''[31] In his ensuing description of the healthy individual, which is for Nietzsche the opposite of the decadent, he states that ''he is a principle of selection, he discards much.'' This principle of selection implies that the healthy individual is a locus of interpretation where competing principles, internalized elements of his own inheritance, are transformed by the experience of interpretation in order to create the self. For if one is both a decadent and a healthy individual, both alive and dead, in the absence of a stable foundation of selfhood, how does one overcome the unhealthy elements that have been internalized? Nietzsche answers: ''Well then, I am the opposite of a decadent, for I have just described myself.''[32] The self is constructed through agon and a self-affirmative narrative, through a hermeneutic economy of self-referentiality and internalized historical conditions. The ''death of God'' is a springboard for the construction of an identity, which is created through the substitution of the self for the absent God. The nihilistic self overcomes the vacuum of self-creation ex nihilo by interpreting the text of the past in a way that makes it contemporary, in a gesture of the eternal return in which ''I was'' is interpreted as ''I will it to be such,'' as necessity interpreted by the will to power. And so the dead gods are brought back to life as a conglomeration: Dionysus and Christ merge to form a compound metaphor for the hermeneutically constructed self aware of its own metaphorical status. This metaphorical status is derived from a textual journey, a narrative genealogy of self, a pausing before being as the text ends by restating the opposition between two narrative regimes whose collision begins the tragedy. The self created by this collision must be overcome time and time again. *Ecce Homo* is parody in two moments: it colonizes the narrative of the Crucifixion, and rewrites the story of a self that stops short of reconciliation and wholeness. Nietzsche as ''decadent'' stands beside Nietzsche as ''healthy individual,'' just as Christ stands beside Dionysus. Once again, the text ends in a genealogical moment, as agonistic aspects of the self are paused in juxtaposition before the process of ranking in endless recurrence.

This leads us to a discussion of origination and of Nietzsche's paradox of origins polemically posited, of his genealogical method

where the oscillation between an evaluative pathos of distance (genealogy) and a pathos of engagement (polemic) creates a metaphor of dual origination. This dual origination, of mother and father and of Dionysus and Christ, acts as a springboard for the activity of *Selbstüberwindung*. This process is dependent on the internalization of an opposition between creative and reactive forces.

Selbstüberwindung is a process that utilizes the internal conflict between forces that have two distinctly different temporal qualities. Nietzsche believed that these forces are present in the individual simultaneously. The textual form of this temporal duality is genealogical polemic. Nietzsche's genealogical project, and in this I include *Beyond Good and Evil* as the main text that the genealogies explicate, was a response to the problem of what he saw as the historical dominance of an unhealthy perspective. In *On the Genealogy of Morals,* Nietzsche claimed that the social conditions of the *Vorzeit* were the result of a problem that ''nature'' set before man: the breeding of an animal that could make and keep promises.[33] This ''breeding'' was the cause of much suffering or pathos, and this suffering was turned inward by the animal that was bred. Thus, another way to understand Nietzsche's reconstruction of the origins of morality is that with the victory of the ''ascetic ideal'' and the advent of moral thinking, this originary pathos was obscured by a now prevailing ethos. In Nietzsche's performative antidote to the ''sickness'' that he attributes to an overabundance of historical thinking, ''the will to power,'' as an interpreting pathos, struggles with the prevailing ethos. For in Nietzsche's conception of a ''healthy'' historical sense, the ethos of shared moral valuation is subordinated to the pathos of interpretation. This helps to explain Nietzsche's philosophy of history: ''the will to power'' as the interpretive force of both self and world uses a genealogy as a vehicle for a reversal of the repression of pathos by ethos. This was his notion of an active nihilism.

Temporally speaking, Nietzsche's attempted reversal of values highlights the conflict between two orders, each of which has its own construction of temporality. From this we can posit the following about Nietzsche's conception of time and memory. This conflict occurs to the individual in the moment. First, Nietzsche did not see time as moving in a circle; instead, he posited two species of time. The first is a linear historical time that is based on the inability to actively forget; this time is marked by ressentiment, the inward turning of suffering, a pathos, and is dominated by the past. The second species of time is the circular time of the eternal return. This is not

a metaphysical time, for Nietzsche had abandoned the notion of divine logos with his declaration of the death of God. It is a psychological time marked by differentiated repetition and *Selbstüberwindung*. This is the time of Zarathustra's ''Vom Gesicht und Räthsel'' (Of the Vision and the Riddle), where the two pathways that stretch on for eternity come together under a gateway over which is written ''Augenblick.''[34] These two species of time coexist and are in constant opposition in Nietzsche's genealogical work. Linear time is the time of passive ''nihilism'' or ''decadence.'' Circular time is valorized as the time of health. And as the time of *Selbstüberwindung*, it is the time when elements of the past are addressed in the moment in order to create the metaphor of self. It is this copresencing of temporal regimes in collision that activates the Nietzschean idea of tragedy as the collision between competing narratives.

This formula also informs the Nietzschean conception of memory. For Nietzsche there are two kinds of memory as well. The first type of memory is distinguished by an inability to digest experience. Nietzsche considered this to be an unhealthy state of affairs. This type of memory posits ''I was, therefore I am.'' The second type of memory is a function of ''active forgetting.'' This entails a discrete relationship between the ''lordly right to name'' and the re-creation of a past dominated by the imperative of the moment. For Nietzsche, the dominant perspective that produces this type of interpretation is ''the will to health.'' This type of memory says ''It was, because 'I' will it to be such.'' This also helps to explain why Nietzsche's historical genealogy polemicizes against moral valuation, for in it memory becomes a site of conflict between pathos and ethos, between individual reconstruction through internal conflict and a collective understanding of the past where conflicts in valuation are resolved through the conventions of an ossified metaphorical system. For Nietzsche, tragedy begins as the individual emerges from these internalized conflicts.

For Nietzsche tragedy begins where it ends; it repeats. Its expression is governed and contained in its repetition, its parody, the poem that runs parallel to the poem. For Nietzsche tragedy reenacts the repetition of creation, of poiesis, in the *Hinzudichtung* of the doer into the deed. In this poeticization of subjectivity, which I claim occurs in the creation of perspective through description, lie both the seed and the fruit of Nietzschean tragedy. And thus we gain some insight into a series of questions concerning the subject of Nietzsche's statements on Zarathustra, at once ''incipit tragoedia''

and ''incipit parodia,'' at once an affirmation of chance and becoming, and a statement pronounced ''amor fati.''

So where does the tragedy begin? It ends in a genealogical moment pronounced Dionysius versus the Crucified, in a genealogical moment accompanied by an existential gesture, a declaration of *amor fati* in an unregulated world fixed momentarily through the affirmation of a perspective and mediated by the eternal return. The tragedy begins in a moment of parody, which is simultaneously an open collision between a god who returns again and again and a god whose death and return initiates the end of time, an *Untergang* in both senses of the word, a going down from the mountain and a demise. This genealogical moment is Nietzsche's dangerous perhaps, which bares the device of perspectivalism, *Selbstüberwindung,* the relationship between description and subjectivity seen under the sign of the eternal return. The work of August Strindberg, the Swedish playwright, poet, novelist, and critic, has a similar genealogical and tragic imperative. That is to say, his project has an imperative where the positing of dual origins leads to the construction of a genealogical moment that arrives at the end of a tragic narrative, that is to say, in a narrative where the absence of a determining force necessitates a moment of self-selection in the form of a return.

Nietzsche and Strindberg

Strindberg became acquainted with Nietzsche through Georg Brandes, the Danish literary critic, who introduced the philosopher to Scandinavian literary circles through a series of lectures in the spring of 1888. These presentations were the first public talks devoted to Nietzsche's work, and they caused quite a stir. Strindberg, who was living in Denmark at the time, ran into Brandes on Copenhagen's main square (Kongens Nytorv) that very same April. Strindberg later said that Brandes told him to read Nietzsche, who, according to Brandes, shared with him a disdain for the masses. Brandes, who was averse neither to widening his circles nor to spreading his influence, then wrote Nietzsche informing him of his meeting with Strindberg, thereby facilitating a book exchange that preceded a short correspondence between the two.[35] Nietzsche sent Strindberg *The Case of Wagner, Beyond Good and Evil,* and *Twilight of the Idols.* Strindberg sent Nietzsche the collection *Getting Married,* the novella *Pangs of Conscience,* and the drama *The Father.*

On November 27, 1888, August Strindberg received his first letter from Nietzsche, postmarked Torino, via Carlo Alberto 6. It opened:

> My esteemed sir,
> I believe our postings have crossed? I have read your tragedy two times and was deeply moved; it has surprised me beyond all measure to discover a work that expresses my own conception of Love—as a medium of war, as the deadly hatred of the sexes—brought to expression in such a grandiose manner.[36]

The tragedy that Nietzsche refers to is *The Father* (1887). However, what informs us about Nietzsche's ''admiration'' for the drama is not his early work on tragedy, but a footnote that he had written a short time before he wrote the letter to Strindberg. The footnote can be found in *The Case of Wagner:* ''It has been a real misfortune for aesthetics that the word *drama* has always been translated ''action'' [*Handlung*]. It is not Wagner alone who errs on this point, the error is world-wide and extends even to philologists who ought to know better. Ancient drama aimed at scenes of great pathos—it precluded action (moving it *before* the beginning or *behind* the scene).''[37]

Nietzsche's letter read in light of his comments above clearly indicates that he understood the essential tragic collision in the drama to have happened offstage. His reading of *The Father* must have seemed right on the mark, for Strindberg later made good use of this Nietzschean perspective on drama. In an article published in the journal *Nya Jord* in 1889, ''Modernt Dramat och modern teater,'' he claimed: ''Drama seems to have meant event in older Greek, not action [*handling*], or what we call conscious intrigue. Life does not actually pass so predictably, like a constructed drama, and conscious schemers so seldom have the opportunity to set their plans into motion in detail, so we have lost our belief in these underhanded plotters who can play with human destiny unhindered. We have lost our belief in the theatrical villain who already with his conscious deception only awakens our scorn for being untrue.''[38]

Although Strindberg wrote *The Father* a good year and a half before he read *The Case of Wagner* and his correspondence with the philosopher began, he must have felt that Nietzsche's theoretical principles applied to his own production. Less than a year after reading *The Case of Wagner,* Strindberg had rearticulated Nietzsche's position on drama and even reproduced his etymological explanation of drama's origination. He began to understand his own production

retrospectively and Nietzsche became his theorist. As he explained to Brandes, ''Strange, through Nietzsche I find the system for my madness in opposing everyone. I reevaluate and place new values on old things. No one has understood this; I have not even understood this myself.''[39]

Certainly, Strindberg's comment on the reevaluation of values indicates that he understood his production as having a philosophical valence. He articulated his concern with the relationship of poetry and philosophy in a letter to the Swedish poet Ola Hansson, a fellow reader of Nietzsche. On March 10, 1889, he commented: '' 'Misogyny' therefore is not and will never be poetry, but must be philosophy. 'The Father' falls under the category of poetry still in that it contains a worship of women (an overestimation of a woman's qualities), a mother cult. I cannot for the moment untangle the relationship between poetry and philosophy.''[40]

It is clear that Strindberg understood the relationship of poetry to philosophy refracted through a gendered optic. In like manner, he saw his encounter with Nietzsche as engendering. As he remarked to Georg Brandes's brother Edvard, ''Meanwhile, my intellectual life has received a terrible stream of seed from Friedrich Nietzsche, so that I feel intoxicated like a bitch in heat.''[41] For both Nietzsche and Strindberg, intellectual encounters were productive collisions, and these collisions were genealogically regulated, tragic in nature, and metaphorical in valence. For both of these men, epistemological considerations impregnate possibility, and what is born from the encounter is never identical to either one of its parents. Creation is not a form of cloning, but rather the inflection of random recombination. This recombination is the stuff of pathos, and the subject of the great pathos that is tragedy.

Nietzsche addresses this issue himself in *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. He opens the former with his opinion ''that the continuous development of art is bound up with the Apollonian and Dionysian duality—just as procreation depends on the duality of the sexes, involving perpetual strife with only periodically intervening reconciliations.''[42] In aphorism 248 of the latter he states that there are two types of genius, ''the kind which above all begets and wants to beget, and the kind which likes to be fructified and to give birth.''[43] He expands his analogy to a classification of national cultures, but my concern is with the ''individual subject.'' Nietzsche concludes by stating: ''These two kinds of genius seek one another, as man and woman do; but they misunderstand each other as man

and woman do.''[44] If we extend the metaphor here to Strindberg, we can understand that his encounter with Nietzsche involved a period of ''forming, maturing, perfecting.''[45] Strindberg's pregnancy, his gestation, involves a fictional enactment of the possibilities of Nietzsche's philosophy as it relates to tragic subjectivity, a subjectivity born from misrecognition.

These misrecognitions have all of the aspects of the Nietzschean genealogies, with their genealogical moment beginning with the assumption of gender, moving to a metaphorical substitution for the male and the female, and then stopping before the conclusion of being. The remainder of this essay will explore the implications of Strindberg's understanding of his own work once it was cast in a Nietzschean light. It is my claim that the salient issue is not whether Strindberg falls under the sign of Nietzsche's influence, but how Nietzsche's notion of tragedy helps to explain Strindberg's own tragic imperative in its relationship to subjectivity. This relationship revolves around a genealogical understanding in which the philosopher-poet overcomes what he perceives to be his maternal inheritance. Strindberg and Nietzsche both understood the tragedy in *The Father* to have occurred offstage, in this genealogical moment. Strindberg's understanding of his tragedy as poetry is brought to light when we realize that the titular emphasis on the father as protagonist is negated by the emergence of the mother as the victor, for the play ends with the father's demise and Laura's assumption of the role of the head of the household. For if the tragedy occurs offstage, it occurs before the appearance of the individual.

''Incipit Tragoedia'': Axel Borg in the Open Sea

> There stands the boat—over there is perhaps the great nothingness. But who wants to step into this perhaps.
>
> —Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

> It is characteristic of philosophical writing that it must continually confront the problem of representation.
>
> —Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*

Georg Brandes wrote a letter to Strindberg in spring 1890. The letter took the shape of an admonition as Brandes urged Strindberg, who had recently proselytized on behalf of the now stricken Nietzsche, to use his critical sense and realize that there were elements of

Nietzsche that were useful and others that were seductive, reactionary, and dangerous. Strindberg responded to Brandes with a rather paranoid tirade about those ''midgets'' who were trying to have him committed (ostensibly because of his stance on women's issues), and then, suddenly, his letter changes tone. The Nietzsche problem, wrote the Swede, was to be staged in the form of a novel. This novel, which would see print by the end of the year, was called *I Havsbandet* (*By the Open Sea,* 1890). Strindberg had previously written two pieces of prose that he would later designate as being part of his Nietzschean period.[46] The first piece, the novella *Tschandala,* welds an autobiographical subplot onto a Nietzschean-inflected understanding of the *Book of Manu.* The second and more important work, the preface to *Miss Julie,* contains Strindberg's famous dictum about the ''characterless character,'' a formulation whose anticipation I address in this essay through a reading of Strindberg's first autobiography, *Tjänstekvinnans son* (*Son of a Servant*). However, *By the Open Sea* remains the most substantial example of the commonality between Strindberg and Nietzsche, and I will address this novel as it relates to Nietzsche's notion of genealogy.

Strindberg would refer to this novel when the fourth volume, *The Author,* of his autobiography, *Son of a Servant,* was published in 1909.[47] Strindberg originally wanted to introduce this text with a schematic overview of his production. In his entry for *By the Open Sea* he writes: ''Nietzsche's philosophy an influence; but the individual goes under through striving after absolute individualism. Beginning of the 90s: Übermensch.''[48] The main character of this novel, the individual who goes under, is named Axel Borg, and it is to his *Untergang* that our discussion will lead. However, much ground needs to be covered, for our issue is not mere wordplay, and my method is not designed to valorize a teleology or a discussion of the connotations of going under. The issue at stake is the relationship between tragedy and notions of return, between competing notions of time—in other words, our issue is the idea of modern tragedy as a theory of subjectivity.

Let us begin with *Son of a Servant.* Here, as in Nietzsche's genealogical work, origins are dual and agonistic. The struggle between them is a war between two types of memory, two species of narrative. This is the very struggle that Strindberg called his *befrielsekriget,* his war of liberation. For it is in *Son of a Servant* that the struggle between two orders of understanding experience, the naturalist order of environmental determination and the hyperpresent order of momentary af-

firmation, come into conflict. These oppositions are thematized as an opposition between maternal and paternal inheritance.

Son of a Servant is divided into four volumes, each depicting a period of time in ''the history of the development of a soul.''[49] Written between 1885 and 1886, it covers the years between 1849 and 1886, Strindberg's entire life up to that point. Strindberg's conception of a ''naturalist'' autobiography is revealed in a fictional interview that he intended to preface the first volume of *Son of a Servant.* The fictional interviewee, the author, states in this ''interview'' that the book ''is not a novel, but something entirely new.''[50] He then explains the principle of a project that was to continue beside Strindberg's other literary production for the rest of his life. This project was a series of cross-referential ''autobiographical'' works, of which *Son of a Servant* was the first installment. At the core of Strindberg's conception of this project was the claim that one could only ''know'' one's own life. What keeps this claim from degenerating into solipsism is the form of these naturalist autobiographies, ''the genealogy of self,'' which as such employs the oscillation between distance and proximity to highlight its self-referential hermeneutic as just that, a hermeneutic with a weakened truth claim that is dependent upon the agonistic relationship between internalized elements of necessity and contingency—necessity being, in this case, the linear time of history, with its collective memory, and contingency being the process of *Selbstüberwindung* through description.

In ''Mitt Förhållande till Nietzsche'' (My Relationship to Nietzsche), Strindberg claims to have ''worked myself free of my older false belief inherited from my youth'' with the writing of the fourth volume of *Son of a Servant.*[51] The first chapter of the first volume of the work alerts us to the source of this ''false belief.'' In order to illustrate how these beliefs are overcome, I will compare the description of origins in the first volume of the text with the metanarrative commentary that closes the book in the fourth volume. I will now turn to the first volume, entitled simply *Son of a Servant.*

Son of a Servant is narrated in the third person and opens, in exemplary naturalist fashion, by depicting the historical environment into which the protagonist, Johan, is born. The narration continues with a description of the class structure, a description that is extended architectonically, in that the house into which Johan is born is divided along the very same class lines as society, the apartments being located along the lines of rank and distinction. These class divisions of the social environment are even mirrored in Johan's own biologi-

cal origins. Johan's father is described as ''an aristocrat by virtue of his lineage and upbringing.'' His mother, however, is described in the same paragraph as ''the daughter of a poor tailor who was sent out by her stepfather to be a maid and a waitress.''[52] This dichotomy of Johan's being the son of an aristocrat and a servant is further developed as the father's aristocratic bearing is set in relief against the mother's ''democratic instinct.'' The opening sets in motion a narrative that is informed by the internalization of historical conditions and hereditary factors. It certainly seems like a naturalist memoir. The protagonist's historical environment and heredity disposition are established as a starting point for an analysis of his development. He is shaped by his environment, and his experience seems to be circumscribed by necessity. However, there is more to the story.

There is a split in the textual fabric. The protagonist Johan is an unveiled pseudonym. Strindberg, a well-known public figure, was designated as the author of the text. The name August Strindberg is inscribed upon the title page as the legal authority to which the text belongs. The narrator attributes the qualities and events that have marked ''Strindberg's'' life to Johan's.[53] The name Johan is connected to a series of predicates that have already been publicly attributed to the name Strindberg. This protocol is observed so strictly that the texts that have been legally attributed to Strindberg, published under his name and copyright, are attributed by the narrator to Johan within the confines of the text. This act gives *Son of a Servant* a dual characteristic. On the one hand, distance is taken through the use of a pseudonymous protagonist who stands in metaphorically for the name ''Strindberg.'' On the other hand, the text is so radically self-referential that the books Strindberg had written are used to illustrate the development of the ''fictional'' protagonist. Such a strategy, at once a distancing through fictionalization and a making proximate through reference to the public utterances and legal status of the author, creates an oscillation between the very notions of the fictionality and facticity of the past. This points to the relationship between the contingency of artistic creation and the necessity of environmental conditions that are forwarded in the text, and between the fixed aspects of the proper legal name and the variability of self-description. One can say that Strindberg assumes the right to name through the use of a pseudonymous stand-in for himself and thereby claims the right for self-definition. He reappropriates aspects of his past through a reinscription of his name as the stand-in, Johan, and thereby as metaphor.

This relationship is radicalized even further. In *The Author*'s last chapter, entitled ''Son of a Servant (1886),'' the narrative is brought into the present tense, and a metanarrative commentary is brought into play. The chapter itself is about the writing of the book of which it is a part, and can be divided into two sections. The first section, a commentary on the writing of the text, starts off in the past tense only to break into a discussion of subjectivity with the verbs in the present tense. The second part of this chapter is a dialogue between Johan and a character designated only as X. It is in this chapter that the radical hermeneutic structure of the text is brought home and internalized within the text itself as it comments upon itself. The narrator states that the book was written because of a decision to ''close the books on the old, go through his life's events from the beginning to the date, examine his soul's origination and developmental history, such as it arose under all the preexisting conditions of inheritance, nature, temperament, under the pressure and influence of the given historical epoch's external events and spiritual movements.''[54]

On the surface this appears to be a laundry list of a naturalist's understanding of the relationship between a historical environment and the possibilities for the development of the individual under those circumstances. Considering that Strindberg radicalized his own conception of naturalism to the point where only self-understanding was deemed possible, it is certainly no surprise that there should be a conflation of autobiography and history in this text. It could be argued that Strindberg's innovation was to give the naturalist protagonist a self-conscious understanding of the effect of environment on the individual by turning the vivisecting scalpel on himself, no more and no less. If this is so, then he evidences at best a weak commonality with Nietzsche, who despite his own predilection for positing environmental factors as determinant, was certainly not a naturalist.[55]

However, despite its ''naturalistic'' surface, there are two orders of time and two orders of memory present in *Son of a Servant*. The first order of time is the linear time of naturalist depiction. This is particularly manifest in the first three volumes. It is here that environmental conditions dominate the individual. The second order of time is the circular time of differentiated repetition. This is the time of the last chapter of the fourth volume. It is here that the dual origins of Johan's conception are overcome and a hierarchy is established, and it is here that autobiographical excavation is transformed into a per-

formative act in the moment. This performative act is initiated in the metanarrative commentary.

The metanarrative commentary goes on to state that *Son of a Servant* is neither a confession nor a memoir.[56] This leads us to a question: What is this text? My answer is that it is a ''genealogy of self,'' a *Selbstüberwindung,* a performative work that overcomes the dual origins of its author and establishes an internal hierarchy. In other words, despite being written in prose, *Son of a Servant* is a tragic depiction of the emergence of the individual and of his demise.

How does Strindberg perform his *Selbstüberwindung?* The title, *Son of a Servant,* is misleading, for it implies that the subject of the book is defined by his relationship to his mother's position. Almost immediately, dual origins are posited. The title has three textual valences: it is an expression of one of the temporal orders in the text, the representation of a movement away from a point of origin, and at the same time a symbol of the retention of a contradictory internal life. The protagonist is the son of two discrete and agonistic positions, as his father's aristocratic nature is sharply contrasted with his mother's ''lower-class'' origins.[57]

These dual origins are not in a stable relationship to each other, but rather like Nietzsche's competing perspectives, their relationship is internalized. They are the raw material with which the narrator describes Johan (''Strindberg'') to construct a complex metaphor that stands in for the self. The process of self-construction that is dependent on contradiction is brought home in the last chapter. The title of the chapter, ''Son of a Servant (1886)'' represents the circular order of time and is a differentiated repetition. It is here that the narrative enters the present and becomes a polemic: the right to name is asserted, and the genealogical exploration of origins ends with a truth claim that is contingent upon an ''organizing idea'' and opposed to a telos.

''Did he get a hold of his 'I' during that long and gloomy journey in memory's shadow kingdom? Before, an answer of no would have embarrassed him, for a personal god demands an accountable personality; but now he cares less, for he knows that the 'I' is a very fragile form of a small movement of an existing quantity of force or material, if one prefers.[58] The narrative changes its verb tenses at the moment of a discussion of the construction of the ''I.'' It is in this moment that the narrative takes on a polemical tone: it both addresses Johan's own past as a contemporary and implicitly attacks the internalization of his mother's religious position through a de-

nial of the existence of a personal God who would demand responsibility in the form of a stable character. It is in this moment, directly after the denial of God's existence, that the tenses change. It is in this moment as well that the ''I'' is dismissed as a construction: it is said to be a quantity of force or material ''if one prefers'' [man hellre vill].

The metanarrative then turns to the subject of the book's conclusion. The narrator addresses an imaginary interlocutor who demands a *sammanfattning* (summary), a recapitulation or summary conclusion. The narrator responds to his own question: ''Where does the summary conclusion that he sought reside? It resides here and there in the thousand printed pages; look them up, collect them, and see if they can be summarized or concluded; see if they are valid longer than a year, five years, think about if they even have the intention to be valid. And don't forget that the truth does not exist, since it finds itself, like everything else, in constant development.''[59]

There is no recapitulation. There is no summary. There is only a continuous becoming without a stable truth claim. The imaginary interlocutor is told to look at the work itself, and to the texts that are discussed therein, all attributed to one August Strindberg and not to Johan the protagonist. Any conclusion is of the moment, which is the time of the recurrence of the past, continually the same and continually new, always in a state of becoming. There is no truth to *Son of a Servant,* only a self-referential narrative that demands an immanent interpretation of the texts of August Strindberg. The narrator names his ''truth,'' and it is the ''truth'' of the fluidity of the past as it is organized and reorganized under the imperative of the moment. The narrator implicitly claims the right to name his own truth, and the name of his truth is Johan, the character who has textually relived August Strindberg's life. There is no telos, only a metaphorical ''I'' that stands in for the constant change.

Johan as subject is a split metaphor. He is the Johan who represents the trajectory of the linear order of time and memory, who is subjected to the historical conditions that have shaped his environment and the inheritance of his parents, who, in turn, represent conflicting aspects that have been internalized. This is the Johan determined by an interpretation called necessity. There is also the Johan who is merely the proper name that stands in for the performance of a genealogy of self, the fictional ''doer'' of the deed of *Selbs-*

tüberwindung. This moment is also present in the last chapter, the chapter of the present tense. This is the Johan of contingency.

As mentioned, the last section of the chapter and the book is a dialogue between Johan and a young Swedish aristocrat designated only as X.[60] There are several things to note about this exchange. First is the form, that of a dialogue between an aristocrat and the ''son of a servant.'' Second is the relationship of form and content. Third, the dialogue represents the two types of competing tragedies articulated by Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*. The two interlocutors discuss this split in Johan, his internalized guilt, his rise above his class, the contradictions of self-critique in his production, and the elements of his birth that he cannot escape. There is a struggle between the two orders in this dialogue; the necessity of inheritance is confronted by the contradictions created by his overcoming of his origins. The dialogue is in the form of a debate; X as an element of the text is the manifestation of the struggle between the son of a servant and an aristocrat. He plays the role of the ''organizing idea.''

The text ends with a performative moment. X urges Johan to write down their conversation if he dares. Johan replies: ''I will do that . . . and that will be the end of the fourth volume of *Son of a Servant*.''[61] Considering that Strindberg later called the writing of this volume his ''war of liberation'' and in many ways began to assume X's convictions,[62] there is a doubleness to this statement. On the one hand, it draws the text into the moment in a radical temporal shift that equates the close of the book with the ending of the act of writing. The performativity of this act resides in the confluence of memory and of the moment of writing, highlighting the differentiated repetition that governs the form of the ''genealogy of self.'' On the other hand, in this volume this act marks the emergence of Johan, who is no longer a *tjänstekvinnans son,* no longer only the son of a servant, but is indeed an aristocrat by virtue of self-overcoming who subordinates the son of a servant through the tyranny of the organizing idea. It is as if he were saying what Nietzsche was to say later in *Ecce Homo:* ''Well then, I am the opposite of a decadent: for I just described myself.'' In an act of performative irony, *Son of a Servant* is no longer a fitting title, and Strindberg has written himself out of his ''false belief.'' The problem of overcoming dual origins was for both writers an aesthetic process in which an internalized social structure and a hereditary disposition are overcome by a selection process that creates a fictional ''doer'' for the ''deed'' of a polemical genealogy. In both cases, the act of description enables a re-inscription

of a momentary metaphor that stands in the place of the subject. This is the commonality in the two men's authorial projects, what Strindberg saw as the systemless system that he had attributed to Nietzsche, and what Nietzsche himself characterized as creation by destruction. This is the hallmark of a tragic subjectivity.

Nietzsche and Strindberg's shared notion of subjectivity has its existential gesture, a pausing before being in the form of a genealogical moment. This is exemplified in Strindberg's Nietzschean novel *By the Open Sea.* It is here, as in *Ecce Homo,* that the genealogical metaphors shift from mother and father to an opposition between Christian and Greek notions of time and recurrence. Johan, in *Son of a Servant,* overcame the doubleness of his heredity, but Axel Borg is a motherless child. He does not carry the burden of a dual inheritance. Instead he carries the expectations of a father who represents the idea of generational progression that is passed on to his son. This idea is carried by Borg, and his understanding of it in vulgar Darwinian terms, as the survival of the fittest, is severely tested as the novel progresses. There are two other arenas of contention, one external and the other internal. The prominent external struggle in this novel plays out through Borg's efforts to dominate nature. The internal struggle is between science and desire, or love and knowledge.

The story opens with Borg traveling as a passenger in a rowboat to the skerry where he is to serve as a fishing inspector. Borg's appearance is described in detail. He dresses in the manner of a dandy and he is wearing ''a thick bracelet in the form of a snake that bit itself in the tail.'' Borg bears the symbol of the Uroborous, the snake biting its own tail. The split in Borg's appearance signifies his perspective: this man of culture is also a figure of the realm of the circular self-referential cycle represented by his bracelet, a self-enclosed cycle of birth and death. Borg is described as a confluence of culture and irrational cyclical repetition.

The descriptions of the ocean in the novel, as focalized through Borg, play on the notion of science as hubris. The narrative develops a complex of descriptive events to illustrate this point: ''Inspector Borg did not worship nature any more than the Indian worshipped his navel. On the contrary, as a being conscious of himself, and of standing highest in the chain of terrestrial creations, he entertained a certain contempt for lower forms of existence.'' This attitude emerges from the descriptions of the ocean focalized through Borg's perspective through the use of indirect discourse: ''It was not

with the dreamlike imagination of the poet, or with the vague and consequently disturbing emotions and confused perceptions that the beholder enjoyed this great spectacle. No, it was with the calm eyes of the scholar that he detected the order behind this apparent disorder.''[63]

The description of natural life that follows obeys a progressive line of development. All living things are described by their position in a chain of development in a schema that despite its attention to rank and order is more Darwinian than Nietzschean. Borg goes on to classify human beings in the same manner. Borg is depicted not as an *Übermensch,* but as ''the last man,'' or the nihilistic scientist of *On the Genealogy of Morals.*

The tragic split in Borg's perspective becomes more apparent as the novel progresses. He continues to seek nature through a scientific optic, but wears his bracelet as a talisman whenever he needs to rely upon his instincts. This represents a confluence of rational and irrational elements in Borg's person, and the descriptions illustrate a repression of instinctive elements that accompanies Borg's conscious attempt to subordinate nature to a scientific order of naming. This is especially apparent in two moments. The first is the creation of an optical illusion designed to show the inhabitants of the island the power of science. Borg loses control over his creation as two suns appear in the sky and the superstitious islanders understand the scene to portend the coming of the apocalypse. His control is incomplete, and he learns that nature cannot be controlled by calculation. His attempt to master nature parallels his attempt to master the population of the island through science alone. Both end in a dismal failure, because ''Borg had played with the spirits of nature; he had conjured up an enemy to help him, as he thought, and now everything had gone the enemy's way and he walked alone.''[64]

This passage is crucial to an understanding of the novel, for Borg, forgetting the ocean's *harmonilära,* masters neither the natural environment nor human relations. He becomes more and more isolated, and eventually he crosses over to madness. His relationship with his lover, Maria, follows along similar lines. He eventually ''masters'' her but winds up alone.

The depiction of Borg's degeneration has its parallel in the progression of the dominance of scientific thinking in his descriptions. The story of Borg's visit to the island is not a representation of the failure of an *Übermensch* to establish control over his environment. Rather, it is a narrative that leads to a ''genealogical'' moment at the

novel's conclusion. At the end of the novel, Borg once again sets out to sea. This time he is alone and leaving the island. It is Christmas Eve and he sees a star in the sky. At first, he thinks that it is the ''lodestar to Bethlehem,'' and this occasions a critique of Christianity. He then realizes that he is mistaken. The star is ''Beta in Herkules.'' Borg sets his course: ''Out towards Heracles who had freed Prometheus, the bringer of light, himself the son of a God and a human mother. . . . He had steered his course towards the new Christmas star, out over the sea, the mother of all, in whose womb the first spark of life was lit, the inexhaustible well of fertility and love, life's source and life's enemy.''[65]

Borg sets his course for the star of Hercules, and the ocean takes on a new aspect. The description is now poetic, and the ocean becomes a source of love, life, and suffering. An opposition is created in the tension between the description of the star and the description of the ocean. The star, ''den nya julstjärnan'' [the new Christmas star], becomes a symbol of Borg's decision to replace the light of Christianity with Hercules, who enabled Prometheus to bring light to the human race. If Prometheus can be seen as a bringer of culture, he is also a symbol of suffering, because he was forced to endure torture throughout eternity. The ocean becomes a vitalistic symbol, dark, uncertain, fruitful, a source of love and death. Borg is traveling toward the beacon of culture creation on a sea of incalculable and cyclical repetition. He is sailing on a sea that is a union of the necessity of recurrence and the contingency of possibility. He has given up his rational evolutionary thinking and now valorizes the sea as a source, as opposed to a link in a chain of progression. His previous mode of description, exemplary in its inability to forget that which has been learned and in its forgetting of the metaphorical nature of its scientific postulations, has now turned to the creation of a metaphor that transgresses against Christian belief. Borg has set sail for the open sea, his horizon the opposition between the Crucified and Dionysus wearing the mask of Hercules, the protector of Prometheus. So where does Axel Borg's tragedy, his *Untergang*, end? In a pause before decision, a genealogical moment, and a dangerous perhaps. And where does Axel Borg's tragedy begin? In the same moment paused before the horizon, located between the pole stars of two gods who die—one who dies time and time again, eternally recurring, and one who dies once only to return at the end of the world—these are the two regimes of tragedy and time in internal opposition, in need of constant ranking, and in constant agon. In

his salvation is his demise. This is the hallmark of both Nietzsche and Strindberg's idea of tragedy.

Conclusion

By the Open Sea does not mark the end of Strindberg's fictional enactment of Nietzschean possibilities; it marks the beginning of a Promethean stage in Strindberg's understanding that culminated in his *Inferno* crisis and the subsequent dramatization of an episode of this crisis in the first installment of his Damascus cycle. For the post-*Inferno* Strindberg,[66] the interpretation of necessity will be called the "powers," and the ideology of remembrance—of narrative—will be the eternal return of the same. It is my contention that the salient aspects of Strindberg's later dramatic production can be found in embryonic form in his initial autobiographical works and that a dynamic notion of subjectivity based on the idea of modern tragedy came into greater relief for Strindberg during and after his encounter with Nietzsche. As indicated by the conclusion of our example, *By the Open Sea,* Strindberg began to understand that the philosophical problem with regard to the idea of tragedy had everything to do with representation, or appearance, and one's comportment toward the conditions of cultural possibility. Like Nietzsche, with an awareness of the de-individuated aspect of the Dionysian he constructs a genealogical metaphor of biological difference and develops this metaphor as the opposition between the ancient, understood as the Greek, and the modern, understood as the Christian.

This manifests as the opposition between love and knowledge in his autobiographical novel, *Inferno,* and the tension between the Saul and Paul aspects of the Stranger in *To Damascus I.* In this last piece, a station drama that superimposes a bourgeois marriage play onto an interrupted narrative of religious conversion, the pause before an ontological decision is highlighted in both form and content. The theme of transcendence, intimated by the title and suggested as a possibility by the content, is subverted by the structure of repetition in the text. This structure, which divides the play up into seventeen scenes of which eight repeat and one remains a center point, highlights the experimental aspect of Nietzsche's eternal return.

The central unrepeated moment, the *Augenblick* of Zarathustra's vision and his riddle, is the point of retrospection and subject forma-

tion. Here, in *To Damascus I,* this moment is called the ''asylum.'' This asylum, a ''refectory in an old Cloister,''[67] is where the protagonist's past confronts him with the conflation of the possibility of religious transcendence and confinement in a madhouse. This central moment highlights what Szondi claims to be the hallmark of modern tragedy, the collision of the possibility of annihilation and salvation for the individual.

But this tragic moment is unrepresentable in Strindberg's Nietzschean-inflected notion of modern tragedy. Instead, the drama strives for a circularity, one in which the protagonist, the Stranger, finds himself pausing before the same decision at the play's opening and at its conclusion. For the later Strindberg, as for Nietzsche, the modern tragedy can appear only as a subversion of ontology, paused before being in a moment of arrested decision, in a moment of parody—for here, in *To Damascus I,* the already written story of Saul's transformation into Paul is posited as a ''what if.'' In this way, the circularity of both Nietzsche and Strindberg's ''idea of tragedy'' manifests, and it is this circularity that disallows the favoring of the individual's tragic demise or his comic reconciliation. Perhaps this is the ebb and flow that Nietzsche alludes to in the first aphorism of *The Gay Science.* Perhaps.

Notes

1. Peter Szondi, *An Essay on the Tragic,* trans. Paul Fleming (Stanford: Stanford, CA: University Press, 2002), 1.

2. The word *Untergang* or ''downgoing'' (in most translations) can mean going down or demise. Certainly, if we take Nietzsche at his word and regard *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a tragedy, the doubleness of his word choice opens up a rather ambiguous semantic field. Also, neither version of Zarathustra ends conclusively. If one discounts the fourth book, the text ends with a seeming parody of Goethe's *Faust;* if one regards the fourth volume as central, then the text ends in a genealogical moment, paused before conclusion. I choose the latter path and will read the text as having four parts that form a coherent structure.

3. Nietzsche ends his self-criticism by quoting ''that Dionysian monster who bears the name of Zarathustra.'' Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967), 26.

4. Ibid., 24.

5. For one textual location where this allegiance is declared, see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin, 1973), 219–20. ''Meanwhile I have learned too much, all too much more about the philosophy of this god, and, as, I have said, from mouth to mouth—I , the last disciple of initiate of the god Dionysus.''

6. See Nietzsche, ''Attempt at a Self Criticism,'' in *Birth of Tragedy,* 23.

7. Ibid., 70–71.

8. Ibid., 92, 42; italics in the original.

9. It is my contention that this term, translated as ''self-overcoming'' or literally ''winning over self,'' implies the erasure of a previously held subject position.

10. See most prominently Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1989), 45. The most exacting expression of this ''skepticism'' is: ''[t]here is no 'being' behind, doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed: it posits the same event first as cause and then a second time as its effect.''

11. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 74.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., 75.

14. Ibid., 76.

15. Carl Kerényi, *Dionysus: Archetypical Image of Indestructible Life,* trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 318, 332.

16. Ibid., 334.

17. Nietzsche, *Gay Science,* 167. The aphorism reads: ''*New Struggles.*—After Buddha was dead his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave—a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown.—And we—we still have to vanquish his shadow too.'' It is significant to note that Zarathustra lives in a cave, and that the last men are entertained there in the fourth book.

18. Ibid., 187–88.

19. Ibid., 273–74.

20. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will To Power,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1968), 297.

21. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* 62. The German is even more revealing. It reads: '' 'Ich' sagst du und bist stolz auf diess Wort. Aber das Grössere ist, woran du nicht glauben willst,—dein Leib und seine grosse Vernunft: die sagt nicht Ich, aber thut Ich.'' Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 39. It is this doing I, this performative aspect of subjectivity, that connects subject construction to the idea of the tragic in Nietzsche's work.

22. See Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* 49: ''for our body is only a social structure composed of many souls.''

23. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* 45.

24. Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral,* 279.

25. Nietzsche, *Will To Power,* 297.

26. Nietzsche, *Gay Science,* 33.

27. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* opens with the exact same passage.

28. See Nietzsche, *Will to Power,* 339, (note 635, dated March–June 1888), for the will to power as pathos; and 342, (note 643, dated 1885–1886) for the will to power as interpreting. In any case, certainly this notion of tragedy as an effect of a pathos stands in distinct opposition to Hegelian understandings of the same genre. Even Kierkegaard, no friend of Hegelians, posits the tragic hero as living under the sign of the universal, i.e., as regulated by an ethos.

29. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1989), 263. ''I am in Greek, and not only in Greek, the *Antichrist.*''

30. Ibid., 222.
31. Ibid., 224.
32. Ibid., 225.
33. See Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral.* Jenseits van Gut und Bōse/Zur Genealogie der Moral, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988). The discussion of this problem starts at the beginning of the ''Zweite Abteilung'' and can be found on p. 291 of *KSA* 5.
34. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathusthra; Dritte Theil,* in *KSA,* eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988): 4. ''Vom Gesicht und Räthsel'' can be found on pp. 197–202. The parable about the ''Augenblick'' can be found on p. 200.
35. The details of this correspondence can be found in my forthcoming monograph, *Nietzsche's Ocean, Strindberg's Open Sea.* The correspondence lasted a little under two months and is of considerable interest, but because our subject is Nietzsche and modern tragedy, suffice it to say that Nietzsche and Strindberg understood that they had a commonality.
36. The German text reads: ''Hochgeehrter Herr, ich denke unsre Sendungen haben sich gekreuzt?—Ich las zwei Mal mit tiefer Bewegung Ihre Tragödie; es hat mich über alle Maaßen überrascht, ein Werk kennen zu lernen, in dem mein eigner Begriff von der Liebe—in ihren Mitteln der Krieg, in ihrem Grunde der Todhaß der Geschlechter—auf eine grandiose Weise zum Ausdruck gebrachte ist.'' Found as letter no. 1160, in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Briefe: Kritische Studienausgabe in 8 Bänden,* ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 8:493.
37. Friedrich Nietzsche, *''The Birth of Tragedy'' and ''The Case of Wagner,''* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967), 174; italics in the original.
38. August Strindberg. *Likt och Olikt: Senare Bandet* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers 1913) 298; translation mine.
39. August Strindberg, *Strindbergs Brev, Vii. Februari 1888–December 1889,* ed. Torsten Eklund (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1961), letter no. 1715 to Georg Brandes, December 4, 1888; all translations from this work are mine.
40. August Strindberg, *August Strindberg och Ola Hanssons Brevväxling, 1888–1892* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1938); my translation.
41. Strindberg, *Strindbergs Brev,* letter no. 1632 to Edvard Brandes, September 4, 1888.
42. Nietzsche, *''Birth of Tragedy'' and ''Case of Wagner,''* 33.
43. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* 180.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. See August Strindberg, ''Mitt Förhållande till Nietzsche,'' in *Samlade Skrifter* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1912–21), 54:323.
47. *The Author* is the fourth volume of *The Son of a Servant* and was written in 1886. The first three volumes were published almost immediately following their completion.
48. The Swedish reads: ''Nietzsches Filosofi influerar; men Individen går under i strävan till den absoluta Individualism. Inleder 90-talet: Übermensch''; my translation. Notice that the Swedish cognate to the German *Untergehen, att går under,* is used. August Strindberg, *Tjanstekvinnans son 3–4,* August Strindbergs Samlade Verk

21 (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1997), 264**;** unless otherwise noted, all translations from this work are mine.

49. The subtitle of the text is ''En själs utvecklingshistoria.''

50. August Strindberg, *Tjänstekvinnans son 1–2,* August Strindbergs Samlade Verk 20 (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1996), 372.

51. Strindberg, ''My Relationship to Nietzsche,'' in *Samlade Skrifter,* 56:323; all translations from this work are mine.

52. Strindberg, *Tjänstekvinnans son 1–2,* 11.

53. Johan is Strindberg's middle name, but my point is simple: the third-person narration and the use of an unfamiliar self-designation by a celebrity author serves as an unveiled pseudonym, a name that creates formal distance between the author and the narrator while keeping the notion of identity clear in the mind of the reader.

54. Strindberg, *Tjänstekvinnans son 3–4,* 214.

55. Or perhaps he was a ''naturalist'' in the same sense as Strindberg—in other words, a type of dialectical naturalist, one who recognized that self-interpretation was subject to historical factors, but introduced a radical element of contingency into the mix. In any case, Strindberg's ''naturalism'' is certainly eccentric, and Nietzsche's antinaturalistic position does not deny the effect of hereditary, social, historical, or even geographical conditions on the development of the subject. In any case, both men's positions on naturalism are more polemical than substantial.

56. Ibid. ''This was the main goal of the book about the son of a servant, and the goal was not at all to write some confessions to ask for pardon, nor to write a memoir to entertain.''

57. Please recall Nietzsche's self-description as positing the same species of dual origination—biology as metaphor, so to speak.

58. Strindberg, *Tjänstekvinnans son 3–4,* 214.

59. Ibid., 215.

60. Biographical readings of *Tjänstekvinnans son* have identified X as Verner von Heidenstam, and all evidence points in his direction. However, for my purposes, X is a textual location, a participant in a split in the narration, an indication of the struggle of Johan's emergence from being the son of a servant, and a trope in Strindberg's ''befrielse krig.''

61. Ibid., 229.

62. By early 1887, Strindberg had renounced many of his former political views. He would return to socialism, democracy, and Christianity after his *Inferno* crisis in the late 1890s.

63. August Strindberg, *By the Open Sea,* trans. Mary Sandbach (London: Penguin, 1976), 20, 34.

64. Ibid., 117.

65. Ibid., 283.

66. Strindberg's production is generally divided into his pre-*Inferno* and post-*Inferno* periods.

Although this is a useful distinction, I believe that my argument offers an alternative.

67. August Strindberg, *Selected Plays,* vol. 2: *The Post*-Inferno *Period,* trans. Evert Sprinchorn (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 447.

D'Annunzio's Dionysian Women: The Rebirth of Tragedy in Italy

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Gabriele d'Annunzio, although acknowledged as the voice who introduced Nietzsche into Italian cultural discourse at the end of the nineteenth century, has been generally considered to be a popularizing translator of the *Übermensch* into a superficial *superuomo,* particularly in his novels. D'Annunzio's interest in Nietzsche, however, was broader and deeper than some of his ''superman'' characters would suggest. Though it is true that he did at times simplify the complexities of Nietzsche's thought, D'Annunzio was also a ''strong'' reader. He reads Nietzsche literally and practically, attempting first to apply the philosopher's aristocratic ethics to a specific political program and then to implement his call for a rebirth of tragedy on the stage. D'Annunzio's understanding of Nietzsche's writings on tragedy develops primarily along two lines: a sexual reading of the Dionysian and the Apollinian and a desire to apply Nietzsche's concept of tragedy as aesthetic rather than mimetic to modern tragedy. In what can be seen as a reification of the sexual and birth metaphors in *The Birth of Tragedy,* D'Annunzio's plays, as well as his theoretical writings on modern tragedy, tend to attribute Dionysian powers both to actresses and female characters and Apollinian ones to the dramatic poet and the male characters who represent him. Under the influence of Nietzsche, along with that of Wagner, the French symbolists, and Eleonora Duse, D'Annunzio played the major role in effectively destroying the predominance of bourgeois drama and naturalism (*verismo*) on the Italian stage. Yet while attempting to write drama that belongs to the world of art rather than to everyday reality, the poet remains aware of the necessity to ground his tragedies in modernity, often experimenting with an incorporation of realist conventions into his apprehension of the Dionysian and Apollinian.

D'Annunzio read Nietzsche almost exclusively in French translation and in French commentaries. His earliest encounter with Nietzsche's work occurred during the years he spent in Naples (1891–93), a city that was at the time at the forefront of Italian intellectual life and that received the latest books and articles from Paris, where the philosopher had already been ''discovered.'' The young poet was familiar with (and in at least one case plagiarized) three French articles on Nietzsche containing excerpts from *Thus Spake Zarathustra, Beyond Good and Evil,* and other works during his time in Naples. He read excerpts from *The Birth of Tragedy* and more on tragedy in excerpts from *The Twilight of the Idols* in a French anthology of Nietzsche's works published in 1893.[1] He may have been familiar with Edouard Schuré's 1875 *Le drame musical,*[2] and he probably read an 1893 article in which Henri Albert summarized the major theses of *The Birth of Tragedy* and other works.[3] The first work of Nietzsche's that he read in its entirety seems to have been *Le cas Wagner,* translated by Daniel Halévy and Robert Dreyfus.

Although D'Annunzio's first explicit reference to Nietzsche appears in his 1892 article published in *Il Mattino di Napoli,* ''La bestia elettiva,'' a diatribe against parliamentary democracy (the ''elective beast'') and a fusion of aesthetics and politics,[4] it is in his three-part discussion of *The Case of Wagner,* published in *La Tribuna* in the summer of 1893, that he first discusses Nietzsche on modern theater, wrestling with his admiration of both the philosopher and the musician, and with the former's critique of the latter.[5] D'Annunzio states that the philosopher criticizes Wagner's music-drama because it epitomizes modernity but is wrong to do so, because an artist must necessarily be of his own time, and Wagner's music was born from the depths of modern anguish. He disagrees with Nietzsche's statement that Wagner's music has no value outside of the ''tiresome theatrical machinery'' that accompanies it. While arguing that the music has independent value, he also takes issue with what he sees as Nietzsche's deprecation of theater as a coarse, inferior form of art, suitable only for the masses. D'Annunzio's project will define itself under the combined, sometimes contradictory, influences of Nietzsche on tragedy, Wagnerian music-drama, symbolist poetic theater, and the revival of outdoor popular theater in France.

D'Annunzio's 1894 novel *The Triumph of Death* is heavily intertextual, permeated with both Nietzsche and Wagner. In the preface, he wrote (in accordance with Nietzsche's anti-Aristotelianism) that he wanted to liberate his own work ''from the chains of plot.''[6] He did

so indeed, in his plays as well as in his novels, all of which were accused of having ''no action.'' In the text of the novel, the majority of citations of Nietzsche come from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* but D'Annunzio also incorporated excerpts on tragedy from *The Twilight of the Idols* that he had read in the Lauterbach-Wagnon anthology.[7] The neurotic modern protagonist, Giorgio Aurispa, longs to be a ''Dionysian man'' or a ''Superman'' but ends his life with a failed imitation of *Tristan und Isolde (*whose death scene D'Annunzio describes passionately) in a suicide with his lover that is far from a *Liebestod.* In D'Annunzio's native Abruzzi, Giorgio observes pagan rites that emerge from a veneer of Christianity, rites that suggest the rural dionysia in Greece and ''the symbol of sex, the great genital mystery—as in Tragedy which is of Dionysian origin.'' The ''tragic feeling'' that Giorgio experiences does not come from ''the aspiration to liberate himself from terror and pity, the aspiration to final catharsis, but rather—as Friedrich Nietzsche intuited—the aspiration to be *himself* the eternal joy of Becoming . . . not excluding [the joy] of *destruction.*''[8] Around the same time, D'Annunzio began to see the possibility of incorporating the revolutionary Nietzschean view of tragedy into a genre in which he had not yet written, drama. The dialogue between ''Gabriele'' and ''Ariele'' (D'Annunzio and Angelo Conti) in Conti's *Beata riva* (*Blessed Shore*), published in 1900 but incorporating conversations from 1895, represents Gabriele as saying, ''What struck me in Friedrich Nietzsche was making the acquaintance of a tragic soul, a brother to my soul. From then on, I felt his poor trembling hand accompany me to the limits of theater, to show me the way, through the purifying flame that roars in the violence of drama.''[9]

By his own account, it was D'Annunzio's trip to Greece in August 1895 on board his friend Edoardo Scarfoglio's yacht *La Fantasia* that prompted his determination to create modern tragedy. Rereading Aeschylus and Sophocles, he conceptualized his first play, *La città morta* (*The Dead City*), in the new genre.[10] Was the third member of the trio of tragedians, Euripides, eliminated because of the judgment on him in *The Birth of Tragedy?* According to a commentator writing during D'Annunzio's lifetime, D'Annunzio ''never hid the fact that he chose Friedrich Nietzsche as master and guide in his exploration of the Hellenic world.''[11] The Hellenic influence on the dream of re-creating tragedy does seem to have taken place under the spell of Nietzsche, as well as that of Eleonora Duse. So does D'Annunzio's formulation of the major thrust of *The Dead City.* On

November 22, 1896, he wrote to his translator Georges Hérelle that he had succeeded in abolishing ''the error of time'' by writing a tragedy set in the present in which Agamemnon and Cassandra also function as characters. After completing the play and in preparation for its first performance in Paris as *La ville morte,* with Sarah Bernhardt, he wrote to the actress that ''the goal of his effort'' was contained in the words on the disappearance of ''the error of time'' in the dialogue.[12] The phrase ''the error of time,'' which reappears in several of his works, appears to be D'Annunzio's formulation of his understanding of Nietzsche's eternal return. In his drama, it acquires the specific significance of the fusion of ancient myth with modernity.

The impact of Nietzsche on D'Annunzio's evolving theory of modern tragedy becomes explicit in two crucial texts: an article published in *La Tribuna* in August 1897, ''La rinascenza della tragedia'' (The Rebirth of Tragedy), and his novel *Il fuoco (The Flame),* begun in 1895 but interrupted by work on *The Dead City* and not finished until 1900. In both, we find D'Annunzio moving away from his earlier elitism and toward an interest in dramatic poetry as a medium for contact with and aesthetic control over crowds, comparable to political oratory. In this, he seems closer to the Nietzsche of the *Twilight of the Idols,* who puts more emphasis on the festive, popular aspect of tragic performance.[13] These texts also mark the end of D'Annunzio's struggle with Wagner: indeed, Wagner is put to rest at the end of the novel with a long description of his funeral. Although the autobiographical main character of *The Flame,* Stelio Effrena, continues to admire Wagner's music and his total theater, with its ''religious'' bonding of the arts, the stage, and the spectators, he rejects the aesthetic of Bayreuth as too Germanic because of its lack of emphasis on the word, the basis of the Latin tradition. Here D'Annunzio seems to align himself with Nietzsche's pronouncement in *The Case of Wagner:* ''Il faut méditerraniser la musique.'' In D'Annunzio's conception, however, the Mediterranean effect has more to do with the musicality of words themselves, both in dramatic poetry and in oratory.

By the late 1890s, D'Annunzio was well aware of an anti-Wagner movement beginning in France (after years of idolatry) in conjunction with La Renaissance latine, a cultural movement that was the precursor of Charles Maurras's Action française. The Roman theater at Orange, which had recently been restored, became the site of the production of a series of Greek tragedies, as well as of modern

plays and operas with classical themes, to revive ''the Mediterranean, classical spirit, whose Romanism has been set aside by so many barbarian currents for a century.''[14] Written in part to praise the initiatives at Orange, D'Annunzio's essay ''The Rebirth of Tragedy'' makes a clear enough reference. The ''rebirth'' he envisaged recapitulates Nietzsche's account of the birth of tragedy in Greece. With the theater's rural site and its harmony with nature, ''everything in it evokes the rural origin of drama, the birth of tragedy from Dithyramb.'' Interestingly, here D'Annunzio uses the word *nativitá* for birth instead of the usual *nascitá.* (Angelo Conti, speaking of Nietzsche's influence on D'Annunzio, referred to the author of ''la Natività della tragedia.'')[15] The word choice reveals the religious aura with which he viewed the notion of the birth and rebirth of tragedy. Yet D'Annunzio's goal was not to restage either ancient drama or modern drama limited to classical themes, as at Orange, but to create ''tragedies, in which the absolute modernity of inspiration joins with a purity of form not unworthy of the temples of Athens.''[16] Today's poets, he argues, must abandon sterile naturalism and bourgeois drama to restore tragedy, infusing it with religious spirit. Drama will become a ceremony, a rite. Its ''religion,'' however, will be founded on ''the revelation of beauty.'' Like other fin-de-siècle aesthetes, D'Annunzio misreads Nietzsche's celebrated statement that the world can be justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon by interpreting it to mean that art must replace religion as the foundation for the rebirth of tragedy.

D'Annunzio's description of the roles of the poet, the actor, and the audience imitates religious ceremony. The actor is ''the living person in whom the word of a Revealer is made incarnate on the stage'' while the audience remains ''mute as in the temples.'' Clearly the Poet-Revealer, although offstage, is the primary figure in this scenario, with the actor an officiant of his word. D'Annunzio, along with Eleonora Duse, even devised plans (which ultimately went unrealized) for building an outdoor ''festival theater'' on Lake Albano, south of Rome, specifically for the production of the new modern tragedy—an Italian version of Orange and Bayreuth.[17] It is as if he were reading Nietzsche's call in *The Birth of Tragedy* for the rebirth of tragedy in modernity through the lens of *The Case of Wagner,* purging it of its Germanic content and working it into a Latin aesthetic.

Stelio, in *The Flame,* also elaborates plans for the creation of modern tragedy and of an outdoor theater while developing another important aspect of D'Annunzio's aesthetic: what we might call the

erotics of tragic poetry. Stelio compares the dramatic poet not only to the political orator and the military conqueror, but also to the lover, more specifically the ''possessor,'' of woman. The poet's possession of the actress who will convey his words—in the novel, Foscarina; in real life, Eleonora Duse—both brings him inspiration and endows the possessed woman with the power to act as mediator. Thus, sexual desire and the sexual act acquire ritual and mythological overtones, and possession implies demonic frenzy as well as phallic power. Stelio desires ''the ardent actress who passed from the frenzy of the crowd to the force of the male, the Dionysian creature who with the act of life crowned the mysterious rite as in an orgy.''[18] D'Annunzio thus carries Nietzsche's feminization of Dionysus a step further: the Dionysian principle now inhabits actual women. In this novel, as elsewhere, D'Annunzio creates two types of Dionysian females: the passionate mature woman and the virgin whose powers have yet to be awakened. Stelio desires the second type in the singer Donatella, to whom he gives the name of Dionysus's wife, Arianna. The sexual ''possession'' of women enables the poet to capture Dionysian musicoerotic forces in beautiful Apollinian words—words he uses to dominate and mold a feminized audience.

Related to this notion of possession are Stelio's meditations on tragedy as ''Medusan.'' They are similar to the passage in *The Birth of Tragedy* in which Apollo tames and controls barbarian Dionysian forces by confronting them with the Medusa's head, thereby transforming them into art.[19] The poet explains to his friend Daniele that great tragedy resembles the gesture of Perseus, who cuts off the head of the Medusa and holds it up to the crowd, a ritual of violence that enacts the ''victory of man'' over destiny.[20] Both woman and audience could, it seems, petrify—silence and emasculate—the dramatic poet; in order to defy this threat he must possess them by stripping them of their power and manipulating the Gorgon's head. The tragic poet thus appears as a kind of Apollinian hero—one who, having encountered horror, has vanquished it and given it artistic form.

The Flame also contains plans for and a plot outline of the modern tragedy Stelio intends to write. Titled *Il vittorio dell'uomo,* the tragedy was to represent a ''pure act'' (a sacrificial murder) that was supposed to illustrate the victory of modern man over ancient destiny, a modern version of the gesture of Perseus. The plot closely resembles the plot of D'Annunzio's first work for the theater, *The Dead City* (1898), but the change in title, as well as the text of the play, radically transforms the theme expressed by Stelio. In D'Annunzio's

modern tragedy, it is not man that is victorious, but rather destiny, represented by the destructive dead city.

The Dead City does, however, represent D'Annunzio's at least partial success in realizing his theories of modern tragedy. With its archaeological subject matter, it is also an archaeological drama, working by uncovering layers, regressing rather than progressing in time. The play is set near the ruins of Mycenae, where a young Italian version of the middle-aged German Heinrich Schliemann is digging in an attempt to discover the remaining artifacts of the family of Agamemnon. With the archaeologist Leonardo, living in a villa represented onstage by Doric columns and fragments of ancient sculptures, are his sister, Bianca Maria; his friend, the poet Alessandro; and Alessandro's wife, the blind Anna. Anna's nurse completes the cast. In the course of the play we learn that Alessandro and Bianca Maria are in love (although Bianca Maria resists him), that Anna is prepared to sacrifice herself so that their love may thrive, and that Leonardo harbors a dark secret, which turns out to be an incestuous passion for his sister. The only two real actions in the play are carried out by Leonardo, both offstage. At the end of act 1, he discovers the tomb of the Atrides, uncovering fifteen corpses covered with gold and gazing for a moment, he believes, on the faces of Agamemnon and Cassandra. In between acts 4 and 5 he commits the sacrificial murder of his sister, drowning her in the fountain of Perseus, the only living spot in the parched land.

The tragedy's archaeological structure makes it anti-Aristotelian in terms of its static plot and lack of catharsis, although classical in its revelation of hidden truths as well as of previous actions, in accordance with Nietzsche's aesthetics. In D'Annunzio's effort to dissolve ''the error of time,'' the modern characters existing in the present relive the destinies of the ancients. The play's text is permeated with intertextuality: Bianca Maria reads *Antigone* and *Agamemnon* aloud, Leonardo refers to *The Oresteia* and cites Homer, and references to classical figures and art objects abound. The atmosphere of stillness, heat, and drought contributes to a sense that, as Bianca Maria puts it, everyone seems to be waiting for something. Action is overshadowed by lyrical pathos, as Nietzsche would have wished. Although D'Annunzio uses neither music nor a chorus, both musicality and a recollection of the chorus permeate the text. The poetic prose and consistently melancholy tone strive for musical effect. Descriptions of the sounds of water, birdsong, and a shepherd's flute playing an ancient melody give a sense that the characters are attuned to music

in nature.[21] D'Annunzio experiments with a modern chorus later in his modern tragedies with much larger casts, *La Figlia di Jorio* (*Jorio's Daughter*) and *La nave* (*The Ship*), but at the time he wrote *The Dead City* he did not think the chorus could be revived for the modern stage. The ancient Greek chorus makes its intertextual appearance as the play opens, with Bianca Maria reading the part of the chorus in Sophocles' *Antigone:* "Love, never conquered in battle / . . . not even the deathless gods can flee your onset, / nothing human born for a day—/ whoever feels your grip is driven mad. Love / you wrench the minds of the righteous into outrage, swerve them to their ruin—."[22] A virgin devoted to her brother and destined for sacrificial death, Bianca Maria will reveal her affinities with the daughter of Oedipus. And Love (Eros) will indeed bring about the catastrophe. D'Annunzio emphasized its pervasive impact with the epigraph: *Eros ankate màchan.*

Associated with Iphigenia, Cassandra, and Nike, as well as with Antigone, Bianca Maria also reveals herself as a Dionysian woman. Anna is the first to express this, noting that the younger woman's loosened hair is perfumed "like a torrent of flowers" and flows like water (*Tutto il teatro,* 64). In Pre-Raphaelite style, but also recalling the return to nature in Dionysian dismemberment, Bianca Maria's unbound hair seems to blend with both the natural world and the water in which her individual form will dissolve. It has an erotic effect on Alessandro, Leonardo, and even Anna, who constantly praises the beauty of Bianca Maria's hair, caresses her at every opportunity, and kisses her on the mouth. Although in terms of the story Anna's pervasive sadness should come from her husband's having fallen in love with another woman, she in fact shows no particular affection for Alessandro. But she shows a great deal for Bianca Maria. The Dionysian woman, innocent but destined to be sacrificed, thus figures as the object of both desire and disruption for the other three characters.

It is Alessandro who announces to Bianca Maria both the D'Annunzian version of the eternal return and her own unconscious Dionysian powers. As Bianca Maria arranges artifacts from her brother's dig, in particular objects that belonged to Cassandra, he addresses her: "Has the error of time not yet disappeared for you? . . . When your hand takes the diadem that adorned the head of the prophetess, the gesture seems to evoke her ancient soul. . . . There is in you a reawakening power of which you are yourself unconscious" (79). Bianca Maria's attempt to contain her flowing hair in a clip that be-

longed to Cassandra is clearly a symbolic expression of the Dionysian overflowing from the Apollinian form. Alessandro, who has been critically dismissed as a superficial Nietzschean spouting an egotistical ''beyond good and evil'' morality,[23] is rather the Apollinian poet who needs to possess the Dionysian woman in order to create: ''All the power in me would stay closed up . . . if the divine voluptuousness, which is in you, did not attract it and incite it to manifest itself in forms and movements of joy . . . I need you!'' (*Tutto il teatro,* 79). In the presence of the Dionysian woman, the poet experiences a ''rebirth'' (76). However, Alessandro is the least developed and the least interesting of the characters. Anna, the blind visionary who recounts her dreams and is compared to a white statue with blind eyes, with her husband forms an Apollinian faction; the intense, emotional Leonardo, prey of ''monstrous'' incestuous desire, forms with his sister a Dionysian faction.

Leonardo understands his sister's Dionysian powers in their horror as well as their beauty, parallel to his understanding of what he finds in his dig. The archaeologist's discovery of the tombs that contain the gold masks of the Atrides leads to an encounter with Dionysian chaos beneath the serene Apollinian forms. When Leonardo makes his entrance to announce that he has at last discovered the tombs, his first words (''The gold, the gold!'') recall the first recorded reaction of Schliemann.[24] But how to express the vision of the very faces of Agamemnon and Cassandra that he saw beneath the gold? Three times he repeats to Alessandro, ''You should have been there,'' reminding his friend that he had once loved Cassandra with the love of Apollo. The archaeologist who experienced a violent dissolution of individual boundaries needs the Apollinian poet to give form to the convulsive experience. But perhaps what he has seen is inexpressible: ''You speak like someone in prey to delirium,'' Alessandro tells him. ''If you really saw what you say, you are no longer a man.'' Indeed Leonardo, a prey to eros-as-incest, has broken within himself the limits that define the human, just as he has broken through the ''error of time'' with his discovery. He has encountered not only the violence of the Atrides, but also that of the house of Thebes. For Leonardo is also, to be sure, Oedipus, uncovering the terrible secret within himself in the course of his search. He also resembles a more recent discoverer. Like the revolutionary author of *The Birth of Tragedy,* Leonardo dares to dis-cover beneath the serene and beautiful forms of Greek art—the gold masks—the primeval horror and chaos from which they were formed.

The archaeologist's moment of glory is his moment of anagnorisis, literally in the sense of discovery and also in the sense of tragic turning point. To uncover the Atrides is to share in their destiny. Leonardo is Schliemann, Nietzsche, Oedipus—and also Agamemnon, returning in his glory to meet disaster, although it will come from a loving, motherly sister whom he will kill rather than from a wife who will kill him. The catastrophe is unleashed, through a tragic irony that recalls Racine more than classical Greece, by Anna telling Leonardo that she wishes to sacrifice herself to allow Alessandro's and Bianca Maria's love to flourish, thereby inciting Leonardo's jealousy. Eros operates as the force of destiny.

And yet, in the wake of Nietzsche, D'Annunzio permits his hero to feel a Dionysian joy within the most painful suffering and destruction. Before the distended corpse of his beloved, at the opening of the fifth act, Leonardo describes the delirium (Nietzschean *Rausch*) in which he killed his victim while explaining how he and his love for his sister have now become "pure." Alessandro now bonds with Leonardo in brotherhood; the poet and the hero fuse before the sacrifice of the Dionysian creature. D'Annunzio seems to be attempting here to achieve the effect described in the passage from *The Twilight of the Idols* that he inserted in *The Triumph of Death:* "Saying yes to life even in its strangest and hardest problems; the will to life rejoicing in the *sacrifice* of its highest types to its own inexhaustibility—*this* is what I call the Dionysian."[25] Tragic joy, along with tragic horror, is affirmed in the loss of the *principium individuationis,* the return of Dionysian energies to nature and oneness, in this case merging with a fin-de-siècle motif of the immersion of a female corpse in water.

The play, however, does not end on this affirmative note. D'Annunzio must have anticipated the inability of many in his audiences to accept the beauty of a brother killing an innocent sister, even with considerable mythological and philosophical overlay. Leonardo and Alessandro do not finally emerge as triumphant heroes, but rather end by trembling in fear before the approach of Anna, like common criminals wondering what to do with the corpse. The presence of Anna, majestic, pale, and barren like the dead city itself, suggests that the cycle of vengeance and violence may begin again. Although the tragic sacrifice of the virgin carries the symbolic weight of the destruction of a Medusan horror—in this case, incestuous desire—the hero does not emerge triumphant with the head of the Gorgon. D'Annunzio in the end seems to cede to the problem endemic in

modern tragedy: self-consciousness. Modern man simply cannot innocently experience Dionysian destruction and joy. As the play closes, modernity and antiquity clash in dissonance, rather than melding in the dissolution of ''the error of time.'' A lurking bourgeois drama rears its head within the lyrical tragedy.

The problematic ending, however, should not undermine D'Annunzio's real achievement in the creation of a poetic and groundbreaking work for the modern stage. The multilayered temporality, the melancholy lyricism, and the pervasive symbolism recall Maeterlinck, but D'Annunzio goes much further in envisioning and realizing the possibilities of modern tragedy. At the same time, *The Dead City* is Europe's first Nietzschean metatragedy: a lyrical meditation on the encounter between the Apollinian and the Dionysian, a suggestion of the author of *The Birth of Tragedy* as tragic figure, an answer to the call for the rebirth of tragedy, and an acknowledgment of the difficulties of realizing tragedy in modernity.

In the plays he calls his tragedies, D'Annunzio continues to write the tragedy of modernity's inability to realize fully the rebirth of tragedy. This may explain his continuous experimentation with modern tragedy in various genres, from the fusion of modern lives with ancient destinies in *The Dead City,* to readaptation of classical tragedy (*Fedra* [*Phaedra*], 1905), to poetic drama in the Abruzzo making use of native traditions *(La figlia di Jorio* [*Jorio's Daughter*], 1904) and using a subtext from Greek tragedy *(La fiaccola sotto il moggio* [*The Light under the Bushel*], 1905), to poetic drama set in medieval Italy (*Francesca da Rimini,* 1902; *Parisina* [an opera libretto], 1912), to historical extravaganza with music, choruses, and spectacular scenic effects (*La nave* [*The Ship*],[1905), to prose drama close to the contemporary ''bourgeois'' theater, set in the present or recent past (*La Gioconda,* 1898; *La gloria* [*Glory*], 1899; *Più che l'amore* [*More than Love*], 1906; *Il ferro* [*Iron*], 1914). All are intertextual, although in different ways, in attempts to dissolve ''the error of time,'' or to underline links between the modern world and mythical, historical, and literary classical-European tradition seen through D'Annunzio's reading of Nietzsche. Here, I will focus not only on D'Annunzio's first modern tragedy, but also on an early tragedy that makes use of ''bourgeois'' theatrical conventions, *La Gioconda,* and two late plays, one that blends Greek tragedy, historical drama, and folk traditions, *La fiaccola sotto il moggio,* and the other his most self-consciously Nietzschean drama, *Più che l'amore.*

The title character of *La Gioconda* has clear affinities with Leonar-

do's enigmatic painting of the same title, known in English as the *Mona Lisa*. In a brief epilogue, consisting of a quotation from the *Iliad* on the old men of Troy watching Helen, D'Annunzio suggests a more remote resemblance. Helen is described as wrapped in white veils; Gioconda appears on stage veiled, as if such mythical, destructive beauty could not show itself directly. Other references in the text link Gioconda to the Egyptian sphinx and the Medusa.

La Gioconda's prose text, which adheres more to realist conventions than does the poetic prose of *The Dead City,* can also be read as a modern triangular melodrama: a struggle between the loving and self-sacrificing wife, Silvia Settala (played in the original production by Eleonora Duse), and the seductive ''other woman'' or femme fatale, the model Gioconda Dianti, for the affections of the sculptor Lucio Settala. Set in modern Tuscany in the spring, the drama opens with the exposition of a previous violence and a present recovery. Having attempted suicide as the ''prey'' of his model and lover, Lucio now seems ''reborn'' under the tender care of his wife. Left alone with his friend Cosimo, however, the sculptor confesses that he is still under the spell of the fascinating Gioconda, though more as an artist than as a man. Framing the contrast between the two women as a struggle between the good and the beautiful—ethics and aesthetics—and between spirit and flesh, Lucio affirms that he sculpts bodies, not souls, and that his quest as an artist is for beauty, not goodness. He defends himself in Nietzschean terms: ''I am in my own law, even if it is beyond Good'' (1:137). Between Gioconda's flesh and the marble she helps him to choose there is a ''divine affinity,'' and her carnal beauty is always different, capable of generating ''a thousand statues'' (138–39). As Cosimo recounts his recent trip to Egypt, Lucio perceives an affinity between Gioconda's beauty and the ''ecstasy of light'' of the desert and ''the orient'': the purity of forms, the violent passions, and the sphinx itself. Silvia, on the other hand, belongs to the Tuscan spring: gentle, flowering, restful. Gioconda incarnates the Dionysian force necessary to the creations of the Apollinian artist Lucio, whose name recalls the god of light. Although it is Sylvia who helps him to heal after his suicide attempt, offering him a rebirth into life, Lucio comes to the understanding that art is more important than life (139). Life, in other words, is justifiable only as an aesthetic phenomenon. Symbolically, Gioconda and Silvia represent the conflict between art and life; dramatically, one between the loyal wife and the femme fatale.

The conflict reaches its climax in the dramatic-symbolic scene be-

tween the two women in the artist's studio, a space in which sculptures of Nike, Demeter, Pegasus, and Medusa, D'Annunzio informs us in the stage directions, ''reveal the aspiration toward a carnal, victorious, and creative life'' (147). Gioconda reaffirms the difference between the domestic and the aesthetic spaces to Silvia: ''This is not a house. Familial affections have no seat here. . . . This is a place outside of laws'' (153). Surrounded by a curtain that conceals the sculpture of a sphinx, inspired by Gioconda, which Lucio was completing before his demise, the space also suggests a metatheatrical stage on which the two female leads play their climactic scene. Desperate in her attempt to reclaim her husband, Silvia violates her own moral integrity, lying to her rival that Lucio sent her to tell Gioconda to leave. Desire for revenge in turn causes Gioconda to violate her artistic integrity, and she smashes ''her'' statue, the work of art that Lucio created by ''squeezing life'' out of her (155). This precipitates the catastrophe: behind the curtain, Silvia tries to save the statue, but the falling marble crushes her hands, ''the hands of kindness and forgiveness'' (152). The tragic event is caused by unbridled Dionysian energy destroying the Apollinian aesthetic figuration of itself.

Gioconda, as Fernando Trebbi argues, is also an androgynous figure, a warrior woman like Athena, whose veil suggests both Athena's helmet and a theatrical mask.[26] Her androgyny also recalls Nietzsche's Dionysus, aggressive and destructive of social boundaries, but possessing the sexual energy needed to mate with and bear the artistic children of the Apollinian force. Lucio does not seem particularly attentive to his child with Silvia, Beata, but the lure of continuing to produce more artistic children with the Dionysian woman is irresistible. The production of art, it seems, is ultimately destructive of life; it is destructive not only of Lucio's marriage with Silvia, but also of Gioconda as a human being and lover. And yet, for Lucio, at least, life can only be justified aesthetically.

In contrast to *The Dead City,* D'Annunzio here attempts an affirmative ending to his tragedy. On the domestic level, Silvia's sacrifice was in vain: Lucio will remain with Gioconda. The statue is saved, although its arms are broken; it thus suggests both the ''mutilated'' Silvia and the sculptures of antiquity as they appear in modernity. Lucio's former teacher Lorenzo Gaddi remarks that it retains ''something sacred and tragic, after the divine immolation'' (164). Ironically, Silvia has sacrificed herself for art, not for life. It is she who becomes the protagonist in the final fourth act, with its poetic

tone and its suggestion of her own healing and rebirth. In accordance with her name, Silvia goes to live in the Tuscan woods, near the sea, in the company of Beata and ''La Sirenetta,'' ''a seer who has the gift of song; a creature of dream and truth, who seems to be a spirit of the sea'' (163). She becomes the sacrificial victim, returning to something resembling a Dionysian natural world removed from civilization and its forms, her mutilation freeing her to some extent from her suffering as an individual. The bourgeois drama and its unresolved conflicts seem to have melted away into a timeless world of imagination and poetry. This new register, as interpreted by Duse, must have been extremely compelling on stage.

Nonetheless, the ending raises questions that reveal some of the problems inherent in the coexistence of the symbolic and the domestic, or of poetic tragedy and realist drama. Silvia's inability to embrace her little daughter, as she hides her mutilated arms, is pathetic rather than tragic. Although Lucio is presumably living the aesthetic and creative life, the reader or spectator loses interest in him. His heroic stature as an artist is undermined by his dependence on Silvia during his convalescence and then his subservience to Gioconda. As usual in D'Annunzio's works, it is the women who have the stronger roles, even though their strength depends on their relationship to a man.[27] Gioconda herself, although she rises to an operatic fury in her big scene, has become in the end more symbol than character. If this ambitious attempt to fuse tragedy, symbolism, and Nietzschean philosophy into the framework of a nineteenth-century domestic drama does not quite succeed, D'Annunzio did create an original and at times spectacular play that had considerable popular appeal. No doubt sensing the difficulties inherent in this particular dramatic mixture, he began to explore other avenues for the creation of modern tragedy.

Bianca Maria and Gioconda exemplify the two types of ''Dionysian women'' figured in *The Flame:* the virgin with ''reawakening powers'' and the mature, passionate lover of an artist. In both cases, forces within the women the artist desires are at once necessary to the Apollinian creations of the poet and the sculptor and destructive of domestic tranquility, unleashing tragedy. Bianca Maria is Dionysian, too, in that she is sacrificed in a ritual accomplished in delirium, returning to an original oneness in death by water. In *La Gioconda,* however, the two Dionysian functions separate. The tragedy ends in one sense affirmatively, in that the Dionysian woman and the Apollinian artist remain united, assuring the triumph of the

aesthetic. The sacrificial aspect of the Dionysian is transferred to the ''pure'' woman, Silvia.

Dionysian women appear in several guises in all of D'Annunzio's modern tragedies. In the early ''tragic poems,'' written around the same time as *The Dead City,* the female protagonists have gone mad with love. Isabella, in *Sogno d'un mattino di primavera* (*Dream of a Spring Morning,* 1897), whose lover died in her arms, insists she is no longer Isabella, but instead ''all green,'' blending into the forest, longing to lose her individual form and dissolve in primordial nature. The duchess Gradeniga in *Sogno d'un tramonto d'autunno* (*Dream of an Autumn Sunset,* 1899), frenzied with jealousy and ''mad with pain and terror'' because her lover has left her for the sirenlike prostitute Panthea, carries out the death of her rival by fire, in ''all the beauty of the tragic vision'' (1:47). In the later tragedies, D'Annunzio experiments with various fusions of myth, history, poetry and prose, and archaic, literary, and popular language in his search for modern tragic form and portrayal of Dionysian women. Basiliola in *La Nave* (*The Ship,* 1905), like the earlier Elena Comnema in *La Gloria* (*Glory,* 1899) a Byzantine princess, represents the ''oriental'' origins of Dionysus, a presence necessary to the creation of the Occident, represented by (masculine) Rome, yet a force to keep under control and ultimately to sacrifice. Mila in *La figlia di Jorio* (*Jorio's Daughter,* 1904) is also a ''strange'' outsider, but she incarnates the paganism native to Italy—the Dionysian folk traditions (as represented in *Il trionfo della morte*) at times subverting and at times blending with the dominant Roman-Christian culture. Both Basiliola and Mila sacrifice themselves, burning in ''beautiful'' flames. Perhaps the most Dionysian of all D'Annunzio's female creations is the protagonist of his *Fedra* (1908–9), his only attempt to write a new version of a Greek tragedy. The text emphasizes Phaedra's Cretan origins—the fact that she is more ''primitive'' and ''barbaric'' than the Athenians but (like Dionysus) at the foundation of their culture. Unlike the guilt-ridden heroines of Euripides and Racine, this Phaedra violently declares her passion, causing Hippolytus to define himself as the prey of a panther. Phaedra accepts the identification, but as ''the fascinated panther at the eyes of Dionysus . . . for you are wild like that god'' (2:334). If Hippolytus figures the god's wildness, Phaedra herself is the prey of Dionysian sexual fury and, finally, of the desire for ecstatic self-sacrifice. D'Annunzio invents a new character, the poet Eurito, both as the voice of eternal return (''What

was, woman, will return'' [292]) and as the Apollinean artist who will justify her passion aesthetically, making it ''unforgettable.''[28]

In the years following the publication of the French translations of Nietzsche's complete works (1899–1901), D'Annunzio read widely in Nietzsche, deepening his understanding of the philosopher's theories of tragedy, if also misreading them. His collection of Nietzsche's works in the Vittoriale library at Garda, edited and translated into French by Henri Albert from 1897 to 1903, each volume inscribed to him by the translator and containing numerous underlinings and marginal comments in his hand, indicates familiarity with and probably multiple readings of Nietzsche's major works. The Vittoriale also contains a well-marked copy of *L'origine de la tragédie,* translated by Jean Marnold and Jacques Morland and published in 1901, as well as the first major study of Nietzsche to appear in French, Henri Lichtenberger's *La philosophie de Nietzsche,* published in 1898. Judging from the markings and annotations in these books, D'Annunzio's major interests seem to be two: parallels between sexuality and tragedy—or artistic creation in general—and Nietzsche's emphasis on the aesthetic, rather than the moral, significance of tragedy. In his copy of *Le crépuscule des idoles* (*The Twilight of the Idols*) he marks a passage on the Greeks' triumph of life over death through the importance of the sexual symbol, and a passage on sexual rapture *(ivresse sexuelle)* as the precondition for all artistic creation.[29] In *La volonté de la puissance* (*The Will to Power*), he underlines passages on the association of both Dionysus and Apollo with *ivresse sexuelle,* and on the combination of suffering, combat, and pleasure in the creation of tragedy.[30] In *L'origine de la tragédie,* he notes the importance of the struggle of the Apollinian with the ''titanic and barbarian'' Dionysian principle and of the incorporation of ''orgiastic music'' into tragic myth.[31] He underlines twice Nietzsche's phrase on the justification of the world as aesthetic phenomenon.[32] He also marks Nietzsche's definition of tragedy as ''aesthetic play'' rather than imitation of reality and his critique of Aristotle's catharsis. Perhaps most important for his own work, he highlights the passage calling for a rebirth of ''the aesthetic listener'' along with the rebirth of tragedy.[33]

D'Annunzio explores different approaches to the creation of modern tragedy in late plays written around the same time: *Jorio's Daughter* (1904), *The Light under the Bushel* (1905), and *More than Love*

(1906). Generally considered to be his masterpiece, and certainly his greatest success, *Jorio's Daughter* is a truly original work that weaves pagan and Christian traditions from the author's native Abruzzo into a violent poetic tragedy complete with chorus. Perhaps more interesting for our purposes here, however, is the lesser-known play considered by most Italian critics to be D'Annunzio's best after *Jorio's Daughter,* and his only attempt to superimpose (in the manner of Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra*) a modern drama on a Greek myth.

In a letter of 1904 to the actress Irma Gramatica,[34] D'Annunzio wrote that he intended to create a ''modern sister'' for Electra . The epigraph to *La fiaccola sotto il moggio,* a citation in the original Greek from Aeschylus's *Choephori,* reads: ''Chorus: The guilty one must suffer; so says an ancient proverb. Electra: It is necessary to go down into combat with inexorable furor'' (D'Annunzio, *Tutto il teatro,* 2:7). D'Annunzio attributes to Electra a line actually spoken by the chorus, thus emphasizing the ''furor'' in the determination of his new Electra.[35] However, he clearly did not intend to create a replica of the Electra myth: the parallels with Aeschylus's tragedy, as well as with his other sources, the Electras of Sophocles and Euripides, are far from exact. Basically similar motifs include the theme of the decline of a noble house, the intrusion of illegitimacy on legitimacy, and a daughter's desire to avenge a parent's death. D'Annunzio has, however, ''feminized'' the tragedy. A mother, not a father, has been killed, the usurper to be assassinated is also a woman, and Electra's ''modern sister,'' whose brother is younger and ill, assumes the role of Orestes as well as that of Electra. More than in any of his other major works, the male characters are weak, ineffective, or base—symptomatic of the decline of the family line. The protagonist Gigliuola, however, is arguably D'Annunzio's strongest tragic heroine.

The literal translation of *La fiaccola sotto il moggio* is ''The torch under the bushel,'' but those are the words used in the Italian Bible (Matt. 5:15–16), which reads in the King James version: ''Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'' The title thus suggests a possible Christian theme, as does the time of the action, the eve and morning of Pentecost. However, D'Annunzio has interwoven and thus transformed elements from Christianity, Greek tragedy, European history, native Italic pagan traditions and myths, and contemporary

naturalism and symbolism. Gigliuola's torch, which she intends to bring out from under the bushel, turns out to be the flame of vengeance, as carried out by Orestes and Electra—hardly an example of Christian ''good works.'' It is echoed visually and verbally by the torches of the laborers who must work at night to try to repair the ancient and noble house of the de Sangro family, physically and morally fast sinking into ruin. Pentecost, as Gigliuola states, is also the ''feast of the tongues of fire'' (12), and she awaits the Holy Spirit to speak in her, not to glorify God, but to break the year's silence on the circumstances of her mother's death. Gigliuola also claims to burn and bleed with the stigmata she carries, stigmata not from Christ but ''from that flesh that bore me'' (13); they are not on her hands, but on her throat, where her mother was strangled.

It is the heroine's burning, single-minded desire for vengeance that constitutes the impetus of the tragedy. Set historically in D'Annunzio's native Abruzzi ''at the time of the Bourbon King Ferdinand I'' (7)—the late eighteenth century—the action follows strict classical conventions, occurring in one place and in less than twenty-four hours. The setting and the circumstances seem almost timeless: except for the fact that the noble family on the verge of collapse is conscious of its own history, symbolized by the overlapping periods of the decaying house, the historical period plays no role. In contrast to *La figlia di Jorio,* in which D'Annunzio uses a variety of linguistic registers (including Latin prayers and Abruzzi dialects) in classical Italian hendecasyllables, the language of *La fiaccola* is on the whole clearly modern, although poetic, in free verse.

The action, too, is simpler than that of most of D'Annunzio's other modern tragedies. In the rapidly collapsing house, in the afternoon of the eve of Pentecost, Gigliuola reminds her paternal grandmother, donna Aldegrina, that the year's anniversary of her mother's death will be that night. Her father, Tibaldo, has since married Angizia, a woman who was a servant in the house. Gigliuola breaks her silence to accuse her stepmother, whom she calls a servant, of the murder of her mother, Monica. Angizia proclaims proudly that she, indeed, committed the murder, but that her stepdaughter cannot touch her because ''I am covered by your father. We are two, we were two'' (31). Tibaldo, who claims to have previously believed that his first wife died of natural causes, denies the implication that he was involved in the murder, cursing the woman and calling her a liar. Angizia does in fact lie frequently; for instance, she denies that she is having sexual relations with Tibaldo's half

brother, that she is in fact poisoning Simonetto, Gigliuola's sickly brother, and that the snake charmer who has arrived in search of her is her father. Repulsed by his daughter, the snake charmer forms a bond with ''la baronella'' Gigliuola, who offers him hospitality. It is he who provides her with the means of vengeance and death. He gives her a hairpin (a feminine equivalent of Orestes' sword), with which she intends to kill Angizia, as well as a basket of asps (recalling Cleopatra's heroic suicide), which she will use to kill herself. However, in between the time she plunges her hands into the nest of asps and when she goes to stab Angizia, her father has killed his wife. Tibaldo tells his daughter that he has vindicated her, doing the deed ''so that your hand would not be contaminated.'' For Gigliuola, however, ''The vow was mine alone. . . . You took away my holy right . . . your [hand] was not pure for this sacrifice'' (67). At the end, Gigliuola asks that the torches be extinguished, for she was not able to light her own; ''all was in vain'' (68–69).

As D'Annunzio remarked in *The Triumph of Death,* the Abruzzi were for him a ''Dionysian womb'' in which ancient, pagan rites, sometimes mingled with Christianity, remained alive. The area was also a source of his naturalistic observations. Thus, the vulgar Angizia and her father are at once characters drawn from peasant life, their snake-filled region specifically described, and timeless, mythical figures. As the snake charmer explains to Gigliuola, his art, in which the music of the flute plays an important role, has a long tradition, each successive charmer being marked by a protective deity, ''il Tutelare'' (48). He also sees, hears, and predicts what others cannot, through a spirit within him that inspires his music. He thus partly resembles Tiresias and partly a more primitive, natural being, at one with nature and music, a satyr arriving from a mythical wood to enable the Dionysian fury within the young noblewoman to realize its sacrificial aim. The frequent references to the snakes shedding their skin suggest the possibility of rebirth, a motif echoed by the Pentacostal fires.

Angizia, who has polluted the noble family by seducing the baron, murdering his wife, poisoning his son, having sex with his half brother, lying, cheating, and stealing, is both an evil, base, naturalistic character and a formidable tragic antagonist. Here is part of her last scene with Gigliuola.

> *Angizia:* What are you thinking about?
> *Gigliuola:* You know. I only think of one thing.

Angizia: Do you want war? You will have it.
To shame me, you called that man,
And he should have taken you,
And closed you in his sack with your companions,
O livid little serpent,
And taken you with him.
But for what you have done to me
I will have vengeance:
Do not doubt.
Gigliuola: Servant, there is no more time for quarreling. Think
of what the man with nauseating snakes warned you.
Fear the night.

(54–55)

The agon of two women recalls the scene between Silvia and Gioconda, but this time the struggle is not over love or passion for a man, but over another woman. Angizia has previously shown her disdain for Tibaldo, whom she pictures as kneeling and begging, pulling at her skirts in sexual enthrallment, and Gigliuola has by this time renounced her father. Angizia's desire is to acquire power by taking the place of Gigliuola's mother, while Gigliuola's desire is to avenge the usurpation. In her virginal indifference to and apparent disgust with sexuality, Gigliuola differs from D'Annunzio's other female protagonists. Hers is no ''Electra complex,'' but rather an almost pathological identification with her mother. For a year, she has ''seen'' her mother and heard her calling her. Like Antigone with her brother, she is certain that the spirit will find no rest until her act of vengeance is completed. In a long soliloquy in the fourth and final act, Gigliuola addresses Monica's spirit:

Give me, Mother,
the strength to come to you
placated, pacified
to you who left in my soul
the vocation for death. . . .
And as your passing was atrocious,
so do I wish mine to be, Mother,
for I was not able to save you.
The more savage my agony,
the more I will seem close to you, to
rejoin you, blend with you,
become one with you, o Mother, as

when you carried me
in your sacred silence.

(64)

Gigliuola is a Dionysian woman of another order. She is possessed neither by a lover, nor by sexual desire, nor by an Apollinian artist (except by the poet D'Annunzio), but rather by an all-consuming passion for her mother and for revenge. It is she alone, enabled by the Dionysian powers of the snake charmer, who prepares herself for an act of heroic self-sacrifice, whose aim is to rid the family of its pollution and to purify herself of the guilt she feels for not having been able to save her mother. The desire to return to the maternal womb also signifies a desire to be spiritually reborn, as announced by Pentecost. All this would seem to indicate an affirmative, ''Dionysian'' ending to the tragedy. D'Annunzio, however, undercuts this possibility by having the man she considers most unworthy, her father, abort her act. Gigliuola's final words, ''All was in vain,'' convey a pessimism that reverses her previous single-minded, almost mad furor of determination and desire.

Tibaldo's guilt or innocence, his motivations, and even his character are somewhat obscure. Certainly his sexual obsession with the woman the others call *la femmina* (the female) has put him in a position of subservience to her and neglect of his family. D'Annunzio suggests, here as elsewhere, that the ''pollution'' of the aristocracy by the lower classes can only lead to disaster. Tibaldo, unlike his proud daughter and mother, sometimes acts like a member of a lower class. The scene (act 1, scene 3) with his half brother—the most vulgar character in the play—is a naturalistic piece dominated by base insults and quarrels over money. When Gigliuola questions him on his knowledge of the circumstances of her mother's death, his literary response, ''Was it not evil fate, a blind blow?'' (27), is almost comic. When Angizia declares that she killed Monica, Tibaldo first insists she is lying. When he becomes convinced of her guilt, he abjectly apologizes to his daughter, attempting to extricate himself from ''the female's'' insinuation that he, too, was involved. Though it may be true that Tibaldo was not complicit in the murder, it seems clear that he has been living for a year in a state of bad faith, lying to himself about his wife's death in order to satisfy his lust. Begging for her help, he tells his mother he does not know the truth (39). When he learns that Angizia has also been poisoning his son, his object of desire turns into an object of disgust, a ''wild beast''

whom he attacks and insults (46). However, the revelation comes too late: just as his son is physically corrupted, Tibaldo is morally corrupted. His attempts to win back his mother's and his daughter's favor are pathetic. So, finally, is the act with which he attempts to vindicate himself, the act that undermines Gigliuola's tragic purity.

D'Annunzio's modern version of the Electra myth follows classical canons in its strict adherence to unities and Nietzschean ones in that it portrays Dionysian energies in Apollinian form, stressing pathos and the recuperation of a previous story over action. As in *The Dead City* and *La Gioconda,* however, elements of realist drama clash with the tragic aesthetic. Tibaldo's ill-fated intervention confuses and troubles the ''pure act'' of sacrifice planned by his daughter. Like a character from a bourgeois drama, Tibaldo is convinced that he can win back family favor, save his Gigliuola, and generally make things right by committing a simple murder, rather than an act of tragic sacrifice. He simply cannot understand the trajectory and the desire of his Dionysian daughter. Gigliuola does not live in the modern world, not even the eighteenth-century world of the play's ostensible setting. D'Annunzio here more clearly than in his other tragedies also writes the tragedy of modernity's inability to enact a complete rebirth of tragedy.

Più che l'amore (*Beyond Love*), D'Annunzio's most conscious effort to write a tragedy for ''the third Rome''—postunification Italy—resulted in the most spectacular failure of any of his dramas on stage, marked by shouts from the audience at the opening in Rome in October 1906 calling for the police to ''arrest the author.''[36] In a letter to Vincenzo Morello, who had reviewed the performance favorably, D'Annunzio vigorously defended his play and further developed his theory of modern tragedy. Eventually published as a preface to the text, this piece is at times confused by the passions of the moment and clearly claims more for the tragedy than it can sustain. Still, preface and play deserve attention for the contributions they make toward understanding D'Annunzio's attempt to incorporate his deepening understanding of Nietzsche into the realization of a new sort of modern tragedy.

In the course of the preface, entitled ''On the Last Faraway Land and on the White Stone of Pallas,'' D'Annunzio compares his tragic protagonist, Corrado Brando, to Aeschylus's Orestes and Prometheus and to Sophocles' Ajax. Nietzsche's name is never mentioned, but it is clear that by this time his Italian follower had absorbed his readings in *The Birth of Tragedy, The Twilight of the Idols,* and elsewhere

into his own thinking about modern tragedy. As if with a shock of recognition, D'Annunzio indeed seems to have discovered the significance of his modern tragic hero while reading Nietzsche. In his copy of Henri Albert's translation of *The Birth of Tragedy,* he marked a passage explaining the sense of the myth of Prometheus as ''the necessity of crime imposed on the individual who wants to raise himself up to the Titan'' and wrote in the margin, ''Corrado Brando.''[37] The phrase is echoed—without attribution—in the preface when D'Annunzio claims that his play ''interprets with exceptional audacity the myth of Prometheus; the necessity of crime that weighs on the man determined to raise himself up to the titanic condition'' (*Tutto di teatro,* 2:85). Along the same lines, D'Annunzio re-cites a phrase from *The Twilight of the Idols* that he used in *The Triumph of Death.* In Corrado Brando, it is not crime that is glorified (*pace* the insensitive audience) but rather ''the dignity of crime conceived as Promethean virtue'' (77).

D'Annunzio envisions Corrado as participating in both the Dionysian and the Apollinian by way of a will to power. His modern tragic hero, he claims, must create and act on his own will, a Zarathustrian will that legates to his son the possibility of becoming more than human (80). Its violence, ''similar to Dionysian frenzy,'' is recognizable, he says, in ''the orgiastic delirium of music'' (78). With Corrado's sacrificial death at the end, the tragedy becomes ''the celebration of a Dionysian agony,'' a return to ''the original unity'' (78). Yet shortly before his death, Corrado seems to hear a kind of internal chorus, the voice of the ''new Erinyes.'' This new chorus of Fates, D'Annunzio explains, will not howl and celebrate death like the ancient ones, but rather will send up an ''Apollinian chant'' in a ''glorification of life'' (77). The hero will suffer, not to purify himself of his crime, but rather, in another reference to *The Twilight of the Idols,* ''to be—beyond terror and pity—'the eternal joy of becoming'" (77). Thus, in D'Annunzio's view, the neo-Promethean/Dionysian sacrificial tragic hero will, in the end, be immortalized in the serenity of an Apollinian form, albeit in a ''chant,'' the Dionysian art of music.

The preface also deals briefly with the problem of the differences between ancient tragedy and the modern form the author is attempting to create. Both the Greek hero and ''the Latin of the third Rome'' affront horror with victorious courage while appearing to be defeated. But the first does not attempt to understand his destiny, whereas the second, self-conscious, ''does not fear descending into

his own abyss and illuminating it'' (81). Transcending the ''sad times'' of modernity and the poverty of the modern stage, the tragedy ''offers to the third Italy the auspicious vision of her new architecture considered as the language of power'' (85). The modern tragic vision is, in this instance, also political: D'Annunzio clearly wants to support Italy's colonialist ventures in Africa, with his country's ideology of reclaiming parts of the Roman Empire.[38]

The decision to make the tragic hero an architect may also have been inspired by Nietzsche. In his copy of *The Twilight of the Idols* D'Annunzio marked a passage on the architect, who represents ''the delirium of the great will that has the desire for art.''[39] The motivating force of the tragedy is certainly the ''great will'' of the architect, Corrado Costa, who tells his longtime friend the hydraulic engineer Virginio Vesto of his overwhelming desire to return to his former explorations in Africa. His ambition has both aesthetic and imperialistic overtones, for he hopes to become ''a builder of cities on lands of conquest and to rediscover the colonial architecture the Romans built in the Africa of the Scipios'' (*Tutto il teatro,* 99). Lacking the finances for this endeavor, he (as Virginio learns later) has robbed and killed an old usurer who also runs a gambling house. Virginio is shocked to learn that Maria, his adored pure and musical sister (reminiscent of Bianca Maria in *The Dead City*) has ''given herself entirely'' to Corrado and is carrying his child. Maria—perhaps D'Annunzio's ideal woman—proves to be more daring than her prototype. In the scene between the two lovers, when she learns that Corrado will leave her to go to Africa, she makes no sentimental scene but declares that she is ''freely given'' and will not hold back the hero but rather will encourage him to follow his destiny ''beyond love.'' ''For you, living is conquering; for me, living is waiting'' (125–26).

When Corrado at last confesses his crime to Virginio, his friend urges him to go to ''purify'' himself in the desert and then to fulfill the heroic drives that his life in Rome has smothered. Corrado, however, realizes that he might not be able to escape, since he may have left a clue (the list of expenses for his preparations, which he figured the sum on the gambling table would cover) at the scene of the crime. Trapped in his room with his Sardinian servant Rudu, he will await the arrival of the police. In his farewell to Virginio, he imagines Maria great in her solitude, expelled from ''the herd,'' preparing a glorious future for their child. He then recalls how, in one of his African adventures, he and Rudu (a ''natural,'' satyrlike man

whom D'Annunzio compares in the preface to a chorus) ''sang and laughed'' in the midst of torture and how their courage made them seem ''immortal.'' Corrado's last gesture is to seize ''the arm which works best at a short distance'' (147), apparently in preparation to kill or be killed. In his ''symphonic exode,'' however, D'Annunzio imagines his hero burned at the stake—hardly likely in the Italy of the early 1900s. Corrado's last words there are, ''Away dogs, to your chains! My ashes are seeds'' (148).

D'Annunzio's pervasive theme of the struggle between a mediocre modernity, represented stylistically by realism, and the aspiration toward a transcendent ideal, represented by the aesthetic of poetic tragedy, takes on a new form here. The modern setting, action, and dialogue appear in two ''episodes'' interspersed with three lyrical interventions—a ''symphonic'' prelude, intermezzo, and an exode—that state the poetic motifs and evoke mythological deities while suggesting a musical chorus. A squalid and mercantile nineteenth-century reality, represented by the descriptions of the gambler-moneylender and of modern Rome, is also juxtaposed with the new technological and adventurous twentieth century, represented by the tools of the engineer and the new guns of the architect-adventurer (both described in some detail in the stage directions) as well as the dream of neoimperialism. As evoked by Corrado, the usurer, with his hanging lip, grotesque body, and passion for gain, seems like he could have been created by of Balzac. Balzacian too is the root of the hero's crime: the need for money to accomplish his ambition. Corrado's justification for the crime may recall that of Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov, but he is more explicit in his disdain for his victim, who seems to incarnate the rampant, base materialism of his society: ''That man's life wasn't worth the life of a wolf, because the wolf species is becoming rarer every day, whereas his species is multiplying every day in ignominy . . . infecting everything it touches'' (138). Virginio, on the other hand, does not justify but explains his friend's crime in Nietzschean terms: ''Nothing is true; everything is permitted'' (118).

One reason that *Più che l'amore* was such a failure when it was first staged was the audience's moral refusal to accept both the crime and the criminal as anything beyond the individual and the sordid, far from the ''Promethean'' hero and transcendent act explained by D'Annunzio in the preface. Another reason was what they knew of the source of the play's inspiration. Nietzsche was far from being a generally accepted figure on the Italian cultural scene and indeed

was viewed with much suspicion, in terms of both morality and philology. One commentator lamented that D'Annunzio's infatuation with Nietzsche's philosophy kept him from turning directly to the ancient Greeks as models for his tragedy: ''A peculiar theory on Greek tragedy certainly did not deserve to be treated like a gospel.''[40] The flaw of the tragedy, however, may lie rather in D'Annunzio's ambitious attempt to answer Nietzsche's call to resurrect Dionysus and Apollo in events set squarely in modernity. The gap between the somewhat melodramatic plot and the ''symphonic'' interludes and that between a character who kills for money and a sacrificed Dionysus/Prometheus listening to the voice of Apollinian new Erinyes is never adequately bridged.

Beyond Love may also be read metatheatrically. The stylistic tension between realist drama and ''sublime'' tragic lyricism is recapitulated in the struggle between the striving and desire of the hero and the power of money and mediocrity in his environment. By killing the usurer, the visionary adventurer would not only triumph over that power, but in a sense ''kill'' realism and nineteenth-century drama to soar into a purified modern tragedy. Similarly, and more credibly, Maria would elevate herself ''beyond love'' in the sentimental, melodramatic tradition toward sacrifice and sublimity. But these modern avatars of Titus and Berenice find themselves mere individuals, not representatives of social forces. The architect's desire to fuse the classical-imperialist past with the technological-imperialist future, both politically and aesthetically, is in dramatic terms defeated by the reigning bourgeois-mercantilist order. That desire is, however, recuperated lyrically when D'Annunzio suggests in the end a tragic transcendence pointing toward a future in which such an ideal might be realized. For today's reader, the knowledge of what the fusion of technology and imperialism became under fascism makes it impossible to follow D'Annunzio's vision.

The play that D'Annunzio's audience saw as most Nietzschean is his only modern tragedy that stages a man instead of a woman as sacrificial Dionysian hero. Like other D'Annunzian male characters, however, Corrado acknowledges that his strength comes from a woman, Maria Vesta. In her interesting reading of D'Annunzio's theater as ''feminine,'' Luisetta Elia Chomel makes the point that the character of Maria represents a new type of woman in D'Annunzio's work. Breaking through the stereotypes of the ''vestal virgin'' that her name would suggest, the good sister that Virginio sees in her, and the submissive wife that would normally be her destiny, Maria

affirms her liberty in a total love, freely chosen and freely given with no ''chains.''[41] Of course, it is also true that Maria's liberty exists only in relation to her utter devotion to a man. Very rarely does D'Annunzio represent maternity in his works, although the possible engendering of a ''superman'' is the major theme of his novel *Le vergini delle rocce* and a baby is the title character of *L'innocente.* Maria's pregnancy suggests a Zarathustrian view to the future and the continuity of life beyond sacrificial death. This attempt at an affirmative tragic ending would explain why the woman could not be the sacrificial victim here.

Corrado may come close to fulfilling D'Annunzio's conception of a modern tragic hero, but in the end he remains, like D'Annunzio's other male protagonists, inadequate. It is difficult to reconcile his Promethean aspirations with his sordid crime and fundamental egoism, just as it is difficult to accept Leonardo's justification for killing his sister or Lucio's for abandoning his mutilated wife. The male characters in *The Light under the Bushel* are weak or base, and even masculine ''heroes,'' such as Aligi in *Jorio's Daughter* or Marco Gratico in *The Ship,* seem somewhat ineffective, especially when contrasted with female characters such as Mila and Basiliola. Perhaps the lack of a true tragic hero should not surprise us. D'Annunzio, after all, wrote many of his plays for Eleonora Duse, and the model that inspires his theory of modern tragedy as outlined in *The Flame* emphasizes the relationship between the Apollinian dramatic poet and the Dionysian actress, a dynamic that leaves little room for a male character or actor who might upstage the voice of the author. Thus, if Alessandro the poet and Lucio the sculptor appear as Apollinian artists who need the forces in Dionysian women in order to create, they also function as representatives of the poet who retains power over them and their women, he who ''possessed'' the divine, Dionysian Duse.

D'Annunzio in a sense writes and rewrites in different forms the metatragedy of the problem of re-creating tragedy for modernity in the wake of Nietzsche. Like Nietzsche, he believed that ancient drama represented primarily scenes of pathos rather than mimesis and that modern tragedy should revive the principle. Like Nietzsche, too, he believed that tragedy should privilege the aesthetic over the moral. And yet D'Annunzio does not go as far as other finde-siècle writers for the stage such as Maeterlinck or Swinburne in the renunciation of fable in favor of poetic or ''static'' drama. Although much of what happens in his plays, as in classical tragedy,

does so in reaction to the uncovering of a prior story, a bourgeois drama often lurks behind the tragedy, so that elements of suspense and surprise do occur on stage and the pathos is sometimes undercut by characters who are at once rooted in modernity and aspiring to tragedy. This discordance, however, can also be the source of D'Annunzio's originality and accomplishment. The lyricism in his tragedies, rather than simply imitating antiquity, expresses the melancholy and anguish of modern men and women attempting, and ultimately failing, to dispel ''the error of time.'' So does his creative use of the chorus as a kind of echo or suggestion.[42] Although D'Annunzio does stage choruses, in *Jorio's Daughter* and particularly in his realization of outdoor ''popular'' drama, *The Ship,* Bianca Maria's reading from the chorus of *Antigone* in *The Dead City,* musical and Dionysian figures such as ''La Sirenetta'' in *La Gioconda,* the snake charmer in *The Light under the Bushel,* and Rudu in *More than Love,* as well as the inner voices of ''the new Erinyes'' that Corrado hears in that play, are perhaps more effective in their suggestion of a refracted choral voice. So are the many musical allusions and musical effects, representative of D'Annunzio's attempt to re-create ''the spirit of music'' within the Latin tradition of emphasis on the word.

D'Annunzio thus interprets Nietzsche not slavishly but originally, eroticizing the Apollinian-Dionysian dyad and attempting to answer the call for the creation of a modern drama based on an aesthetic understanding of the tragedy of antiquity. If he did not entirely succeed in effecting a rebirth of tragedy, he did pose the problem in new dramatic forms, leaving us with memorable figures of Dionysus in feminine guise.

Notes

1. Paul Lauterbach and Adrien Wagnon, eds. and trans., *A travers l'œuvre de Friedrich Nietzsche* (Paris: Albert Schulz, 1893). Guy Tosi, ''D'Annunzio découvre Nietzsche (1892–1894),'' *Italianistica* 2, no. 3 (1973): 481–513, is still the best source for reliable information on D'Annunzio's earliest encounter with Nietzsche. The articles he mentions are Jean de Néthy, ''Nietzsche-Zarathustra,'' *La Revue Blanche,* April 1892, 206–12; G. Valbert, ''Le docteur Friedrich Nietzsche et ses griefs contre la société moderne,'' *La Revue des Deux Mondes,* September 1, 1892, 677–89; and Velbert, ''Fragments de Nietzsche,'' *La Revue Blanche* 3, no. 10 (July 25, 1892), trans. D. H. (Daniel Halévy?). Tosi clearly demonstrates that D'Annunzio plagiarized sections of de Néthy's article in ''La bestia elettiva.'' Other works on the D'Annunzio-Nietzsche relationship include Gaia Michelini, *Nietzsche nell'Italia di D'Annunzio* (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1978); Francesco Piga, *Il mito del superuomo in*

Nietzsche e D'Annunzio (Florence: Valecchi, 1979); Barbara Spackman, ''Nietzsche, D'Annunzio, and the Scene of Convalescence,'' in *Nietzsche in Italy,* ed. Thomas Harrison (Stanford, CA: Anma Libri, 1988), 141–57; Jeffrey Schnapp, ''Nietzsche's Italian Style: Gabriele D'Annunzio,'' in Harrison, *Nietzsche in Italy,* 247–77; Peter Carravetta, *Prefaces to the Diaphora: Rhetorics, Allegory, and the Interpretation of Postmodernity* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press,1991); Luisella Battaglia, ''Un superuomo troppo umano,'' in *D'Annunzio e il suo tempo,* ed. Francesco Perfetti (Genoa: SAGEP, 1995), 2, 97–114; and Davide F. Valenti, *D'Annunzio lettore di Nietzsche, per una rettifica* (Catania: Edizioni Boemi, 1996).

2. D'Annunzio's close friend Angelo Conti, who may well have been instrumental in introducing him to Nietzsche, repeats Schuré's words in his (Conti's) *La beata riva* (Milan: Treves, 1900), 164: ''Apollo and Dionysus, according to Nietzsche's fortunate intuition, are the two poles of the Greek soul.'' (All translations from this and other works are mine unless otherwise indicated.)

3. Henri Albert, ''Friedrich Nietzsche,'' *Mercure de France* 7, no. 11 (January 1893): 41–64, and 7, no. 12 (February 1893): 163–73.

4. The text of *La bestia elettiva* has been edited by Davide Valenti in *Su Nietzsche/Gabriele D'Annunzio* (Catania: De Martinis, 1994). Schnapp (''Nietzsche's Italian Style'') translated the text as *The Beast Who Wills* and argues that D'Annunzio was the first to make a literalizing political reading of Nietzsche.

5. The texts have been edited and published by Valentina Valentini in *La tragedia moderna e mediterranea: Sul teatro di Gabriele D'Annunzio* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1992), 66–77.

6. ''Un ideal libro di prosa moderno . . . libero dai vincoli della favola.'' D'Annunzio, preface to *Il Trionfo della morte* (Milan: Mondadori, 1995), 3.

7. Tosi, ''D'Annunzio découvre Nietzsche,'' 506–7.

8. Gabriele D'Annunzio *Il trionfo della morte* (Milan: Mondadori, 1995), 289, 288; italics in the original.

9. Angelo Conti, *La beata riva: Trattato dell'oblio preceduto da un ragionamento di Gabriele D'Annunzio* (Milan: Treves, 1900), 131–32.

10. On September 23, 1895, shortly after returning from Greece, D'Annunzio wrote to his French translator, Georges Hérelle, that he was at work on his play: ''The title of the drama is *La città morta.* It will be the first fruit of my mind made fertile by the Greek sun. . . . I have reread Aeschylus and Sophocles. I hope at last to give material form to my dream of a modern tragedy.'' He also asks Hérelle to get him a copy of Schliemann's book on Mycenae in French. In Guy Tosi, ed., *Gabriele D'Annunzio à son traducteur, Georges Hérelle: Corréspondance, accompagnée de douze sonnets cisalpins* (Paris: Denoël, 1946), 255.

11. A. Galletti, preface to *L'ellenismo nell'opera artistica di Gabriele D'Annunzio,* by Rafaello del Re (Bologna: L. Cappelli, 1928), 9. The author of the book finds the influence of Nietzsche to be an unfortunate (anticlassical) one.

12. ''Comme dans l'âme de la vièrge, dans le drame 'l'erreur du temps' est abolie. Agamemnon et Cassandre, comme Anna et Leonardo, sont eux aussi *dramatis personae.*'' D'Annunzio, qtd. in Tosi, *D'Annunzio à son traducteur, Georges Hérelle,* 300. The Vittoriale archive contains D'Annunzio's not entirely legible draft of his letter to Bernhardt (Ms 685). He writes that his characters are not only individuals, but also types and symbols. He continues: ''Vous trouverez encore, dans la première scène du deuxième acte, lucidement indiqué, dans le langage de la poésie, le but

de mon effort: 'L'erreur du temps n'a-t-elle donc pas disparu? Les lointains des siècles, ne sont donc pas abolis? N'était-ce nécessaire qu'enfin, dans une créature vivante et aimée, je retrouvasse cette unité de la vie à laquelle tient l'effort de mon art?'"

13. The passages at the end of *Twilight of the Idols* in which Nietzsche extols the celebration of the Dionysian mysteries, which were founded on the mysteries of sexuality, are reproduced in the Lauterbach-Wagnon anthology (*A travers l'oeuvre de Friedrich Nietzsche,* 90–92) and, translated by D'Annunzio from French into Italian, appear in *Il trionfo della morte* in the context of popular festivals in the Abruzzi.

14. Paul Mariéton, *Le théâtre antique d'Orange et ses chorégies* (Paris: Editions de la Provence, 1908), 9. Mariéton gives the history of the revival of the theater through the action of the Provençal group Félibres. For D'Annunzio's interest in these initiatives see Luisetta Elia Chomel, *D'Annunzio: Un teatro al femminile* (Ravenna: Longo, 1997), 33–35.

15. Conti, *La beata riva,* 59. Conti seems to assume that D'Annunzio had read *The Birth of Tragedy* before 1900. The earliest complete French translation, and the edition annotated by D'Annunzio, was Jean Marnold and Jacques Morland, trans., *L'origine de la tragédie* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1901). Henri Lichtenberger, in his anthology *Friedrich Nietzsche: Aphorismes et fragments choisis* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1899), gives the title as *La naissance de la tragédie* (as do Lauterbach and Wagnon). Edouard Schuré, in his *Précurseurs et révoltés* (Paris: Didier, 1904), refers to both "L'enfantement de la tragédie" (135) and "La naissance de la tragédie" (143). The 1907 Italian translation, by Mario Corsi and Attilio Rinieri (Bari: Laterza), was titled *Le origini della tragedia,* and the 1919 translation, by Enrico Ruta (also Bari: Laterza), *La nascità della tragedia.*

16. Gabriele D'Annunzio, "La rinascenza della tragedia," *La Tribuna,* August 3, 1897, in Valentina Valentini, *La tragedia moderna e mediterranea: sul teatro di Gabriele D'Annunzio* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1992), 80.

17. See the interview with Mario Morasso, "Il futuro teatro d'Albano," in *L'Illustrazione Italiana,* October, 1897, and "Un colloquio con Gabriele D'Annunzio" in Valentini, *La tragedia moderna e mediterranea,* 80–84.

18. Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Il Fuoco,* ed. Anco Marzio Mutterle (Milan: Mondadori, 1990), 101.

19. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings,* ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20.

20. D'Annunzio, *Il Fuoco,* 157, 161; my translation.

21. Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Tutto il teatro,* ed. Giovanni Antonucci (Rome: Newton Compton, 1995), 1:107. Subsequent references to *Tutlo il teatro,* in my translation, will appear in the text.

22. I have used the translation of *Antigone* by Robert Fagles in Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays* (London: Penguin Books), 84. D'Annunzio's version reads: "Eros nella pugna invitto. . . . E nessuno tra gli Immortali può fuggirti / e nessuno tra gli uomini efimeri, e chi ti ha è furente. / Tu dei giusti i traviati spiriti volgi alla ruina" (*Tutti il teatro,* 55).

23. Giovanni Getto, for example, in one of the most extensive studies of the play, finds that Alessandro "speaks the pompous language of someone standing *jenseits von Gut und Böse*" and aspires to be an *Übermensch.* "La città morta," in *Tre studi sul*

teatro (Rome: Salvatore Sciascia, 1976), 224. Writing twelve years later, Morena Pagliai situates D'Annunzio, in *The Dead City,* "between the vitalist affirmations of Nietzsche and the sense of precariousness, pain, and anguish of turn-of-the-century culture," thus suggesting a less superficial relationship to the philosopher. Pagliai, "Stagione e miti della '*Città morta,*'" in *D'Annunzio drammaturgo,* ed. Cesare Molinari, *Biblioteca Teatrale* 9–10 (1988): 27.

24. Maria Teresa Marabini Moevs, *Gabriele D'Annunzio e le estetiche della fine del secolo* (L'Aquila: L. U. Japadre, 1976), 328, points out this parallel and discusses extensively the similarities between Leonardo and Schliemann.

25. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols,* trans. Duncan Large (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 80; italics in the original.

26. Fernando Trebbi, "Figurazioni del femminile sulla scena della *Gioconda,*" in *Gesto e parola: Aspetti del teatro europeo tra Ottocento e Novecento,* ed. Umberto Artioli and Fernando Trebbi (Padua: Esedra, 1996), 115, 125.

27. Chomel, *Un teatro al femminile,* and Roberto Alonge, *Donne terrifiche e fragili maschi: La linea teatrale D'Annunzio–Pirandello* (Rome: Laterza, 2004), both correctly argue the superiority of female roles in D'Annunzio's theater. However, they fail to point out that the female characters are often defined primarily by their relation to a man, often to the poet himself.

28. For an analysis of *Fedra,* see *Mary Ann Frese Witt, The Search for Modern Tragedy: Aesthetic Fascism in Italy and France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 50–55.

29. The first in Henri Albert, trans., *Le crépuscule des idoles* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1899), 234, and the second in Friedrich Nietzsche, "*Pages choisies* (le crépuscule)" Henri Albert, trans. (Paris: Mercure de France, 1899), 323.

30. "C'est lá que je place le Dionysos des Grecs: l'affirmation religieuse de la vie totale, non point reniée et morcelée—(il est typique que l'acte sexuel éveille des idées de profondeur, de mystère, de respect)" (Nietzsche, *Le valenti de la puissence,* 284). "La sexualité et la volupté se retrouvent dans l'ivresse dyonisiaque: elles ne manquent pas non plus dans l'ivresse apollonienne" (165). Under the section on "Dionysus and the Crucified," he marks the passage contrasting Dionysus, who says "yes" to life, including sex, suffering, and cruelty, with Christ, who says "no."

31. "C'est seulement au prix d'une lutte incessante contre la nature titanique et barbare de l'esprit dionysien que put vivre et durer un art aussi hautainement dur . . . un principe de gouvernement aussi cruel et aussi brutal" (Nietzsche, *L'origine de la tragédie,* 10). "La Tragédie absorbe en elle le délire orgiastique de la musique" (190).

32. "L'existence du monde ne peut se *justifier* que comme phénomène esthétique" (ibid., 10; italics in original); "le monde et l'existence ne peuvent paraître justifiés qu'en tant que phénomène esthétique" (218).

33. D'Annunzio underlines a passage on tragedy as a supreme *art,* along with Nietzsche's citation of an observation by Goethe: "Ne serait-ce pas vraiment l'un des mérites des anciens que, chez eux, le plus haut pathétique n'ait été en même temps qu'un jeu esthétique, alors que pour nous, la vérité naturelle doit intervenir afin de produire un semblable résultat?" (ibid., 203). On the rebirth of tragedy, he marks the passage, "Cést ainsi que la renaissance de la Tragédie fait renaître aussi *l'auditeur esthétique,* auquel s'était substitué jusque-là, dans les salles de théâtre, un étrange quiproquo, aux prétentions mi-morales et mi-savantes, le 'critique'" (204; italics in original).

34. In Valentini, *La tragedia moderna e mediterranea,* 233.

35. Pointed out by Elena Adriani in ''L'Ombra delle Coefore sulla *Fiaccola sotto il moggio,*'' in *Gesto e parola,* 162.

36. Review by Domenico Oliva in *Il Giornale d'Italia,* October 30, 1906, in Laura Granatella, *Arrestate l'autore: D'Annunzio in scena* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1993), 2:625.

37. Friedrich Nietzsche, *L'origine de la tragédie* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1901), 94. (D'Annunzio's copy in the Vittoriale.)

38. See the perceptive analysis by Giovanna Tomasello, in *La Letteratura coloniale italiana dalle avanguardie al fascismo* (Palermo: Sellario, 1984).

39. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Le crépuscule des idoles,* trans. Henri Albert (Paris: Mercure de France, 1899), 182. (Copy in Vittoriale.)

40. Nicola Festa, *Corrado Brando e i modelli greci* (Trani: Vecchi, 1907), 17. Offprint from *La Cultura* 26, no. 5.

41. Chomel, *D'Annunzio,* 147–48.

42. Paolo Valesio, who argues that D'Annunzio's drama represents one of the highest realizations of the modern stage, emphasizes the originality of D'Annunzio's use of the chorus as ''quotation,'' particularly in *The Dead City.* For Valesio, D'Annunzio realizes Nietzsche's insight that the spectator of tragedy does not see the dramatic action directly, but rather the vision of the action that the chorus creates. See *Gabriele d'Annunzio: The Dark Flame,* trans. Marilyn Migiel (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 47.

Lidless Eyes, Stony Places, Vibrant Spectators: Nietzschean Tragedy in Yeats's Lyric Poetry

John Burt Foster

Among the Anglo-Irish poet William Butler Yeats's literary and artistic contemporaries throughout Europe, Nietzsche's first book *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) often outranked the later ones from the 1880s, which Nietzsche had believed were intellectually more daring and more vividly expressive. Such was the case in nearby Austria almost immediately after the book was published, as William J. McGrath has shown; and Bernice Rosenthal has described a similar situation, at a further geographical and cultural distance, in tsarist Russia of the 1890s.[1] Both André Gide in France and Thomas Mann in Germany have also testified to the inspiring role *The Birth of Tragedy* played in their early careers around the turn of the century.[2] The situation with Yeats, at the far western edge of Europe, was different. Tragedy did become a crucial element in his plays, as Frances Nesbitt Oppel has discussed in detail;[3] but in his poetry, which is where Yeats's greatest and best-known writing is to be found, Nietzsche's impact was less direct and took effect more slowly. In the end, however, certain of his poems helped to channel one of Nietzsche's most arresting theses into the English-speaking world—the contention that at its core tragedy expresses Dionysian ecstasy or, in a well-known phrase of Yeats's, "tragic joy."[4]

This essay will explore Yeats's efforts as a poet to come to terms with the cluster of issues and motifs that surround this influential vision of tragedy. I will begin with some initial contacts that amount to lyric "translations" of Nietzsche, then consider an ensuing process of elaboration and reconfiguration, and end with a stage of conclusive implementation just before Yeats's death in 1939. What fascinated Yeats throughout this entire development was the philosopher's focus not just on tragic drama itself, nor even on the tragic

playwright, but on the *audience* for tragedy, where tragedy was understood both as an art form and, more broadly, as a historical or a cosmic-metaphysical spectacle. More specifically, Yeats was deeply impressed by the psychological paradox at the heart of Nietzsche's defense of what can be called a tonic theory of tragedy:[5] that tragedy's abrupt and piercing revelation of cosmic terror need not result in utter misery and hopelessness, but instead can create a compensatory mood of emotional vibrancy or ''fullness of life.'' Of course, few choices of word or image in the best poems by a poet of Yeats's stature can be traced back unambiguously to a single source; most such items involve, instead, the confluence of numerous experiences from many different sources and are thus by nature multifaceted. Still, it is clear that Nietzsche did hold a central place in the poet's intellectual and artistic outlook, to the point that Yeats could give him the honorific title of ''Forerunner'' in the psychological-historical system that he constructed for himself in *A Vision*.[6] Nietzschean threads do undeniably run through Yeats's work, though they often appear in close connection with other threads that lead in other directions, such as motifs from the poet's deep interests in Irish lore, the occult, or the visual arts.

In disentangling one such Nietzschean thread, this essay will focus on three key points in Yeats's career. A first, preliminary moment involves the growing but initially somewhat hesitant engagement with *The Birth of Tragedy* that surfaces in two short poems from the years just before 1914. Just a few years later, following the Irish Uprising of 1916 and then the end of World War I, several bolder and richer expressions of these attitudes appear in two major poems and spill over into Yeats's autobiography. Ultimately, however, Yeats's responses to Nietzsche undergo further shifts in emphasis that come to expression in two major lyrics from right before his death on the eve of World War II. But before we turn to the poetry, it will be necessary to discuss the nature of the poet's first encounter with Nietzsche's ideas, especially the question of whether at that point he even thought of tragedy as a major issue in this striking new philosophy.

I

A mood of intense excitement marked Yeats's first real experience of reading Nietzsche. In 1902 he received several of Nietzsche's books from John Quinn, an Irish-American lawyer from New York

City who much later became a patron of James Joyce and T. S. Eliot. Though the exact date of the letter reporting his reaction to these readings is uncertain, the enthusiasm with which Yeats wrote to Lady Augusta Gregory, his own patron and collaborator in founding an Irish national theater, is unmistakable: ''You have a rival in Nietzsche, that strong enchanter. I have read him so much that I have made my eyes bad again.''[7] Given Yeats's theater interests at the time, these words might prompt the assumption that he was already responding with enthusiasm to Nietzsche's eloquent calls for a rebirth of tragedy. This response would go beyond simply identifying with tragedy as a time-honored dramatic form; instead, it would acknowledge its supreme value as a complete vision or philosophy of human experience that would presumably be indispensable for any Irish cultural renaissance. *The Birth of Tragedy* could thus have been read as a manifesto lending strong support to Yeats's and Lady Gregory's theatrical mission in Ireland.

To evaluate such a recontextualization of *The Birth of Tragedy* in the spirit of Edward Said's notion of ''traveling theory,''[8] we would need to distinguish Yeats's situation in Ireland from Nietzsche's disenchantment with Bismarck's newly founded German Empire. Living after the fall of Charles Stewart Parnell, in an Ireland that was still British, Yeats read Nietzsche at a time in his country's history of bitterness and political demoralization, not of exuberant triumph, and was convinced that his country could surmount the current impasse only by concentrating on cultural creation. Calling for a revival of dormant artistic potentialities would obviously have to mean something different on the Irish than on the German side of the vast divide between turn-of-the-century empires or great powers and the smaller national groups under their rule or influence.[9] Yet, on balance, it seems unlikely that Nietzsche's book lay at the heart of Yeats's sense of exciting new possibilities during his reading binge in 1902, which, along with *Thus Spoke Zarathustra, A Genealogy of Morals,* and *The Case of Wagner,* included an anthology of selected passages called *Nietzsche as Critic, Philosopher, Poet and Prophet,* edited by Thomas Common. Not only is *The Birth of Tragedy* missing from this list, but, when Otto Bohlmann examined Yeats's heavily marked copy of the anthology, he found that the annotations avoided any direct emphasis on drama. Instead, all but one of Yeats's notes dealt with Nietzsche's later thought, with the section devoted to ''ethics'' receiving special attention.[10]

Indeed, Yeats's knowledge of *The Birth of Tragedy* at this time could

only have been indirect, since the book—paradoxically, given its wide popularity elsewhere—was one of Nietzsche's last to be translated into English; an English translation did not appear until 1909.[11] To be sure, as Yeats's recent biographer Roy Foster has pointed out, the poet's friend and onetime flat mate, the critic Arthur Symons, was the author of a short essay called ''Nietzsche on Tragedy.''[12] Yet even this source of information appeared only in 1902, being based on the French translation of *The Birth of Tragedy* that had been published just the year before. Though we shall see that Symons did mention a passage that casts light on how Yeats's first poems show some familiarity with Nietzsche's views on tragedy, on the whole his discussion amounted to little more than an admiring book review.

Yeats's initial interest in a collection of selected passages is significant, though, for it probably encouraged him to read Nietzsche in a manner that was in any case widespread among writers and artists. Many of these early readers liked to respond to Nietzsche's ideas in bits and pieces, with relatively little regard for the aims of any one book or for major changes in his thought. The nature of this first encounter does help explain why, as we shall see, Yeats's poetry often combines motifs from *The Birth of Tragedy* with ones from the much later reflections on tragedy that appear in *Twilight of the Idols* (1888).[13] The poetry also tends to emulate the explosively condensed, aphoristic force that characterizes that work as well as many others of the 1880s—in Nietzsche's words, their ''tremendous drive to bring out the main features''[14]—rather than the more discursive style of *The Birth of Tragedy*. On the whole, however, it was two other later books, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) and *A Genealogy of Morals* (1887), with their contrast between noble and resentment-laden states of being, that most impressed Yeats in 1902. At this moment of intense intellectual contact and transfer between thinker and writer, when the poet was more committed to the theater than at any other time in his career, *The Birth of Tragedy* is conspicuous by its absence. It seems the book did not make nearly as strong an impression on Yeats in Ireland in 1902 as it had already had in Austria or Russia, or that it was having on Gide and Mann, Yeats's somewhat younger contemporaries in France and Germany.

Granted, the late Nietzsche's discussions of noble morality can provide insight into the Yeatsian tragic hero, a line of inquiry that has been followed by Alex Zwerdling as well as by Oppel and Bohlman.[15] But with *The Birth of Tragedy,* when after a delay some insights

from that book did start to make themselves felt in the poetry (for Yeats wrote little poetry in the decade after 1902), it was Nietzsche's provocative position on the psychology of tragedy, along with his vivid way of expressing it, that had the most impressive results. As translated into Yeats's poetry, these ideas highlighted one special moment in the process of creating and staging a tragedy. Despite all of Yeats's direct experience with both activities, Nietzsche's primary impact did not fall on the tragic dramatist's act of writing the play, nor on the emotions projected by the actors. Instead, Yeats responded to Nietzsche's emphasis on the powerful feelings that tragedy can arouse in its audience, a topic addressed by the Aristotelian catharsis of pity and fear. With Nietzsche, however, consideration of the audience's response yields a different emotional dynamic, one that involves a figure that he calls, using italics for emphasis, ''*der ästhetische Zuhörer*''—the ''aesthetic listener.''

This idea is not fully developed until near the end of *The Birth of Tragedy,*[16] where the discussion has turned from Greek tragedy to Wagnerian opera. Since by this point Nietzsche is concerned with describing the music and libretto of *Tristan and Isolde,* and not with visualizing a stage performance, he rightly stresses the act of listening. It is a notably intense form of listening, moreover, since it results in the audience's nearly complete identification and even fusion with the artwork's creator, which, in evoking the young Nietzsche's own overwhelming regard for Wagner, seems to give it special artistic significance. Nietzsche can make a point of stating that ''the experiences of the truly aesthetic listener . . . bring to mind the tragic artist himself'' (*Birth of Tragedy,* 132 [22]). But earlier (56–57 [7]), in a passage that intrigued Symons, Nietzsche had ridiculed August Wilhelm Schlegel's similarly formulated but sharply contrasting concept of an *idealische Zuschauer,* which accounted for the Greek tragic chorus by invoking an ''ideal spectator.''[17] In mounting this critique Nietzsche relied on his now-famous interpretation of ancient Greek culture in terms of varied interactions between the mythic figures of Apollo and Dionysus. Thus, he could view the chorus as radically Dionysian by virtue both of its forming a group and of its reacting to the drama with visionary immediacy. The actual characters in Greek tragedy, however, because they had been so forcefully individualized, were aligned with the Apollinian tendency. At this point (*Birth of Tragedy,* 67 [9]), in order to show how the two principles can combine to produce great art, Nietzsche coins a metaphor that, in yet another application of his interpretive method,

brings out how the Apollinian clarity and precision of Sophocles' language are a necessary complement to the Dionysian terror and destruction in his tragic subject matter.

At one level the passage I am about to cite shows how, in combating Schlegel's theory of the chorus, Nietzsche begins to imagine spectators who share in the tragic artist's intensely painful cosmic awareness, for their response to the world portrayed in a tragic play parallels their alertness to the ''terrors'' pervading the universe as a whole. At another, stylistic level, however, the passage shows Nietzsche straining for poetic effect in his own writing,[18] in the spirit of his praise for figurative language just one section earlier in *The Birth of Tragedy*. For ''a genuine poet,'' he had remarked at that point, a metaphor is ''not a rhetorical figure but a vicarious image [*stellvertretendes Bild*] that he actually beholds in place of a concept'' (*Birth of Tragedy,* 63 [8]). In our passage, accordingly, when Nietzsche explains how the speeches of Sophocles' characters exert a compensatory psychological effect on their audience, he does so with a vivid image. This compensatory effect ''is just the opposite of a familiar optical phenomenon. When after a forceful attempt to gaze on the sun we turn away blinded, we see dark-colored spots before our eyes, as a cure, as it were. Conversely, the bright image projections of the Sophoclean hero . . . are necessary effects of a glance into the inside and terrors of nature; as it were, luminous spots to cure eyes damaged by gruesome night'' (67 [9]).[19]

Since plays appeal to eye and ear alike in performance, the glide in this passage from the audience for Sophocles' speeches to a spectator gazing at the sun is not overly important, though it does correspond, within *The Birth of Tragedy* as whole, to the slippage between the critique of Schlegel's ''ideal spectator'' and Nietzsche's final emphasis on an ''aesthetic listener.'' Still, the metaphor seems problematic in several other ways: the initial reliance on a reverse analogy to make a point that is complicated enough in its own right, the convoluted wordiness of an exposition that must then reverse the reversal, the unacknowledged and undefined relationship of these ''damaged eyes'' to Oedipus's self-inflicted blindness in Sophocles' most famous tragedy, and finally the counterintuitiveness of this closing reference to ''luminous spots to cure eyes damaged by gruesome night.'' Nonetheless the image of gazing directly at the sun is a memorable one. Its paradoxical tone looks ahead to the forcefulness of ''pessimism of *strength,*'' Nietzsche's much later slogan for the psychological state that underlies tragic art.[20] In addition, to the

extent that any image, even one in words, still presupposes some reference back to vision, an image based, like this one, on pushing the faculty of sight to its limits and beyond has an undeniable radical flair.

II

Despite Yeats's apparent lack of any direct contact with *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1902, by 1910 he seems to have begun a process of coming to terms with Nietzsche's book. It is revealing to place the ''luminous spots'' passage in dialogue with ''Upon a House Shaken by the Land Agitation,'' a twelve-line poem on Lady Gregory's country estate at Coole Park that was published in that year (*Poems,* 95–96). The topic of a great house has obvious implications for Yeats's interests in heroic nobility, but in seeking to disentangle a specifically tragic strand in his response to Nietzsche, we must concede that the poem's final lines, which honor ''a written speech / Wrought of high laughter, loveliness and ease,'' suggest an elegant comedy of manners more than Sophoclean tragedy. Yeats comes much closer to *The Birth of Tragedy* in the first of the poem's three pentameter quatrains, to the point of undertaking an apparent critical rewriting of the ''luminous spots'' metaphor. As a result, Nietzsche acquires, in the very texture of Yeats's poetry, that role of rival to Lady Gregory that was mentioned in the letter of 1902. Here is the quatrain:

> How should the world be luckier if this house,
> Where passion and precision have been one
> Time out of mind, became too ruinous
> To breed the lidless eye that loves the sun?

In the second line, the union of contrasts in ''passion and precision have been one'' could be a well-honed if overly psychologized epigram summarizing the interaction of Dionysus and Apollo as presented in *The Birth of Tragedy.* Certainly the next phrase, ''time out of mind,'' makes better sense when applied to Nietzsche's thoughts on pre-Socratic culture, with their long retrospective gaze back to the limits of the historical record, than to the much more recent and more fully documented issue of Anglo-Irish estates.

A particularly striking figure of speech comes at the end of the quatrain, with its fear lest the house become too ruinous: ''To breed

the lidless eye that loves the sun?'' The verb ''breed'' raises late Nietzschean issues related more closely to questions of nobility,[21] but if we pass over the irreverent and overly literal supposition that ''lidless eye'' might simply refer to garden statuary (which does figure in other Yeats poems on country houses, where the statues clearly have aristocratic connotations),[22] then this image suggests a Yeatsian version of the tragic spectator. Indeed, as an image it both sharpens and intensifies the one that Nietzsche created, in accordance with his philosopher's definition of poetic expression in terms of a ''vicarious image'' that can stand in for a concept. Editing out the double reversal in Nietzsche's exposition, Yeats envisions an identification with cosmic energy so total that he can propose gazing directly at the sun without even the natural shield of eyelids, the poem's equivalent for Nietzsche's reference to the automatic but familiar and less willfully exaggerated ''dark spots'' that supposedly protect the eyes. In the process, though, Yeats eliminates Nietzsche's cautionary sense of a basic disproportion between the cosmos and human nature, so that in *The Birth of Tragedy* full tragic awareness permits insight into an indifferent and indeed threatening universe while also giving some sense, however illusory, of the tragic artist's control over that fearsome subject matter. In this capacity to express or otherwise give shape to inhuman forces, tragic art can have a healing and revitalizing impact on its audience. Is Yeats's formulation in this poem tending toward a direct identification with the inhuman realm that trumps even Nietzsche's more emphatic attitude on returning to tragedy as a topic in *Twilight of the Idols* (530 [''Skirmishes,'' 24]), when he praises its communication of a ''state *without* fear in the face of the fearful and questionable'' (italics in original)? Perhaps. But Yeats's position in this poem could also be viewed in more moderate terms if we interpret ''loving the sun'' to imply not an unblinking Zarathustrian gaze that would quickly lead to blindness but simply a preference for the daylight world associated with Apollo in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Just two lines earlier, after all, it was Apollinian precision that had been brought to bear on Dionysian passion, rather than a reverse movement that would give some priority to the Dionysian. Nietzsche's own statements often suggest a full equivalence between the two powers, but on this issue Yeats tilts toward the Apollinian; he thus avoids the unqualified endorsement of the Dionysian that so many literary readers assumed was Nietzsche's basic message.

In the first line of the next quatrain, ''Upon a House'' goes on to

link the ''lidless eye'' to ''sweet laughing eagle thoughts,'' a phrase that might foreshadow the later Yeats's formula of ''tragic joy.'' Yeats was to make this paradoxical coinage his own, but of course it was anticipated by Nietzsche's sense in *The Birth of Tragedy* that ''the highest artistic primal joy'' (132 [22]) can persist in the face of tragic mutability. As we have seen, however, the note of laughter that is introduced at this point actually prepares for the mood of refined social comedy with which the poem ends. ''Tragic joy'' still remains in the deep background, as at most a dimly and fleetingly glimpsed possibility.

Yeats's decisive shift to full tragic awareness in Nietzsche's tonic sense will come three years later, in another short poem written with Lady Gregory in mind. This poem has an entirely different tempo: it has replaced the relative calm of the first poem's quatrains, with their alternating rhymes and long pentameter lines, with the breathless trimeter rhythm that William Blake had used in certain poems to convey gnomic wisdom. Blake had been rediscovered by Yeats in the 1890s, when he helped to edit several of Blake's so-called prophetic poems, and he eventually came to associate Blake with Nietzsche.[23] By the time of this poem, the Irish national theater had met with active hostility in the form of riots against John Millington Synge's *Playboy of the Western World,* and there had also been a public campaign mounted against a proposed gift of impressionist paintings by Lady Gregory's nephew Hugh Lane. Yeats responded by becoming deeply pessimistic about his dreams of Irish cultural revival. The prospect of tragedy had now come much closer to home: rather than envisioning a programmatic *Birth of Tragedy*–style renewal of Irish culture through the writing and production of tragedies, Yeats now had to consider the dismaying possibility that one's best efforts to spark cultural revival could be rejected, even vilified. Hence the poem's title, ''To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing'' (*Poems,* 109).

It is in the second half of this sixteen-line poem that Yeats evokes and images forth the tragic response:

> Bred to a harder thing
> Than Triumph, turn away
> And like a laughing string
> Whereon mad fingers play
> Amid a place of stone,
> Be secret and exult,

Because of all things known
That is most difficult.

Here tragedy is initially characterized as ''a harder thing / Than Triumph.'' ''Hard,'' of course, is a notorious late Nietzschean word;[24] but when used, as in this poem, in the wake of a defeat, it loses the troubling ambiguities that it could have had in a victorious German rather than a vanquished Irish context. Not that the word lacks important ambiguities even so, for as the poem continues, ''hard'' comes to suggest the world's harshness after a defeat, a primal cold indifference on the part of the cosmos, and the difficulty of summoning up a fitting response to both kinds of hardness. As a result, the remaining six lines of the poem split into two three-line units, the first leading up to the image of ''a place of stone,'' where the metaphor of stony hardness combines social rejection with metaphysical homelessness. The second three lines culminate with the poem's final, ringing affirmation, ''Because of all things known / That is most difficult.'' These words resonate with another of Nietzsche's pointed formulas for tragedy in *Twilight of the Idols:* ''Saying Yes to life even in its strangest and hardest problems'' (562 [''What I Owe to the Ancients,'' 5]).

At stake in these final lines is an early expression of Yeatsian tragic joy. ''To a Friend'' had begun, in its second line, by offering the advice to ''Be secret and take defeat,'' which seemed to advocate a dejected acceptance of one's isolation in failure. But these words have turned by line 14 into a self-proclaimed and self-empowering ''most difficult'' challenge of ''Be secret and exult.'' This new imperative transforms dejection into a mood-reversing resurgence of energy. However, whatever substance this hard-won psychic wisdom gains from the excited rhythm of the gnomic three-beat line is outweighed by the complex image presented in the immediately preceding lines. This exultation, we are told, has been born from the spirit of music, for it is rooted in a psychic state that resembles ''a laughing string / Whereon mad fingers play / Amid a place of stone.'' The ''mad fingers,'' in addition to deepening the harshness of the ''place of stone'' by evoking a musician at one with that inhuman world, may also allude to Nietzsche himself in his final years, left hopelessly insane following his breakdown in Turin in 1889. That this metaphysical madness can be transformed to laughter through the vibrancy of a stringed instrument not only comes closer to actually naming tragic joy, but also moves Yeats nearer to Nietz-

sche's theory of the healing, even life-enhancing, potential of tragic art.

Written just a year before World War I, ''To a Friend'' might leave the impression of a certain naïveté, given the upheavals on the horizon, unless one reads an allusion to Irish history into its return to the notion of breeding. For could Yeats really mean Lady Gregory and her environment of genteel leisure when he begins the second half of the poem with ''Bred to a harder thing / Than triumph''? Suggesting more than nobility as a social class, ''bred'' here would seem to connote a broad, deeply felt, and committed historical and cultural identification with one's own society in its frustrations and defeats. Such an attitude could see past facile political slogans to grasp how these ''harder'' experiences could indeed make one's world a ''place of stone.'' Breeding would thus imply the inbred fortitude of character that permits one to be a clear-eyed spectator not of a triumphant but of a tragic history, an attitude that would overturn the common saying, ''History is written by the victors.'' As a result, ''Be secret and exult'' can eventually serve not just as a watchword for rejected artists or philosophers, as in ''To a Friend,'' but as the summons to a potential audience. We are at the threshold of ''We that look on but laugh in tragic joy'' (293), the attitude of the implied spectators in ''The Gyres'' (the Yeats poem of the late 1930s mentioned in note 4), who are watching not just a play, but also history and human life itself. The coming events in both Europe and Ireland would soon furnish a far greater tragic spectacle than the poet could imagine in 1913.

Yeats probably never read Nietzsche in German, but even so, the perspectives on *The Birth of Tragedy* presented in these two poems have involved three different kinds of translation beyond the purely linguistic—namely, the movement from a German cultural and political context in the 1870s and 1880s to a British and Irish one some three decades later, the shift from a philosophical language of concepts to a literary one of images that was begun to some extent by Nietzsche but taken much further in Yeats, and a parallel but distinct shift from the sentence rhythms of prose to more complicated poetic rhythms involving line, meter, and rhyme scheme as well as sentence structure. On the basis of these initial indications of Yeats's response to *The Birth of Tragedy,* the rest of this essay will follow several paths of reconfiguration and final implementation involving some of Yeats's most famous works from during and after World War I, and then from just before World War II. Discussion will focus on

the increasingly emphatic replacement of a comic vision by a tragic one, on the more sharply detailed images of stony places that for Yeats evoke the cosmic terror at the core of tragedy, and on Yeats's further elaboration of the Nietzschean ideal of a spectator capable of emotional vibrancy in response to terror.

III

''High laughter,'' we recall, gave way in the two Lady Gregory poems to ''a harder thing / Than Triumph,'' and Yeats's well-known poem on the Irish insurrection, ''Easter 1916,'' takes a similar path. It opens by evoking a thoughtless, farcical world incapable even of high comedy, one ''where motley is worn.'' The death, execution, or imprisonment of the insurrectionists famously instills this obsequious court-jester world of comedy with ''terrible beauty,'' the phrase that returns refrainlike at the end of three of the poem's four parts. Thus, the first part ends as follows, in a trimeter format that seems to stumble hesitantly in contrast to the rapid, almost manic pace of ''To a Friend'':

> Being certain that they and I
> But lived where motley is worn:
> All changed, changed utterly:
> A terrible beauty is born.
>
> (*Poems,* 180)

In their dominant meaning these words show Yeats's ambivalence toward the sudden emergence of a soon-to-be compelling patriotic myth. But surely they gain added force from Nietzsche's reorientation of the psychological basis for tragedy, away from the Aristotelian combination of pity and fear (Nietzsche's doubts about pity are already apparent in *The Birth of Tragedy* and are later stridently driven home by his many attacks on this emotional affect) and toward a focus instead exclusively on terror.[25] Terror can then become the metaphysical foundation for an aesthetics in which art provokes an existential about-face following a confrontation with this primal negativity. Moreover, the point of view in ''Easter 1916'' belongs, in a metaphorical sense, to neither actor nor playwright (Yeats had not been told of plans for the insurrection and only much later would wonder, recalling one of his Irish revival works,

''Did that play of mine send out / Certain men the English shot?'').[26] The poet speaks rather as a startled spectator who can react to events only after they have occurred. And when in the fourth stanza this observer of history contemplates the insurrectionists' lives and, in recalling how devotion to conspiratorial politics might have stunted their humanity, states that ''Too long a sacrifice / Can make a stone of the heart'' (*Poems,* lines 57–58), he has further qualified the already qualified endorsement of hardness in ''To a Friend.'' If the cultural controversies from before the war had sharpened Yeats's eye for tragedy, the advent of real political violence cut deeper still, to the point that he had to separate the metaphysical terror at the origins of tragic art from the psychic consequences of internalizing such intimations of ruthlessness, which he had seen could result in political terrorism.

A similar abrupt shift from comic to tragic vision marks the most elaborate part of Yeats's *Autobiography,* called ''The Trembling of the Veil.'' This segment covers his young manhood from 1887 to 1896, or roughly from age twenty-one to thirty. He originally wrote it as a personal confession, intended for himself alone, in the same year as ''Easter 1916''[27] but then completely rewrote the draft for publication in the early 1920s. Among many other changes, this later version of ''Trembling'' gives a much greater role to tragedy. It is here, for example, that Yeats coins his highly Nietzschean maxim on how insight into life's harshness can lead to a tonic heightening of vital energies: ''We have begun to live when we have conceived life as tragedy.''[28]

The fourth of ''Trembling'''s five chapters, significantly called ''The Tragic Generation,'' opens with a vignette of George Bernard Shaw as the ultimate comic dramatist. Yeats recalls the successful premiere of *Arms and the Man* and his own mixed feelings toward the play, then remembers his ultimate visionary response: a nightmare in which he ''was haunted by a sewing machine, that clicked and shone, but the incredible thing was that the machine smiled, smiled perpetually.''[29] The chapter's many other vignettes, however, chronicle the tragic fates of the poets, artists, and mystical seekers whom Yeats had known in the 1890s. The most telling portrait is one of Oscar Wilde amid the libel trials that destroyed him at the height of his success as a playwright. This scandal epitomized the great shift in attitude, because if, for Yeats, Wilde resembled his Anglo-Irish rival George Bernard Shaw in winning great fame as a comedian, he had now fallen into ''the hands of those dramatists who understand

nothing but tragedy.''[30] Indeed, when he remembers a meeting with Wilde at that time, Yeats retells a story of his that seemed to distill Wilde's mood; and for Yeats that mood consisted precisely of ''terrible beauty.''[31] The temporal ambiguity of autobiographical writing, placed between the time being written about and the time of actual composition, makes it difficult to decide whether Yeats is projecting back into the 1890s the ideas about tragedy that he only really formulated in ''Easter 1916,'' or it was those fin-de-siècle experiences that prepared for the ideas. Whatever the case, around the turn of the century Wilde and Nietzsche were often linked with each other; however, they were usually seen as aesthetes, and not (as Yeats was beginning to understand) as forerunners of a tragic vision that would abruptly displace a more superficial comic attitude.

Yeats brings home the image of the ''stony place'' by giving it both a new eloquence and a more directly personal application in his elegy for Lady Gregory's son, an aviator killed near the end of World War I. Yeats begins this long, twelve-stanza poem with vignettes of three other dead friends, among them John Synge, whose life can be considered doubly tragic: not only did he die young of tuberculosis, but he also wrote tragedies for Yeats's theater. Yeats pays tribute to Synge in the elaborate eight-line stanza that he developed for this elegy, which moves adeptly between pentameter and tetrameter lines while shifting from two initial couplets to the lingering closure of a CDDC rhyme:

> And that enquiring man John Synge comes next,
> That dying chose the living world for text
> And never could have rested in the tomb
> But that, long travelling, he had come
> Towards nightfall upon certain set apart
> In a most desolate stony place,
> Toward nightfall upon a race
> Passionate and simple like his heart.
>
> (*Poems,* 133, lines 25–32)

In evoking Synge's career as a playwright with the line, ''That dying chose the living world for text,'' Yeats has coined another formula in which tragic circumstances and tragic art affirm life in the spirit of his ''We have begun to live'' aphorism. The poem then evokes Synge's western world on Ireland's austere Atlantic coast, which by then had become Yeats's home as well. The ''stony place'' as a harsh existential setting chimes with the advancing night of

Synge's premature death to call forth, with even greater emphasis, a compensatory force of ''passionate and simple'' feeling. Though it is ''most desolate'' stone that has evoked this attitude, the vitality and spontaneity of this heartfelt emotion clearly differ from the potential stonyheartedness that troubled the poet in ''Easter 1916.'' Compensatory vibrancy is an entirely different psychological process from a dehumanizing internalization of cosmic terror.

The second half of the elegy, which pays tribute to Gregory himself, includes a stanza that presents a more detailed and concrete image of Ireland's western world. It does so by addressing its subject's activities as a landscape painter while identifying their essential spirit with Yeats himself:

> We dreamed that a great painter had been born
> To cold Clare rock and Galway rock and thorn,
> To that stern colour and that delicate line
> That are our secret discipline
> Wherein the gazing heart doubles her might.
> (*Poems*, 134, lines 65–69)

Frank Kermode has praised this poem as ''perhaps the first in which we hear the full range of the poet's voice,''[32] and in these lines that voice addresses the ''secret discipline'' of tragic fortitude. Notice, as a development from ''Upon a House,'' how the movement from ''cold'' and ''stern'' to ''delicate'' in the epithets describing the thorny, rock-strewn landscape sharpens our sense of what is involved in the transition from passion to precision in the earlier poem. If the surroundings now are unambiguously harsh, without the former tinge of exuberance or high spirits, the delicacy of the form-giving response allows for sensitivity and nuance as well as for a precise clarity. The phrase ''gazing heart'' is even more suggestive: not only does it once again spotlight the tragic spectator, but here the tragic scene does not merely enhance ''life'' in the vitalistic spirit of Yeats's autobiographical aphorism. Instead, it is the ''heart,'' with its richer connotations of courage and emotional integrity, that is strengthened—the heart that might have otherwise been hardened by ''terrible beauty.''

IV

Two late poems, written in an awareness of old age and international crisis just before the poet's death in 1939, elaborate still fur-

ther on the motifs of stony metaphysical terror and vibrant tragic spectatorship while revisiting the Nietzschean image of light-bedazzled eyes. ''Man and the Echo'' places an old man in another ''place of stone,'' specifically a rocky ''cleft'' that at once mocks and enigmatically echoes the man's questions about his past life and future destiny. Even this ''rocky voice'' falls silent at the end, however, leaving the poem's closing words to the man:

> O rocky voice,
> Shall we in that great night rejoice?
> What do we know but that we face
> One another in this place?
> But hush, for I have lost the theme,
> Its joy or night seem but a dream;
> Up there some hawk or owl has struck
> Dropping out of sky or rock,
> A stricken rabbit is crying out
> And its cry distracts my thought.
>
> (*Poems,* 346, lines 37–46)

Though the man's first question—''Shall we in that great night rejoice?''—seems to allude to tragic affirmation, whatever reply the echo might have given is drowned out by a natural event nearby. The rabbit's violent death might seem to evoke primal cosmic terror or, more narrowly, a Darwinian struggle for existence, but the speaker does not in the end identify with the predatory ''hawk or owl.'' Instead, it is the cry of the ''stricken rabbit'' that distracts his thought (as well as scrambling the precision of his rhymes, which connect ''struck'' with ''rock'' and ''out'' with ''thought''). Does this distraction signal, in addition to sympathetic care for the victim and perhaps even a touch of the pity Nietzsche had so vehemently criticized, some final inability to accept the doctrine of tragic joy? We might recall at this point Nietzsche's ringing phrase in *The Birth of Tragedy* on how Greek tragedy made it possible for audiences to bear nature's cruelty: ''[A]rt saves him, and through art—life'' (59 [7]). If so, are we meant to feel, with a certain sense of shock, that the compensatory powers of artistic creativity have stopped dead? Yet we must also allow for the final and perhaps decisive irony that ''Man and the Echo'' is itself a poem.

''Lapis Lazuli,'' the other late poem, is one of Yeats's boldest aesthetic statements, since it is both interartistic (encompassing poetry, drama, painting, sculpture, and music) and intercultural, ranging

from Shakespeare and ancient Greece to premodern China. Two moments in this complex five-part poem deserve emphasis. One involves the ending, which zooms in on three elderly Chinese men carved on the piece of lapis lazuli of Yeats's title. Yeats imagines them in a scene that is suggested but not actually shown on this new ''place of stone'':

> . . . and I
> Delight to imagine them seated there;
> There, on the mountain and the sky,
> On all the tragic scene they stare.
> One asks for mournful melodies;
> Accomplished fingers begin to play.
> Their eyes mid many wrinkles, their eyes,
> Their ancient, glittering eyes, are gay.
> (*Poems*, 295, lines 49–56)

Rather than simply being on their way to a halfway house on a mountainside, as the carving actually portrays the men, in the poet's imagination the men have already reached their goal and are looking out around them: ''There, on the mountain and the sky, / On all the tragic scene they stare.'' The poem's last image—''Their eyes mid many wrinkles, their eyes / Their ancient, glittering eyes, are gay''—with ''eyes'' appearing three times to include each man as well as to provide emphasis, ends ''Lapis Lazuli'' by underlining the vibrancy of these tragic spectators. Although the poet also imagines one of the men playing ''mournful music,'' this detail does not mean that Yeats has tried to replicate Nietzsche's final position in *The Birth of Tragedy,* with its ''aesthetic listener'' entranced by *Tristan and Isolde.* Yeats's awareness of the arts of ancient China suggests broader cultural horizons than Nietzsche's enthusiasm for Wagner and ancient Greece or, more fleetingly, for the Indian origins of the Dionysus cult. As the son of a painter and as someone who had himself gone to an art school, moreover, Yeats was more attuned than Nietzsche to the visual arts. Hence he closes not with listeners, but with spectators and staring eyes, and with images in both the literal sense of a stone carving and the figurative one of the imagined picture that this carving has summoned up.

In the poem's second section, Yeats treats drama itself as an art form:

> All perform their tragic play,
> There struts Hamlet, there is Lear,

That's Ophelia, that Cordelia;
Yet they, should the last scene be there,
The great stage curtain about to drop,
If worthy their prominent part in the play,
Do not break up their lines to weep.
They know that Hamlet and Lear are gay;
Gaiety transforming all that dread.
All men have aimed at, found and lost;
Black out; Heaven blazing into the head:
Tragedy wrought to its uttermost.

(*Poems*, 294, lines 9–20)

In preparation for the culminating ''black out'' image in this passage, Yeats has already invoked Shakespearean tragedy's capacity to affirm emotional vibrancy in grim circumstances: ''They know that Hamlet and Lear are gay; / Gaiety transfiguring all that dread.'' These lines speak explicitly of the actors, the ''they'' who perform the Shakespearean roles, then less directly of the playwright who created Hamlet and Lear as having the capacity to maintain emotional vigor in adversity. But the underlying theatrical perspective in this part of the poem still lies with the spectator, in the sense of people at large, for the speaker at the outset stresses that ''All perform their tragic play'' and goes on to anticipate the dropping of a ''great stage curtain'' that is generally existential, not just literally theatrical.

However, to bring home how tragic gaiety can transfigure dread, this poet-spectator cuts abruptly and eloquently to a complex set of juxtaposed images that respond, *Guernica*-like, to the panicked intimation of aerial bombardment, ''Aeroplane and Zeppelin will come out'' (294, line 6), that opened this poem of the late 1930s: ''All men have aimed at, found and lost; / Black out; Heaven blazing into the head: / Tragedy wrought to its uttermost.'' As an intuition of cultural achievements that have ''come to nothing'' much more drastically than Yeats's grand hopes for the Irish National Theatre, the ''black out'' image resonates on several levels: as a standard precaution against air raids, as the familiar ''lights out'' in a theater, as death itself in either cultural or personal terms. At the same time, moreover, this abruptly alternating dark-light image of tragedy at ''its uttermost'' replicates, in a telescoped array of settings that are all less contrived than the corresponding situation in *The Birth of Tragedy,* with its spectatorial scenario of ''luminous spots'' that appear before the eyes to counter ''gruesome night.'' In Yeats, how-

ever, the polysemy of the image also makes it deeply ambiguous, for if in a theater the ''black out'' at the end of a tragic play is followed by an initially dazzling but ultimately reassuring return to well-lit normal reality, in an air raid it is the darkness that is protective and the ''blazing heavens'' of falling bombs that bring terror. Or, in a third, even more emphatic option, but in a searching spirit of metaphysical interrogation rather than of affirmation, the ''black out'' of an entire culture or of life itself is followed by the blinding advent, beyond all powers of human vision, of ''Heaven blazing.'' In this inflection of the image, there can be no doubt that the ''lidless eye'' of ''Upon a House'' will be gazing directly at a sunlike brilliance. But to revert to the question left hanging in ''Man and the Echo,'' would any eye, in such great light, be capable of anything so humanly definite as the capacity to rejoice?

Hence, even as tragic joy keeps its vibrancy in Yeats's later poems despite the deepening crises of Western history and the afflictions of old age, it is clouded by wisps of uncertainty and caution. No such second thoughts were apparent in Nietzsche, who unlike Yeats was never forced to submit his doctrines to the tests of mortality and historical catastrophe. Indeed, in the wake of his harshest challenge, the madness that struck him at age forty-four shortly after he returned to the topic of tragedy in *Twilight of the Idols,* Nietzsche was no longer in a position to inform anyone whether he still considered tragedy to be a ''Yes to life,'' even in its ''hardest problems.'' Yeats, in starting to respond to this doctrine in his own mid-forties, had sought to make good on this silence by affirming that even ''mad fingers'' could create the ''laughing string'' of compensatory art. But after 1914, as Irish and European history turned tragic with a vengeance, and as Yeats came to feel more deeply both his own and his culture's mortality, he modified this stance. If Nietzsche, in disputing Aristotle's analysis of the tragic spectator's emotions, had sharpened fear into terror and banished pity, then Yeats, as he faced stony hardness and blinding light with a Nietzschean ecstasy in distress, put new emphasis on conscientious self-examination and fullness of heart. Even while he transmitted this vision of tragedy to the English-speaking world with memorable poetic intensity, Yeats went beyond Nietzsche by bearing witness to the harshness both of the poet's much harsher age and of old age itself, and also by affirming the values of personal warmth and self-scrutiny.

Notes

1. See William J. McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974); and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, ed., *Nietzsche in Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).

2. For details on Gide's and Mann's response to *The Birth of Tragedy,* see John Burt Foster, Jr., ''From Nietzsche to the Savage God: An Early Appropriation by the Young Gide and Mann,'' in *Heirs to Dionysus: A Nietzschean Current in Literary Modernism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 145–79.

3. See Frances Nesbitt Oppel, *Mask and Tragedy: Yeats and Nietzsche, 1902–1910* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987).

4. This phrase figures prominently in ''The Gyres,'' a poem of the late 1930s: ''We that look on but laugh in tragic joy.'' See William Butler Yeats, *The Poems: A New Edition,* ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Macmillan, 1983), 293. Subsequent references to Yeats's poems are keyed to this edition and will be given in parentheses following the citation.

5. In a note written late in his career and not published until after his death in 1900, Nietzsche himself used this term to describe his vision of tragedy: ''dass, die Tragödie ein *tonicum* ist'' [tragedy is a *tonic*] (aphorism 851, in *The Will to Power,* trans. Walter Kaufmann and Richard J. Hollingdale, ed. Walter Kaufmann [New York: Random House, 1967]; italics in the original). For an account of John Dewey's aesthetics, which in much the same spirit stresses that ''the art of tragedy [is] tonic and exhilarating rather than depressing,'' see Henry David Aiken, ''American Pragmatism Reconsidered III: John Dewey,'' *Commentary* 34, no. 4 (October 1962): 339.

6. William Butler Yeats, *A Vision* (1938; reissued with the author's final revisions, New York: Macmillan, 1956), 126–29. An earlier version of this book appeared in 1926.

7. Yeats to Lady Gregory, September 26(?), 1902, in *The Letters of W. B. Yeats,* ed. Allan Wade (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 379.

8. See Edward W. Said, ''Traveling Theory,'' in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 226–47. Said draws attention to how theoretical or philosophical discourse, with its seemingly general validity, can actually vary quite drastically in meaning when applied in different historical or cultural contexts.

9. Especially among foreign readers, it was easy to forget the significance of the fact that when Nietzsche wrote *The Birth of Tragedy* he was living in Basel, Switzerland, rather than in Germany.

10. Otto Bohlmann, *Yeats and Nietzsche: An Exploration of Major Nietzschean Echoes in the Writings of William Butler Yeats* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1982), 2.

11. See the table showing the first translations of Nietzsche's works into both English and French given by David Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England, 1890–1914: The Growth of a Reputation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), x. This book also includes a careful and informative chapter titled ''The English Translations of Nietzsche'' (17–52).

12. R. W. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life,* vol. 1: *The Apprentice Mage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 272. The essay in question is Arthur Symons, ''Nietzsche on Tragedy,'' in *Plays, Acting and Music: A Book of Theory* (New York: Dutton, 1909),

11–16. According to Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England,* 319, the essay originally appeared in *Academy* 63 (August 30, 1902): 220.

13. *Twilight of the Idols* was actually one of the first of Nietzsche's books to appear in English, having been translated in 1896 (Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England,* x). As a result, Yeats's earliest firsthand impressions of Nietzsche's ideas on tragedy might well have come not from *The Birth of Tragedy,* but from the brief but powerfully expressive comments that appear in *Twilight.* These comments were made some two years after Nietzsche reread and critiqued *Birth* in preparation for its republication in 1886, and they can give the impression of being the kind of vivid, comprehensive thesis statement that the earlier book often seems to lack.

14. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols,* in *The Portable Nietzsche,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1954), 518 [''Skirmishes,'' 8]. Subsequent references to this book will appear parenthetically in the main text. Because Nietzsche's works are available in so many different editions, references to them will include both the page numbers from Kaufmann translations and then, in brackets, the unit titles and/or section numbers provided by Nietzsche himself.

15. Alex Zwerdling, *Yeats and the Heroic Ideal* (New York: New York University Press, 1965).

16. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy,* in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968), 133 [22]. Subsequent references to this book will appear parenthetically in the main text.

17. Symons (''Nietzsche on Tragedy,'' 12) had drawn attention to this very passage. In addition to bringing out Nietzsche's interest in the psychodynamics of a properly attuned spectator, the essay comments on the Apollo-Dionysus duality, on the famous assertion that ''existence and the world seem justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon,'' and on Nietzsche's ''astonishing figures of speech'' (16). Symons's prime example of this figurative language, however, is not the one that will be examined later in this essay, but rather Nietzsche's proposal, near the end of *The Birth of Tragedy,* to ''imagine dissonance become man'' (143 [25]).

18. In looking back at *The Birth of Tragedy* in the ''Attempt at a Self-Criticism'' of 1886 that now prefaces the original text, Nietzsche would call it ''image-mad and image-confused'' (*Birth of Tragedy,* 19 [''Attempt,'' 3]).

19. Paul de Man has cited this passage, putting the emphasis on the complexity of Nietzsche's own rhetorical practice rather than on the passage's potential influence on other writers; see *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 93.

20. Italics in the original. This phrase appears in *Birth of Tragedy,* 17 (''Attempt,'' 1).

21. See especially the notorious unit titled ''Discipline and Breeding,'' the fourth and final section in *The Will to Power.* This title was actually assigned by Nietzsche's sister in the course of editing this book after his death, but her decision to emphasize this topic was not entirely arbitrary.

22. See especially the somewhat pejorative lines from the ''Ancestral Houses'' section of ''Meditations in Time of Civil War,'' which evoke ''all Juno from an urn displays / Before the indifferent garden deities'' (Yeats, *Poems,* 201, lines 27–28).

23. In the 1902 letter to Lady Gregory, for example, Yeats could remark that ''Nietzsche completes Blake and has the same roots.''

24. See, e.g., the final words of *Twilight of the Idols,* 563 (''The Hammer Speaks''),

which are themselves quoted from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra:* ''This new tablet, O my brothers, I place over you: become hard.''

25. Silk and Stern emphasize that, although Aristotelian *phobos* is best translated as fear, many German discussions of tragedy used *Schreck* (terror) instead of *Furcht* (fear). See M. S. Silk and J. P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 298, 306.

26. Yeats, ''Man and the Echo,'' in *Poems,* 345, lines 11–12.

27. For this version, see Yeats, ''Autobiography,'' in *Memoirs,* transcribed and edited by Denis Donoghue (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 19–134.

28. Yeats, *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats* (1916; reprint, New York: Macmillan, 1965), 128.

29. Ibid., 188.

30. Ibid., 190.

31. Ibid.

32. J. Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (1957; New York: Vintage, 1964), 30.

Groundlessness: Nietzsche and Russian Concepts of Tragic Philosophy

Edith W. Clowes

> We who have yet to find our place, who are eternally seeking, full of anxiety [*trevoga*], who understand the meaning of tragedy—we must take account of the questions that [Shestov] has articulated so pointedly.
>
> —Berdiaev, ''Tragedy and the Everyday''

AN ''EXISTENTIALIST'' CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY AS TRAGEDY EMERGED IN early twentieth-century Russian philosophy, in part through a creative interaction with Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. The first philosophical work to define the concept was Lev Shestov's pathbreaking *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche: A Philosophy of Tragedy* (1902). Although Shestov (1866–1938) is Russia's most important tragic philosopher, this approach reverberated in the works of the Christian existentialist Nikolai Berdiaev (1874–1948) and in the works from the 1920s and 1930s of Aleksei Losev, the last philosopher of the Russian Renaissance; and, surprisingly, they echoed faintly in the 1980s in the lectures of the most original and magnetic of late-Soviet-era philosophers, Merab Mamardashvili. This essay examines the tragic aspect of Russian philosophy as it developed in the twentieth century, particularly in its relationship to Nietzsche's founding concept of the Dionysian, developed in his first work, *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Shestov generated his concept of ''philosophy as tragedy'' in response to writers and speculative philosophers—Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche—and through his ongoing critique of Kant. This kind of philosophy was oriented toward a personal quest for, in some cases, self-knowledge, and in others, ''self-creation.'' Rejecting post-Kantian metaphysics, it criticizes systematic knowledge. Inspired to a great extent by Nietzsche's style of philosophizing, Shestov's philosophy as tragedy was not meant to teach or to certify truth,

but to probe and articulate the most personal, difficult, and paradoxical human experiences of the good and the true. The tragic aspect of tragic philosophy could be found in the image of the philosopher as seeker after wisdom and risk taker, an adventurer willing to confront horrifying aspects of human nature that do not fit into a neat order. This ''Dionysian'' figure Shestov depicted as the boldest, most deeply truthful and spiritually penetrating sort of person, who walks the edge of the existential abyss, probing first and final questions about the meaning and purpose of life, questions that in the end cannot be answered.

The Russian reception of *The Birth of Tragedy* started in the 1890s with the older symbolist, Dmitry Merezhkovsky, who in his historical novels *Julian the Apostate* (1895) and *Leonardo da Vinci* (1900) and his pathbreaking study *Tolstoi and Dostoevsky* (1900) responded to Nietzsche's hope for cultural rebirth. Viacheslav Ivanov, the major theorist of the younger generation of Russian symbolists, and the two most famous symbolists, Andrei Belyi and Aleksandr Blok, offered a much deeper response to *The Birth of Tragedy*. Ivanov, who had studied in Europe for long years under the famous historian of antiquity Theodore Mommsen, discovered *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1891 and gradually in response to Nietzsche developed an original study in which he drew parallels between ancient cults of Dionysus and the Passion of Christ. He made a stunning debut in Paris and St. Petersburg in 1903 with a series of lectures entitled ''On the Hellenic Religion of the Suffering God.''[1] Another essential introduction to concepts from Nietzsche's first work was Shestov's third book, *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche: A Philosophy of Tragedy,* published in 1902.

All these intellectuals first read *The Birth of Tragedy* in German, typically while traveling in Europe in the 1890s.[2] The first Russian translation, by N. N. Polilov, titled *Proiskhozhdenie tragedii* (*The Origin of Tragedy*), appeared in 1899. It was followed by others repeating the same inaccurate title in 1900 and 1902, and a reprint of the first was issued in 1903. A serious and accurate translation appeared only in 1912 as part of a planned collected works of Nietzsche, edited by the famous classicist F. F. Zelinsky and the philosopher Semyon Frank.[3]

For philosophers, the later works of Nietzsche have typically been of greater importance than *The Birth of Tragedy,* particularly the concept of the superman in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and Nietzsche's critique of moral value in *On the Genealogy of Morals* and *Beyond Good and Evil.*[4] Nevertheless, for the important line of development in Russian philosophy, which Shestov called ''tragic philosophy,'' *The*

Birth of Tragedy was a crucial text. Nietzschean concepts of the Apollinian and particularly the Dionysian gained widespread currency in both Shestov's and Berdiaev's writing. In Losev's work the close link between philosophical seeking and music that underpins Nietzsche's work would find further emphasis. And the conceptual inclusion of tragedy in the philosophical economy was apparent throughout in a number of ways. We see it in the image and voice of the philosopher as those of a wise man rather than a scientist, in the chronotope of philosophy as consciousness on the edge of the unknowable, and in the master plot of philosophy as vital, existential risk-taking. Together with a concurrent reception of Dostoevsky, Shakespeare, and Ibsen, Nietzsche would prove to be a strong stimulus.

Shestov first discovered Nietzsche in the mid-1890s while living in Germany. The young economist turned literary critic read Nietzsche first in 1895 and more intensely in 1896.[5] What exactly he read and when we do not know, although the textual evidence from his own first writings gives ample evidence that he was familiar with *The Birth of Tragedy* as well as with Nietzsche's middle and late works, particularly *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* Shestov's second and third books, *Tolstoi's and Nietzsche's Concept of the Good: Philosophy and Proselytizing* (1899) and *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche,* respectively, attest to the fact that Nietzsche occupied center stage in Shestov's thinking of this time. Although Nietzsche presented Shestov with serious challenges, Shestov's efforts to work through Nietzsche's thought produced brilliant results and instantly put Shestov in great demand as a critic and a thinker.[6] Almost a decade later, in 1908, no less a critic than Ivanov-Razumnik claimed that Shestov's interpretation of Nietzsche was still the best to be had. The young student of Hüsserl, Gustav Shpet, writing to an acquaintance in 1912, recommended Shestov's thought as ''exceptionally outstanding.'' Shpet added that Shestov ''is very difficult to understand, not because he writes badly but because of his special way of drawing negative conclusions, which most people take for skepticism and pessimism.'' Meanwhile, Shpet concluded, there is ''no person more in search of or more desirous of the truth'' than Shestov.[7]

Shestov uses ideas from *The Birth of Tragedy* in a number of places and links them directly to his idea of philosophy as tragedy. In Nietzsche, he wrote in *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche,* art is understood as a ''deliberate [*umyshlennyi*] falsification of reality, [and] the same devices are recommended for philosophy. Otherwise, it is impossible to

bear the horror and coldness of isolation'' (*Izbrannye,* 265).[8] Shestov brackets this conceptualization, doubting that falsification really helps in the long run. Still, Nietzsche remains central to the task of defining philosophy as tragedy: ''Nietzsche not only does not try to purge life of what is mystifying, difficult, and tormenting, but he seeks these things. In the laws of nature, in order, in science, positivism, and idealism are the guarantee of unhappiness; in the horrors of life is the guarantee of the future. Such is the ground for the philosophy of tragedy; it is the result of the skepticism and pessimism that so scared Kant in his time and which everyone, each in a different way, avoids like the plague'' (*Izbrannye,* 316).

Tragedy held a particular attraction for Shestov from the very beginning of his philosophical career. Even in the late 1880s and early 1890s, when he was immersed in his first book, a study of Shakespeare and Kant, he called Shakespeare the tragedian ''my first philosophy teacher.''[9] Shakespeare's view of human existence, Shestov argued, was much more profound than that of Kant, who ''tried and succeeded in caulking up the chinks of existence for centuries to come.''[10]

The real defining moment for Shestov's concept of tragic philosophy comes, of course, in *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche.* He views *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche* as an attempt to explore what will become his particular approach to philosophy, ''tragic philosophy.'' Philosophy as tragedy focuses on those issues in life that philosophers traditionally avoid confronting. In contrast to systematic philosophy, tragic philosophy is based on an acknowledgment of the actual horror and chaos of life. Shestov argues that ''laws—all of them—have a regulatory meaning and are useful to a person who is in search of rest and support. But the first and vital condition of life is lawlessness. Laws are sleep that fortifies. Lawlessness is creative activity'' (*Izbrannye,* 404). Although metaphysicians, system builders, and scientists try to articulate axioms, rules, and laws, deeper philosophical experience has to do with phenomena and feelings that are not ''average'' or ''typical,'' that do not lend themselves to regularization and normalization.

In his departure from established philosophical norms Shestov relies heavily upon the experiences of Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, whose approach to speculative thought he views as pathbreaking. Their visions are ''underground'' visions that acknowledge the role in thought played by suffering, illness, and life on the edge of the normal. Responding to personal illness—and in Dostoevsky's case,

the experience of prison—they both counter the normative views of metaphysicians, materialists, and empirical scientists with frank insight into the horror of life: ''The wisdom of official wise men has always viewed suffering as something absurd, meaningless, and essentially unnecessary, that one should avoid at all costs'' (*Izbrannye,* 320). For both Dostoevsky and Nietzsche the gateway into philosophy is metaphysical hopelessness.

Indeed, confronting despair is the key strength of the Dionysian tragic philosopher. As Shestov writes in *Great Vigils* (1911), the philosopher is attracted ''to what is unsolved, to mystery—not because we want to resolve . . . to comprehend mystery, or in a word, to understand, to order life. We need to turn away from understanding and to fall in love with horror and disorder.''[11] Implied here is a juxtaposition of something akin to the concepts of the form-making Apollinian and the chaotic, suffering Dionysian that lie at the heart of Nietzsche's concept of tragedy. What is more, the tragic philosopher has to accept ridicule from the people around him. In his most famous and original prerevolutionary work, *The Apotheosis of Groundlessness* (1905), Shestov generalizes: ''A philosopher is compelled to doubt, doubt, doubt and only then to ask, when no one else is asking, running the risk of becoming the laughingstock of the crowd'' (*Izbrannye,* 464). He must doubt even when doubting and confronting horror seems absurd and foolish to everyone around him.

Tragic philosophy offers Shestov a basis for tearing down what are in his view the utterly false cloud palaces of systematic metaphysics. This claim to philosophical ''truth,'' Shestov writes, is ''just called 'truth' to make it seem more binding'' (*Izbrannye,* 373). Philosophical ''logic,'' the building blocks of persuasive argument, Shestov believes, should never be celebrated as a goal in itself (*Izbrannye,* 398). He asserts and reasserts the greater ''reality'' and ''vitality'' of disorderly thought: ''Unfinished, disorderly, chaotic thoughts that do not lead to goals already posited by reason, contradictory as life itself—aren't these closer to our heart than systems . . . the creators of which were less concerned with apprehending reality than with 'understanding' it?'' (*Izbrannye,* 331–32).

In *Apotheosis of Groundlessness* Shestov beautifully summarizes his project of philosophy as tragedy, and specifically the crucial metaphysical concept of ''groundlessness'':

> Risking the wrath of readers and particularly critics who, it stands to reason, want to see in the violation of traditional form nothing more than

> a strange whimsy, [I decided] to put forth my work in the form of a series of externally unconnected thoughts. . . . There is no idea, there are no ideas, there is no consistency, there are contradictions, but that is precisely what I was after, as the reader may have already guessed from the title. Groundlessness, even the apotheosis of groundlessness, . . . my whole purpose was once and for all to get rid of all kinds of beginnings and ends that had been forced on us with such unfathomable tenacity by all possible founders of philosophical systems, both great and small. (*Izbrannye,* 330–31)

In a discussion of *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche* and *The Apotheosis of Groundlessness,* Nikolai Berdiaev called Shestov a "very significant symptom of the split character [dvoistvennost] of contemporary culture." He suggested that Shestov had articulated the anxieties of the time, something that other thinkers had avoided: "[W]e, who have yet to find our place, who are eternally seeking, full of anxiety [trevoga], who understand the meaning of tragedy—we must take account of the questions that [Shestov] has articulated so pointedly."[12] Berdiaev and others would echo aspects of tragic philosophy that Shestov had first explored.

In contrast to Shestov, Berdiaev's philosophical style was epic in its breadth and in its concern with establishing a more secure sociocultural position for and the historical legacy of speculative philosophy.[13] Although Berdiaev started his intellectual career as a Marxist, at the end of his life he called himself a "Dionysian philosopher." He claimed that this epithet derived not so much from Nietzsche as from an innate quality of his own character. Like the god Dionysus, he claimed in his autobiography, *Knowing Myself,* he could "experience moments of ecstasy."[14] Already this choice of emphasis on ecstasy rather than horror shows Berdiaev's relative unwillingness to ponder the unresolved spiritual and psychological paradoxes of human existence.

Berdiaev's discovery of Nietzsche started with reading Shestov's books.[15] In Paris in 1938, a long way from and many years after the philosophical disputes in St. Petersburg and Moscow, Berdiaev admitted privately to Shestov that "Dostoevsky and Nietzsche played a much larger role in my life than Schelling and German idealism."[16] And in *Knowing Myself* Berdiaev said that he felt very close to Shestov's themes of "existential communion [*obshchenie*] [and] the search for the meaning of life."[17]

In the heat of the moment, in the early 1900s, although he was

loath directly to acknowledge such indebtedness, he did embrace the concept of tragedy as a legitimate part of philosophy. In ''Tragedy and the Everyday,'' a review of *The Apotheosis of Groundlessness,* Berdiaev immediately bracketed Shestov's work as an ''idiosyncratic gnoseological utopia.''[18] On one hand, in contrast to Shestov, he held to the quite untragic idea of philosophy as the process of imposing harmony and order on existence (*Filosofia tvorchestva,* 2:236). On the other, he went to some length to redefine tragedy in a way that could fit his own concept of philosophizing as a creative act: tragedy, he wrote, ''can . . . arise from an excess of creative powers and from too great risk taking, and the positive thirst of the superhuman and supernatural'' (228). Berdiaev summoned his readers to ''revaluate all moral values on the basis of the philosophy of tragedy (238). The difference between his own use of tragedy and Shestov's was Berdiaev's belief in a (rather Apollinian) form of ''transcendent individualism.'' Berdiaev challenged Shestov to find the ''link between tragedy as he [Shestov] understands it, and the transcendent existence [*bytie*] of the individual self'' (241). It is in moral torment, Berdiaev argued, that a person seeks his higher self. For Berdiaev there was a chance for the ''happy ending'' of actually finding that transcendent self and of experiencing ecstasy, of knowing ''one's individual predestination [*prednaznachenie*] in the world,'' while for Shestov there was only endless seeking without the guarantee of absolute truth (239).

During his philosophical career of more than forty years Berdiaev redefined philosophy as an epic project, not personal, intense, and tormented in tone but broad in scope, oriented outward toward history and society. In the arena of Russian social debate, and most pointedly in the philosophical compendium *Landmarks* (*Vekhi,* 1909), Berdiaev systematically took on other, better established politically active thinkers—first the populist Nikolai Mikhailovsky, then Marxist radicals of all sorts. Later he wrote a trenchant philosophical critique of the whole radical tradition in *The Origin of Russian Communism* (1937). Berdiaev was concerned to unseat what he felt to be narrow-minded radical ideologues from their place at the head of the table of Russian public discourse. Through a series of critical philosophical biographies of nineteenth-century Russian thinkers and an important history of Russian philosophy, *The Russian Idea,* he situated Russian philosophy in its own idiosyncratic tradition. In contrast to Shestov's, Berdiaev's philosophizing was marked by a strongly utopian sensibility. Berdiaev believed that Russia was mov-

ing toward a new social order, and he wanted to be sure that speculative philosophy left a significant imprint on the moral outlook of the new society (245).

Despite his strongly epic philosophizing, Berdiaev still found a place for tragedy in philosophy. This concept of tragedy lacked that edgy sense of taking philosophical risks before one's readers and oneself that one senses in both Nietzsche and Shestov. In a number of places Berdiaev used the term ''Dionysian'' without really clarifying what he meant. In what he considered his first real philosophical work, *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (1914), Berdiaev developed the idea that the world was about to enter a new phase of monumental human creativity in which new heights of self-transfiguration could be reached. Humanity had experienced an ancient epoch of ''law,'' during which values were imposed on people, followed by an epoch of ''grace,'' when people internalized the value of duty to society. Now, Berdiaev argued, humanity was entering a modern period of creative transfiguration symbolized by some combination of Christian and Dionysian passions: ''Creative Dionysism is Dionysism transfigured, which has gone through law and redemption and joined with Apollinism'' (256). Berdiaev was ever concerned in his philosophical writings to stress the final ''beautiful'' form, not the tormented process of searching and probing.

There were two notable Soviet-era echoes of the idea of tragic philosophy. The first was the philosophy of Aleksei Losev. First openly during the relatively permissive atmosphere of the 1920s and then in his private writings during the darkly murderous Stalin years of the 1930s, Losev probed the tragic confrontation of philosophical ratiocination and musical expression. Educated as a classicist and philosopher, Losev saw music and philosophy in what might best be called a mystical-gnostic framework. Music expressed the ''meon'' or lowest, most chaotic (and also sensual) aspect of cosmic essence. In this frame the philosopher seeks to impose order and meaning on the elemental chaos of the world and is destroyed in the process. This concept of the philosopher emerged first in Losev's study on the philosophy of music, *Music as a Subject for Logic* (1927) and then, once his philosophical activities had been silenced by a stint in a labor camp in the early 1930s, in unpublished novellas such as ''The Chaikovsky Trio'' and ''The Woman Thinker.''

In all these works, whether philosophical or artistic, music becomes the greatest challenge to philosophical thought, because it expresses depths of being that are inaccessible to the rational mind.

Musical performance ends up being much more powerful than philosophical, logical performance, and the philosopher succumbs to the force of the musician. His logical faculties are overwhelmed by music's emotional power. Losev follows the lead of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, both of whom viewed music as the most profound art. In *Music as a Subject for Logic,* Losev describes music as an ''ocean'' and says it is from the ''alogical musical element'' that ''logos and myth are born.''[19]

In his writing Losev tried, and failed, to resolve the tension between music and philosophy that Nietzsche confronts in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Dionysian tragedy, founded on music, fosters a pessimistic form of wisdom, crushing the hubris of human logic. Socrates opens an optimistic, scientific form of thinking while repressing in himself the power of music. For both Nietzsche and Losev music is an expression of something primal and subrational. While for Nietzsche music expresses primal suffering and terror, for Losev it communicates a cosmic level of chaotic being that suppresses verbal, logical articulation.

For Nietzsche music is the powerful generator of the tragic text, which itself conveys the deepest values of a culture. Analytical philosophy, in Nietzsche's view, is deeply inimical to the tragic spirit of music. During Socrates' time, he argues, the dramatist Euripides shifted the focus of tragedy from Dionysian horror, transgression, and the subsequent shattering of the illusion of the integral moral self to mere melodrama. Nietzsche holds Socrates responsible.

The result in Losev's works is quite the opposite. Philosophical discourse acknowledges its own inability to penetrate the profound suffering and chaos at the heart of great music. Just as the philosopher is incapable of apprehending more than the technician in the pianist—is incapable of seeing the complex, suffering human spirit—so the tools of philosophy can help only to analyze form and cannot penetrate the deeper essence of that dark, chaotic being that informs music. With Losev, Nietzsche's hope for a new tragic culture after the failure of scientific optimism finds new expression, but no resolution of conflicting elements. If anything, Losev, whose style of philosophizing is very technical, sharpens the contrasts.

The idea of tragic philosophy has enjoyed greater longevity in Russian thought than might be expected, given that during the Soviet era all speculative thought was, in the words of one contemporary thinker, ''murdered.''[20] In the 1980s the lectures and writings of the academic philosopher Merab Mamardashvili, best known for

reopening the philosophical dialogue about Descartes in Russia, show some late-Soviet echoes of Shestov and Berdiaev. Mamardashvili, somewhat like his predecessors three generations removed, attached high value to literary fiction as an important location of philosophical insight. Although a semiofficial philosopher with a turgid writing style, when speaking he could electrify his audiences. During the free years of perestroika in the 1980s he moved to his hometown of Tbilisi, Georgia, and engaged in a lecture project of rethinking philosophy from the ground up. His lectures, colorlessly titled ''Introduction to Philosophy,'' threw out the old Marxist-Leninist dogma and, drawing in part on a newly rediscovered prerevolutionary body of philosophy, presented philosophy as an intensely personal process. Here we find some distant echoes of a tragic view of philosophy. For example, in a lecture entitled ''Philosophy and Freedom'' (1987), Mamardashvili remarks that because the language of philosophy is ''paradoxical, [in that] it relates to what we cannot in principle know,'' it follows that philosophy is rather a form of ''wisdom [*mudrost'*]'' than of ''knowledge [*znanie*].''[21] In other lectures from this course, he repeats the idea that philosophy is possible only after one has ''crossed the edge of despair''; only then does a ''tragic process of making sense [*osmyslenie*] begin.''[22]

What ideas presented here interact significantly with the fundamental ideas of *The Birth of Tragedy?* First, with Shestov we find an image of the philosopher wholly opposed to the figure of Socrates that Nietzsche criticizes for the first of many times in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Genuine philosophizing is informed by a sense of existential horror and hopelessness at the consciousness that one's most deeply cherished truths are probably groundless (*Izbrannye,* 171, 219). This attitude fits better with the tragedies of Oedipus or Prometheus and their arrival at wisdom than with the rationalizing project of Socrates. And it was this approach that stuck with a number of gifted philosophical minds of the early twentieth century. In a letter from July 1912, the young philosopher Gustav Shpet wrote: ''When a person starts to fear whether her philosophy is deeply true [*istinna*]—that is the moment when the genuine search for truth starts, and her life . . . becomes the life of a philosopher.''[23]

Although neither Shestov nor Berdiaev mentioned the notion of transgression of moral norms as part of the new insight tragedy brings (in fact, Shestov was careful to argue with this aspect of Nietzsche's thought—largely because he was sure that his younger readers would rebel and try something inappropriate), Shestov in

particular stressed the idea that genuine philosophy is predicated upon extraordinary experience and upon existence on the periphery of the ''city'' of normal human life. As he writes in *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche:* ''Everyday life among everyday people produces everyday philosophy! And who can guarantee that people need precisely *that* philosophy? Maybe, in order to acquire truth, you need to free yourself of the everyday? So that penal servitude not only does not overturn 'convictions' but *justifies* them; and real, true philosophy is a philosophy of penal servitude'' (*Izbrannye,* 222; italics in original). Certainly the image of penal servitude comes from Dostoevsky, but the sentiment also works well with Nietzsche.

It should be said that Shestov's chief inspirations in his project of tragic philosophy were the Dostoevsky who emerged from the camps and the older Nietzsche who struggled with illness. On the whole, his work is less inspired by the early Nietzsche than by the late works. Nonetheless, his and Berdiaev's terminology and their concepts of tragedy certainly have roots in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Finally, for Shestov, as to a degree for Losev, philosophizing involves a process of peeling away the conventions of systematic thought to contemplate the inexplicable chaos of human experience. Here, finally, is the strongest parallel to Nietzsche's concept of the Dionysian and its effect of imparting greater spiritual and psychological depth to the more clearly perceptible ''masks,'' the forms and fictions of the Apollinian.

Notes

1. Edith W. Clowes, *The Revolution of Moral Consciousness: Nietzsche in Russian Literature, 1890–1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1988), 136–38.

2. See Fedor Stepun, *Mystische Weltschau* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1964), 202; Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, ''Nietzsche in Russia: The Case of Merezhkovskii,'' *Slavic Review* 3 (1974): 429–52.

3. Richard D. Davies, ''Nietzsche in Russia, 1892–1917: A Preliminary Bibliography,'' part 1, *Germano-Slavica* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1976): 107–46; part 2, *Germano-Slavica* 2, no. 3 (Spring 1977): 201–20. Notes on these translations are to be found on pp. 121, 125, 136, and 140 of part 1 and p. 217 of part 2. This bibliography reappears, with some corrections, in Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, ed., *Nietzsche in Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 355–92.

4. For more information on reception of Nietzsche among Russian philosophers, particularly Shestov, see Iu. V. Sineokaia, ''V mire net nichego nevozmozhnogo,'' in *Fridrikh Nitsshe i filosofiia v Rossii* (St. Petersburg: Russkii khristianskii gumanitarnyi institut, 1999), 75–85; Bernice Rosenthal, *New Myth, New World: Fried-*

rich Nietzsche to Stalinism (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 51–67.

5. Natal'ia Baranova-Shestova, *Zhizn' L'va Shestova,* 2 vols. (Paris: La Presse Libre, 1983), vol. 1, 31.

6. Lev Shestov, *Izbrannye sochineniia* (Selected Works) (Moscow: Renessans, 1993), 476. Further citation of these works of Shestov will appear in the text after the relevant quotation as *Izbrannye.*

7. Gustav Shpet, letter to N. Guchkova, *Nachala* 3 (1993): 39. Here and elsewhere, unless otherwise noted, all translations into English are my own.

8. It is important to realize the intermingling of Dostoevskian vocabulary and concepts with those of Nietzsche in Shestov's thinking. The word that Shestov uses to speak of art, *umyshlennyi* (intentional), is the famous word that Dostoevsky uses in *Notes from the Underground* to describe the peculiar ontological status of the capital of the Russian empire, St. Petersburg, a planned city that Peter the Great for military reasons built on a swamp.

9. Baranova-Shestova, *Zhizn' L'va Shestova,* vol. 1, 15.

10. Ibid.

11. Lev Shestov, *Sobranie sochinenii,* 6 vols. (St. Petersburg: Shipovnik, 1911), 6:16.

12. Nikolai Berdiaev, ''Tragediia i obydennost','' *Voprosy zhizni* 3 (1905), quoted in A. V. Akhutin, ''Odinokii myslitel','' in *Sochineniia v 2-kh tomakh,* by Lev Shestov (Moscow: Nauka, 1993), 1:3.

13. For more on this question, see Edith W. Clowes, *Fiction's Overcoat: Russian Literary Culture and the Question of Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 182–207.

14. Berdiaev, *Samopoznanie* (Moscow: Kniga, 1991), 142.

15. Ibid., 141.

16. Baranova-Shestova, *Zhizn' L'va Shestova,* vol. 1, 194.

17. Berdiaev, *Samopoznanie,* 141.

18. Nikolai Berdiaev, *Filosofiia tvorchestva, kul'tury i iskusstva,* 2 vols. (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1994), 2:282. Further citation of this work will appear in the text.

19. Aleksei Losev, *Muzyka kak predmet logiki,* in *Samoe samo* (Moscow: Eksmo-Press, 1999), 697.

20. Klaus-Dieter Eichler and Ulrich Johannes Schneider, eds., *Russische Philosophie im 20. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1996), 58.

21. Merab Mamardashvili, *Kak ia ponimaiu filosofiiu,* 2nd ed. (Moscow: Progress-Kul'tura, 1992), 367.

22. Merab Mamardashvili, *Moi opyt netipichen* (St. Petersburg: Azbuka, 2000), 79.

23. Shpet, letter, 45.

''The Gods Are Evil'': Tragedy and the Holocaust in Weil's *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof*

Bettina Kaibach

If one takes a close look at the Czech reception of Nietzsche, one can see that for some time literature played a far more crucial role than academic philosophy in conveying the complexities of Nietzsche's thinking to the Czech public. Although university philosophers tended to take a somewhat superficial view on Nietzsche, based on popular prejudice rather than sound analysis, it is in the work of poets, novelists, and literary critics that we find a deeper, more adequate understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy. Thus, even a level-headed thinker such as Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937), founding father of Czechoslovakia and professor of philosophy, denounced Nietzsche not only as a propagator of antidemocratic and antihumanitarian ideas, but also as a German nationalist who allegedly helped prepare the ground for the vicious pan-German ''racial mysticism'' of later decades. Masaryk's view was by no means exceptional. On the contrary, it was representative of contemporary opinion, which saw Nietzsche primarily as an advocate of ruthless individualism and founder of a superman cult, and which liked to emphasize the ''Teutonic'' nature of his thinking.[1]

One of the first writers to offer a more subtle reading of Nietzsche was the symbolist poet Otokar Březina (1868–1929). The life-affirming Zarathustra became an essential source of inspiration for Březina's own struggle to overcome decadence. But while Březina welcomed Zarathustra's unconditional affirmation of life, he repudiated the idea that was at the core of Nietzsche's tragic thinking—his model of the eternal return of the same.[2] It was the influential literary critic František Xaver Šalda (1867–1937) who not only recognized the fundamental importance of the tragic for Nietzsche's philosophy, but also based his own critical activity on a tragic outlook on life that was deeply influenced by Nietzsche.[3] Not least because of Šalda's

Nietzscheanism, the impact of Nietzsche's thinking on Czech literature was felt long after the Nietzsche reception among the Czechs had reached its peak in the works of fin-de-siècle writers such as Otokar Březina, Josef Svatopluk Machar, and Ladislav Klíma, as well as in those of their successors S. K. Neumann and Fráňa Šrámek, who around 1910 began to propagate a cult of life strongly indebted to Nietzsche. Nietzschean themes and motifs can be found well into the 1930s and 1940s in the works of poets as different as Vítězslav Nezval (1900–1958), Jan Zahradníček (1905–60), or Vladimír Holan (1905–80).[4] With the communist takeover in February 1948, however, the differentiated Nietzsche reception initiated by Březina and Šalda was cut off abruptly. In postwar Czechoslovakia, as elsewhere in Stalinist Eastern Europe, Nietzsche was officially labeled a reactionary thinker and a forerunner of Nazism.[5]

One would expect that a communist writer such as Jiří Weil (1900–1959) would take just such an ideological, simplistic approach to Nietzsche's thinking. Weil started out as an ardent believer in the Russian Revolution and was the editor of a Czech anthology of Soviet revolutionary poetry. In 1933, he went to work as a translator in Moscow, where for reasons yet to be cleared up he was expelled from the party and exiled to Central Asia. His novel *Moskva—Hranice* (*Moscow: The Border,* 1937) was one of the first literary accounts of Stalinist terror.[6] It was not forgotten by the Czech Communist Party. In 1949, after Weil had published his novel *Život s hvězdou* (*Life with a Star*), he became persona non grata in communist Czechoslovakia and for seven years was banned from publishing.

Despite these experiences, Weil remained true to his communist ideals. He does not, however, seem to have adopted the distorted view of Nietzsche as "prophet of base power" and "father . . . of German fascism" prescribed by Stalinist critics such as Zdeněk Nejedlý or Georg Lukács, who presented Nietzsche as a direct forerunner of Nazism.[7] In his response to Nietzsche's thought, Weil proved to be a pupil of his university teacher Šalda rather than of Lukács or Nejedlý.[8] Like Šalda, Weil reads Nietzsche primarily as a philosopher of tragedy. This will be shown in the analysis here of Weil's last novel, *Na střeše je Mendelssohn* (*Mendelssohn Is On the Roof*) (published posthumously in 1960), which is set in Prague during the German occupation and, like most of Weil's postwar works, deals with the suffering of the Czech Jews under the Nazi regime.[9] (Weil himself barely escaped the Holocaust; all other members of his family were killed.)

Mendelssohn Is On the Roof is an intricate web of interwoven episodes that render an almost panoramic view of life in occupied Prague. Most of the novel's characters and events are fictional: pious Dr. Rabinovich and young Richard Reisinger, who are both threatened by deportation to Terezín, as well as the two Jewish children who try to survive the war in a hideout, to give but a few examples. There are, however, some fictionalized characterizations of historical figures, such as the Reichsprotektor Reinhard Heydrich, whose assassination by Czech resistance fighters in spring 1942 is of central importance in the novel, or the chief elder of the Jews in Terezín. The numerous strands of the plot center around an episode from which the title of the book is taken: a high-ranking Nazi official takes offense at the statue of the composer Felix Mendelssohn on the roof of the Rudolfinum, Prague's concert hall, because Mendelssohn came from a Jewish family. His decision to have the statue removed affects the lives of most major characters of the novel.

Weil's novel abounds with allusions to Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy,* a fact that has been curiously overlooked by scholars. The novel constitutes in part a critical dialogue with Nietzsche's book on tragedy. Indeed, the imagery of *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* suggests that Weil's concept of a tragic culture is based on the dichotomy of Dionysian versus Apollinian so essential to Nietzsche's understanding of tragedy. Nietzsche's opposition of the arts of sculpture and music, joined in tragedy, is essential to an understanding of Weil's novel. However, Weil does not merely adopt Nietzsche's solution to the problem of tragedy, but under the impact of the Holocaust submits it to an implicit criticism, reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's objections to *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Like *The Birth of Tragedy* Weil's novel is an attempt to come to terms with the moral outrageousness or *skandalon* that the Greek concept of the tragic presents to a morality based on Platonic-Christian ideals. At the core of Weil's understanding of the tragic lies the diabolical mechanism by which the Nazis forced their Jewish victims to organize their own extermination, thus becoming guilty while innocent. Weil himself had firsthand experience of the Jews' involuntary involvement in the Nazis' politics of annihilation. In occupied Prague, he was forced to catalog stolen Jewish artifacts for the Nazis until he was summoned to register for his transport to Terezín. Weil escaped by faking suicide and had to spend the rest of the war in hiding.

Weil's novel contains an intricate phenomenology of this "guilt of the guiltless," with conspicuous parallels to the "theology of wickedness,"[10] which, according to Paul Ricoeur, lies at the very basis of the Greek concept of tragedy. Weil had long been familiar with this concept. In 1937, he used a passage from Sophocles' tragedy *Philoctetes* as the epigraph for his novel *The Wooden Spoon,* which is based on Weil's experience of exile in Central Asia. The passage ends with the phrase "the gods are evil."[11]

Guilty while Innocent: The Tragic as an Ethical Dilemma

"When the wrath of the daemons attacks a man, . . . it begins by taking away his understanding and inclining him to the worse judgement, so that he is not aware of his own errors."[12] Lycurgus's famous dictum maintains that the tragic concept of guilt is based on a "theology of wickedness" (Ricoeur) fundamentally opposed to later notions of justice. Guilt in the tragic sense is synonymous with divine temptation, a temporary insanity or blindness caused by the gods (*ate*).[13] The tragic hero does not fail of his own volition; he is prompted by a demonic deity who deliberately and under false pretenses deceives him into seeking his own ruin. He is therefore punished for something that at least to our minds is not at all his fault. The tragic concept of guilt acknowledges neither mitigating circumstances nor diminished responsibility: the modern criminal who seeks remission of punishment by claiming to have committed his deed at Satan's command is conceivable only within the frame of a later, nontragic concept of guilt. The tragic hero does eventually grasp that he has been hoodwinked; he is able to see himself as a victim of divine malice. This does not mean, however, that he feels in any way exonerated. His guilt may have been inflicted on him externally, but it is still his own guilt, and he accepts death as appropriate.[14]

Although the tragic concept of guilt runs counter to an ethos that cares less for the act than for motive or intent, tragic fate proves highly repugnant to a self-image based on the assertion of free will. A "necessity that more or less rules out freedom [of will] is no longer compatible with our sentiments," writes Goethe about ancient tragedy.[15] As Walter Otto pointed out, free will is indeed a notion utterly foreign to the tragic.[16] The tragic permits only necessity,

whether as personified force or as blind agency. It is founded on a theology ''of predestination to evil'' from which freedom has been largely eliminated.[17]

A merely passive endurance of fate cannot be called tragic in the strict sense of the word, as Paul Ricoeur rightly observes.[18] The absolutely tragic, as it appears in tragedy, generates tension from the collision of necessity with a hero who, at least temporarily, dares to resist this necessity. Without these ''dialectics of fate and freedom'' there would be neither action nor tragedy.[19] They are at the same time the essential precondition for tragic pity. These dialectics also imply, however, that, at least temporarily, divine and human guilt are disentangled from each other instead of being knotted up into one inseparable whole. For a time, the human being bears sole responsibility for his or her deeds, before this momentary freedom is again crushed by fate.[20]

It has become evident that the problem of the tragic is ultimately of a religious nature.[21] Human beings, as presented in tragedy, find themselves in the clutches of a fundamentally evil transcendency; they become sport to a malevolent power seeking to annihilate them. According to George Steiner, absolute tragedy is the ''performative mode of despair'': ''[I]ts declaratory terms are 'nothing' and 'never.' '' The absolutely tragic is a deeply ''negative ontology,'' according to which we are guilty a priori—that is, guilty merely because we exist: our ''generation and birth are nothing but idiotic provocations to pain and betrayal.''[22]

Ricoeur emphasizes that the theology that lies at the basis of tragedy itself categorically precludes any kind of redemption. Whenever redemption does emerge in a tragedy, ''it always proceeds by substituting some other religious schema and not by resolving the internal tensions that issue from the tragic schema itself.''[23] If we reverse this argument, it leads us to the conclusion that absolute tragedy can never take root in the soil of Judaeo-Christian eschatology, nor in a modern secular utopia.[24] Where there is hope and promise, the tragic has been overcome ''from the outside,'' its internal contradictions remaining unsolved.

The tragic resists moral interpretation. The common assumption that the tragic hero sins on account of his hubris misses the essence of tragedy. It posits a later notion of justice in which tragic fate is no longer the result of vicious attacks by a malevolent deity but is instead seen as rightful punishment for the hero's undue presumption. With respect to ancient tragedy the reverse is true, as Ricoeur

emphasizes: by no means does human hubris arouse divine jealousy (*phtonos*). On the contrary, hubris is originally evoked by *phtonos,* since it provides the gods with a pretext for striking against their mortal foes.[25] Similarly, in an attempt to rescue the notion of free will, the philosophy of tragedy for a long time interpreted tragic conflict in moral terms. It was not divine malice that set off the tragic conflict, but a collision of two equally justified ethics.[26] If we adopt this view, however, we abandon the sphere of the tragic. It makes the tragic more palatable but inevitably distorts it past recognition.

For the psychoanalyst Léon Wurmser, tragedy teaches us precisely that human existence is inevitably based on conflict.[27] However hard we try, there is no way of escaping guilt. Fate is never just. We can at best only endeavor to fathom its underlying laws; our quest for justice will always remain futile. This modern perception of the tragic does not attempt to evade the contradictions inherent in the tragic by submitting them to a nontragic perspective, nor does it try to solve these contradictions. One has to face up to the unbearable aspects of tragedy, to endure and even welcome them. This view has its roots in Nietzsche's philosophy. Nietzsche's concept of tragedy proceeds precisely from his insight into how utterly unacceptable the tragic must appear to our moral consciousness. The world of tragedy is a world of scandalous injustice. Morality fails in the presence of the tragic. From this Nietzsche draws his famous conclusion that "only as aesthetic phenomenon are existence and the world eternally justified."[28] This oft-quoted statement does not mean that in art the world is justified, whereas otherwise it is not. What Nietzsche has in mind is that in art—namely in Attic tragedy—the fundamentally tragic character of the world reveals itself in a manner that makes the unbearable appear worthwhile and even desirable. Hence art makes us fit for life, which without it would only lead us to utter despair.

The fact that Nietzsche submits the entire world and life in general to this aesthetic point of view could easily suggest that cruelty and suffering, too, are reduced to merely aesthetic phenomena. Does this not imply a downright invitation to sadism and atrocity, which are fully justified by their aesthetic appeal, not only on the stage, but in life itself? This difficult question of whether Nietzsche's concept of tragedy does indeed permit such a conclusion cannot be answered here. It should be pointed out, however, that *The Birth of Tragedy* deals primarily not with suffering inflicted by human beings,

but with the fundamental cruelty of nature itself, which eventually destroys whatever it has previously produced.

Walter Benjamin's criticism of Nietzsche focuses on a different aspect of his thinking. Benjamin concedes that it was Nietzsche who finally freed tragedy from the stereotyped morality that for a long enough time had obscured the true nature of the tragic.[29] He argues, however, that by approaching the issue from a purely aesthetic angle, Nietzsche not only ignored the historical condition of Greek tragedy, he also neglected the moral problem that lies at the core of this particular genre, namely the problem of guilt.[30] In Benjamin's view, Greek tragedy marks the transition from pagan to moral existence. The tragic fate of the hero, who bears his ruin silently and without resistance, is in fact a mute but nonetheless powerful accusation against the gods, for it is they who in the end prove to be the true culprits. The hero's death is a sacrificial death: by bringing to light the gods' injustice it prepares the ground for their final overthrow. It is thus one last tribute to a power whose days are already numbered.[31] For Benjamin, Greek tragedy is therefore a genre of prophecy: by portraying the tragic, it foretells its downfall.[32] The power of the evil gods is indeed affirmed by the outcome of tragedy, but there is a note of protest in this affirmation, a call for justice, that clearly transcends the domain of the tragic.

Justice and the Judgment of Paris: Elements of the Tragic in *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof*

The problem of justice is the central issue of Greek tragedy.[33] It is also central to Weil's novel, although here it appears at first in an utterly nontragic sense. The prologue to *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* recounts the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha; ''because they were just,'' they were the only human beings who survived a deluge sent by Zeus. In their despair the old couple, no longer able to ''people the earth,'' turn to Themida, the goddess of justice. Their appeal is heard: from stones, which they are told to cast behind themselves, a new human generation is brought to life.[34] The prologue of Weil's novel thus leads us into a world where there is no room for the tragic. It is a world ruled by gods not always benevolent, yet fair and reliable in their actions. In this world, it pays to act in a manner pleasing to the gods, while sins are inevitably punished. The relation between crime and punishment is absolutely transparent and there-

fore reasonable. Not accidentally, however, this world is limited to the mythical sphere of the prologue, clearly set off from the actual plot of the novel. In the first chapter, we are confronted with a reality of an altogether different kind: that of Prague under German occupation. The reign of the new rulers is founded not on justice, but on arbitrary power. The disaster that befalls the citizens of Prague follows laws totally inscrutable; it seems in fact devoid of any causality at all. This holds particularly true for the Jews. Weil depicts their situation as a gruesome enactment of the absolutely tragic, as Steiner and Ricoeur described it.

Although in the prologue catastrophe comes as punishment for an actual crime or general depravity, the Jews of Prague are prosecuted for merely existing.[35] Theirs is an offense for which there is only one penalty: they must be annihilated. As in ancient tragedy, here, too, the ''tragic counterforce'' has two faces.[36] In *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* it appears both as a personified power and as impersonal, blind necessity. On the one hand, fate operates in the shape of the Nazis, who persecute their victims with a destructive energy worthy of the Greek gods. On the other hand, it manifests itself in the ''anonymous'' resolutions of the Wannsee Conference, the infamous meeting of high-ranking Nazi officials in January 1942 that officially informed the German bureaucracy of the regime's plans to exterminate all of European Jewry. Its diagrams, statistics, quotas, and figures form a quasi-abstract necessity that with seeming inevitability leads the Jews to their doom. Of course, Weil was aware of the fact that the ''final solution'' was a ''human'' plan carried out by human beings. It is significant, however, that in *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* he never actually calls the Wannsee Conference by name. It is always the ''secret conference'' or simply ''the conference.''[37] With this Kafkaesque technique Weil creates the impression that what is at work here is in fact some kind of impersonal, supernatural force. In *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* even Reinhard Heydrich, one of the key figures in planning the genocide of the Jews, sees himself as but a temporary agent of this eerie power. His last thought after the successful attempt on his life is for the briefcase with the plan of the ''final solution'' in it, which he always carries with him. His own death is irrelevant so long the briefcase can be handed on to someone who will continue its work of destruction. This bizarre ''relay race'' illustrates more than anything the seemingly impersonal nature of the ''great plan,'' which is carried out with unyielding consequence to the very end.

In Weil's book, we are confronted with the problem of tragic guilt, the consequence of which is capital punishment, despite the fact that the ''defendant's'' crime has been imposed by a superior power. The Jews in *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* are victims of an insidious delusion clearly reminiscent of tragic blindness (*ate*). The plan of the final solution is a matter of absolute secrecy. Its victims are deliberately left in the dark about their destiny. While desperately trying to make sense of the disturbing rumors, to detect a hidden meaning behind the harassing laws, they fail to see that all this means only one thing: they are all going to die. Blind to the fact that their fate has long been sealed, they remain trapped in a roller coaster of hope and despair.[38] Weil makes it clear that though this confusion seems absurd and pointless, there is method to it. The Nazis perform their stratagems with perfidious calculation. As long as there is the slightest flicker of hope, their victims will do anything to survive—even if they themselves become involved in the diabolic machinery of destruction.[39] Registering confiscated Jewish property, assigning Jews to forced labor, setting up a Jewish museum designed to document for posterity the culture of those to be extinguished, even choosing a ''suitable'' site for a ghetto—all of this is carried out by an army of desperate Jewish accessories. Tricked into hoping they can save their own lives and those of their families, they become accomplices to a crime aimed at their own destruction.

In the hermetic world of the ghetto, behind the walls of Terezín, the tragic can unfold in its absolute form. Here, the victims become inextricably entangled in the guilt of their persecutors. It is a prisoner who designs Terezín's gallows. Prisoners build a railroad line for the transports to the East. Prisoners compile the lists of those to be deported. Nobody is as deeply involved in this mechanism of evil as the head of the Council of Elders. Weil presents this old man as someone who is guilty while innocent, his guilt being the result of a tragic blindness deliberately brought about by the ''superior'' power, that is, the Nazis. With the best of intentions, the chief elder of Terezín becomes a willing tool for the murderers, who mislead him about the true nature of their game:

> [He] fulfilled all their wishes: he expedited the transports to the East and established an eighty-hour workweek that applied even to children over fourteen. He was an accomplice in all the deceptions blinding the eyes of neutral countries abroad. He didn't do it to save his own life. He had no doubt that he, too, was condemned to death. He had an idea of

> what was hiding behind the ghetto commandant's chance innuendos. And still he believed it was possible to misdirect, to delude, to hoodwink. He believed it was necessary to give the appearance of following without question every order he received, even if it meant the death of tens of thousands, in order to have a chance to save the lives of children—children, the only hope of the future. . . . He thought he could make a pact with the devil, he thought he could give the devil a great deal in order to save at least something. He couldn't have known of the folder with the strictly designated deadlines. He couldn't have known that that very folder contained a resolution made at a secret conference which established that children, biologically the most valuable, must be exterminated above all others.[40]

The strategy works for the Nazis: in the end their victims virtually deport themselves. A ghastly scene, highly reminiscent of Kafka, illustrates the final overthrow of justice. In Terezín, a group of prisoners is sentenced to be hanged: "They hadn't had a trial, they hadn't been sentenced by any court. The verdict was final."[41]

Of course, what Weil describes here is based on historical facts. He does, however, endow these facts with an allegorical meaning that leads us beyond the historical events into the realm of the tragic. This can be demonstrated by two seemingly haphazard episodes, which on closer examination turn out to be connected. Before being deported to Terezín, Richard Reisinger, a Jew from Prague, is forced to work in a warehouse used by the Nazis to store stolen Jewish property, including a statue of the figure of Justice that instills a superstitious fear in the warehouse's German manager. Eventually, she orders Reisinger to smash the statue to pieces. Thus, the victim has to cooperate in destroying a world founded on laws equally valid for all.[42] A statue is at the center of another event, and again it is confiscated Jewish property. The head of the Central Bureau in Prague, a division of the German Security Police responsible for the "solution" of the Jewish question in the Czech and Moravian protectorate, needs a birthday gift for his aged mother. Fiedler, his subordinate, has orders to choose the most beautiful piece from the Meissen porcelain taken from wealthy Jewish families. He surprises his superior with a precious figurine representing the Judgment of Paris. The piece, which for the two Nazis exudes an almost sacred aura, turns out to be a valuable rarity. The only other extant copy is kept in the Meissen Museum. It is by no means accidental that Weil has chosen this particular motif. The Judgment of Paris set off the Trojan War. The figurine thus implicitly points to the Homeric

world, a world where for the first time the elements of the tragic manifested themselves in their entirety.[43] Taken together, the two episodes make literally manifest how the tragic world order has been released from its museum showcase to topple justice.

The Tragedy of Dr. Rabinovich: *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* as Anti-Tragic Prophecy

Among the elements that constitute ancient tragedy are, besides blindness sent by the gods and guiltless guilt, a dialectics of fate and freedom. In their confrontation with fate, human beings will always come off worst. Yet by resisting destiny the tragic hero can temporarily maintain a semblance of freedom. For some time at least, the inevitable seems avertible. It is this delusive contingency that allows us to feel pity for the hero. Watching it being thwarted by a malign transcendency causes us anguish (*phobos*).[44]

But does Weil in his novel employ this tension between necessity and freedom, so essential to ancient tragedy? At first sight, the contrary seems true. The narrator in *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* makes it quite plain that his Jewish protagonists have no scope of action whatsoever. They are determined by an inexorable necessity. Fate cannot be outwitted, and any such attempt only makes things worse. By trying to outsmart his tormentors, the chief elder in Terezín ends up assisting them in their evildoing instead of preventing it. Moreover, most of the novel's characters are stylized to an extent that hardly allows for tragic pity. There is, however, one exception. The pious and learned Dr. Rabinovich is one of the few characters in Weil's novel endowed with individual features. To be sure, he, too, succumbs to his fate. Rabinovich is among the very last Jews in Prague to be deported to the death camps. Until then, however, we anxiously observe his struggle for survival, which involves him more and more deeply in the crimes of his persecutors, yet for some time grants him a semblance of freedom.

Rabinovich makes himself guilty in two respects: by working with the Nazis and by sinning against the commandments of Judaism. In order to survive he cooperates with the murderers, a tiny cog in the gigantic machinery of destruction, yet one that helps to keep it running. Moreover, he, who has always led a life of impeccable piousness, ends up having to entertain the Nazis with blasphemous acts: not only does he disregard the Second Commandment (''Thou

shalt not make graven images") by arranging a Passover celebration with papier-mâché figures for a museum designed to mock the soon-to-be-extinct Jewish people. At the request of a Nazi official, he even blows the shofar, the ram's horn used to announce the Day of Atonement on the Jewish New Year, thereby desecrating one of the highest religious holidays.

Nevertheless, the old man cannot be condemned easily. Rabinovich's motives are selfless. It is not for his own life that he makes himself guilty, but for the sake of his wife and children. More importantly, Rabinovich, too, acts in a state of blindness sent from above and therefore cannot properly be called guilty. His German superior makes him believe that in return for his services his entire family will be saved, while secretly the Nazi gloats over this successful deception.[45]

Rabinovich's tragic error consists in attributing to the new regime his own way of thinking, which has been shaped by his religion. He still believes the world to be governed by a kind of justice that manifests itself in a well-ordered system of rewards and punishment. He even goes so far as to interpret the Holocaust as God's punishment for his own religious offenses. It is significant that Rabinovich's "sins" culminate in his having to blow the shofar for a Nazi visitor. The shofar announces "the beginning of the Day of Judgement, the Day of Atonement, the highest and most terrible of the Jewish holidays, the day when one thinks about one's sins, repents of them, and begs for forgiveness." It thus illustrates Rabinovich's belief in a divine justice that judges people according to their misdeeds or merits.[46]

For a long time Rabinovich refuses to see that by actively cooperating with the Nazi murderers he makes himself guilty of a crime far more serious than those sins against Jewish law committed under pressure. The same concept of justice leads him to believe that eventually he will be rewarded for his obedience to the new rulers. Again, he fails to see that the Nazis long ago wrote a law of their own, which for Jews—regardless of their merits or offenses—issues only one verdict: death.

Weil carefully arranges the sad tale of Dr. Rabinovich so that it follows the pattern of ancient tragedy. Right before catastrophe sets in, he lets his protagonist have a flash of insight or anagnorisis. For some time Rabinovich is able to close his eyes to the fact that his fate has already taken its decisive turn (*perepeteia*). Even when he and his family are actually being deported to the east, he still alternates be-

tween a fatalistic acceptance of the impending disaster as punishment for his blasphemy and the desperate hope of being saved at the very last minute as a reward for his cooperation with the Nazis: ''They had all been in touch with . . . important people. Surely these people wouldn't abandon them after they had been provided with so many valuables, surely they would save them at the last moment; surely a fancy limousine would appear any minute now and a general would step out, all covered with medals and decorations, and say, 'This person performed good services for the Reich. I demand that he and his entire family be released.' ''[47]

Only when the door of the railroad car suddenly opens and instead of the longed-for deus ex machina in his ''fancy limousine'' there appears just another prisoner—the only one among those cooped up together who not only refused to work for the murderers but even fought them—does it dawn on Rabinovich that his case is lost. Only now is he beginning to grasp the true nature of those who cruelly tricked him into complicity only to ruin him in the end.

In his downfall, Rabinovich—up to this point not an altogether pleasant character—achieves a certain tragic grandeur. Not unlike the hero in ancient tragedy, he, too, comes to accept his actual human guilt and eventually bows to his fate. It is his encounter with a ''just man,'' one who resisted complicity with the Nazis, that finally opens Rabinovich's eyes. Now he understands that his sin consisted not in breaking religious commandments, but in making himself an accessory to crimes against his fellow Jews.[48] Rabinovich does not exonerate himself by telling himself he did not act on his own initiative. In the end, he takes full responsibility for his deeds, thus gaining the stature of a tragic hero.

The fact that the hero accepts his guilt does not justify the deeds of the ''evil gods.'' On the contrary, in Weil's novel we observe a deep indignation at the very maliciousness of fate that constitutes the basis of tragic action. This, according to Walter Benjamin, is characteristic of ancient tragedy. He argues that though it may indeed seem as if in tragedy the hero is put on trial, it is the gods who in the end find themselves in the dock while the hero takes the witness stand.[49]

Similarly, in *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof,* Weil ultimately shifts the emphasis from Rabinovich's transgressions to the far more serious depravity of those who provoked these transgressions in the first place. When on his way to death Rabinovich finds himself accompanied by a ''just man,'' he realizes that without exception all Jews are

doomed, those who worked for the Nazis as well as those who resisted them. Only now does Rabinovich take the Holocaust for what it is: not a God-given, well-deserved punishment for some sin, but an outrageous crime on the part of those who set themselves up as "evil gods." Paradoxically, it is precisely by accepting his guilt that, in a sense, Rabinovich finally denies the Nazis obedience. They may have power over life and death, but his deeds, the old man now firmly believes, will be judged not by them, but after his death, by the Supreme Judge.[50] By referring to a divine justice superior to the "evil gods," Weil eventually transcends the tragic schema. The tragedy of Dr. Rabinovich thus ends with the kind of "anti-Olympic prophecy" Walter Benjamin perceives in all of ancient tragedy.[51]

Sculpture versus Music: Weil's Response to *The Birth of Tragedy*

Outwardly, when confronted with his own tragic guilt, Rabinovich submits to his fate. Inwardly, however, he refuses to accept it as ultimate reality. From a moral point of view, he rebels against the tragic. Rabinovich's inner development captures in miniature the general development of thought underlying Weil's novel. Weil implicitly argues that only the tragic provides us with a pattern that helps us to adequately comprehend the situation of the Jews under the rule of the Nazis, especially their involuntary complicity in a crime directed against themselves. This insight leads, however, to a deep indignation against the tragic itself, an indignation that eventually manifests itself in a kind of antitragic utopia.

Like Rabinovich, Richard Reisinger, the young Jew who at the command of the Nazis has to destroy the statue of Justice, seems to be totally at the mercy of the evil gods. He, too, is forced to cooperate with the Germans. As a member of the Terezín ghetto guard he is made at once prison warder and prisoner, victim and culprit. Unlike Rabinovich, however, Reisinger is not blinded for even a moment. He has no illusions as to the nature of a regime that dupes its victims into complicity and then annihilates them, regardless of their "merits." It is precisely this clairvoyance that ultimately prompts him to stand up to his fate. In the end, Reisinger manages to escape from Terezín, whereupon he joins the Communist resistance. Again Weil demonstrates that a world outside the seemingly hermetic realm of the tragic does exist. Although in Rabinovich's case the tragic is tran-

scended in an otherworldly sphere to be reached only in the life to come, Reisinger's sanctuary is altogether of this world. Instead of divine justice, a worldly, social justice is now invoked as a utopian counterforce to the tragic. In both instances, however, leaving the bounds of the tragic takes a terrible toll. While Rabinovich can overcome the tragic only at the expense of his own life, others have to pay the price for Reisinger's rebellion: as a punishment for his escape from Terezín, all remaining members of the ghetto guard are sent to certain death in the eastern concentration camps.[52]

The experiences of Rabinovich and Reisinger are significant in that they express Weil's view of the problems of Jewish resistance and Jewish collaboration during the Holocaust. Weil makes it clear that there is no moral solution to either of these equally sensitive issues. Morally, Jews in the position of either Reisinger or Rabinovich could not do the right thing. Their situation is tragic: whatever they do, whether they bow to their fate or resist it, they will make themselves guilty. With the destruction of the ''Judgment of Paris,'' the emblem of the tragic world order, during the bombardment of Berlin, Weil symbolically anticipates the final downfall of the tragic. The last extant copy of the figurine is now kept in a museum. Once more, the tragic is but a phenomenon of the past, to be marveled at from a safe distance. In the last chapter of *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* Weil returns to the world of the prologue. The ''evil gods'' are punished for their deeds. Their empire collapses in a tremendous cataclysm, and the world is ruled by justice again. For the victims of the tragic, however, it is too late. Tragedy does not allow for a happy end or redemption. *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* ends with a dreadful scene, one that adds a taste of bitterness to the triumph of justice. In its downfall the tragic once more reveals its true face. The end of the war is at hand when two Jewish children—the most innocent of the innocent—are found in their hiding place and tortured to death by the Gestapo.

I have shown that *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* deals extensively with the problem of the tragic. But to what extent does the novel respond to Nietzsche's particular concept of the tragic? One of the central motifs in *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* is the opposition of sculpture and music, which for Nietzsche epitomize the two *Kunsttriebe*—Apollinian and Dionysian—that in their dynamic interplay constitute the tragic nature of the world. Weil depicts prewar Prague as an ideal model of what Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* described as true culture. The ever flowing, ever changing Vltava river, ''tamed''

by sleuces and weirs, the famous bridge with its statues, and the widely acclaimed ''musicality'' of the historic buildings are all characteristics of a living culture based on the dynamic and precarious balance of the two antagonistic *Kunsttriebe.*[53] The eternal flow of the Dionysian is hemmed in by statues, while Apollinian architecture pulsates with a musical rhythm. The Rudolfinum, with its concert hall and its roof crowned with statues, is an appropriate landmark of this culture.

The Nazis in *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* are in fact quite susceptible to the Dionysian-Apollinian ideal of culture, wherever they find it, but they prove incapable of ever producing such a culture themselves. They admire Prague, with its successful amalgamation of Dionysian dynamism and Apollinian statics.[54] Yet in trying to monopolize this culture, they end up destroying it. Prague under German rule is eerily silent; everything seems paralyzed and petrified—a nightmare of Apollinian rigidity, peopled by somber statues. In the end, music appears almost only in its most Apollinian form, as military marches. Occupied Prague is ''silenced and subjugated.'' After Heydrich's death the ''strangled city [falls] silent''—it is ''a lifeless city, disintegrating and silent.'' Heydrich himself is associated with music of fife and drum, which Weil frequently employs as a symbol of death. Toward the end of the German regime, classical music is replaced by ''noisy'' and ''raucous'' patriotic songs about military victory. When, on a rare occasion, popular music is played, it is disrupted by the Nazis' anti-Semitic ''rowdy and sentimental songs.''[55]

Near the end of their rule, the leading Nazis in Weil's novel develop an increasing aversion to music.[56] In doing so, however, they only go from one extreme to another. In *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof,* Heydrich begins his career with downright Dionysian excesses, a killing frenzy accompanied by music. It is in fact music that makes these excesses at all possible, for it provides an inexhaustible source of power for the worn-out murderer.[57] This barbaric tyranny of the Dionysian is finally followed by an Apollinian terror no less outrageous than its counterpart. Weil thus demonstrates that the Nazis' attempts at culture always result in the absolute power of either one or the other *Kunsttrieb,* but never in their vital synthesis.

The Nazis' incapacity for culture is ironically reflected in the title episode of Weil's novel. Heydrich commands that Mendelssohn's statue be removed from the roof of the Rudolfinum. But the attempt to ''Aryanize'' the symbol of true culture takes a somewhat grotesque turn. Instead of Mendelssohn, the Czech workmen almost tear down

Richard Wagner, the man whose art was to become the main source of inspiration for Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. (Of all the statues he has the biggest nose, thus it is assumed he is the Jew.)

Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* is indeed a major source of Weil's novel. Weil, too, understands ideal culture as the interplay of the Dionysian and the Apollinian, where neither of the two *Kunsttriebe* may break away from their mutual interdependence. Furthermore, Weil shares with Nietzsche the opinion that from a moral point of view the tragic cannot be justified. In *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* Weil describes the situation of the Jews during the Holocaust as tragic, thus pointing out that it, too, cannot be grasped with moral categories. This holds particularly true for the delicate issue of Jewish cooperation with the Nazis and the equally problematic question of to what extent Jewish resistance was both possible and useful. For Weil there is only one way to ''do justice'' to the dilemma of people like Rabinovich or Reisinger, and that is to see it in the light of the tragic.

Weil does not, however, approve of Nietzsche's conclusion that an essentially tragic world is justified in an aesthetic way. If the tragic cannot be justified morally, it cannot be justified at all. A world devoid of justice, where the innocent are made guilty through the intervention of ''evil gods,'' has to be rejected and eventually overcome. At the end of *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* a clear distinction is again made between those responsible for the Holocaust and their victims. It is not Rabinovich or Reisinger who made themselves guilty, but the Nazis, who like ancient ''evil gods'' cunningly deceived them into complicity. It is therefore only right that the novel end with the prophecy of the final downfall of these gods. For the early Nietzsche the tragic reveals a metaphysical truth only temporarily concealed by moral misinterpretations. Weil, on the other hand, presents the tragic as a historical phenomenon that, precisely by arousing our moral indignation, sows the seeds of a new world based on justice. His view thus shows a certain affinity to Walter Benjamin's theory of ancient tragedy.

Weil tries to show that by acting as ''evil gods'' and annulling justice, the Nazis also destroyed the delicate balance between the Dionysian and the Apollinian that is characteristic of all true culture. A society where human relations lack a moral basis will never produce culture, but will lead to either Dionysian excess or Apollinian petrification. More than that: true culture is never nationalistic or racially ''pure.'' Both Mendelssohn and Wagner belong on the roof of the Rudolfinum. Here, however, Weil is much closer to Nietzsche than

he himself might have guessed. Nietzsche's posthumously published fragments, which Weil could not have had access to during his lifetime, contain the following note: "Against Aryan and Semitic. Where races are mixed, [there is a] source of great culture."[58]

Notes

1. For a detailed analysis of Masaryk's polemics against Nietzsche, see Urs Heftrich, "The Early Czech Nietzsche Reception: T. G. Masaryk, O. Březina, F. X. Šalda," in *East Europe Reads Nietzsche,* ed. Alice Freifeld, Peter Bergmann, and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 107–17.

2. Details in Urs Heftrich, *Otokar Březina: Zur Rezeption Schopenhauers und Nietzsches im tschechischen Symbolismus* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1993); and Heftrich, "Early Czech Nietzsche Reception," 117–24.

3. Heftrich, "Early Czech Nietzsche Reception," 124–32. The parallels between Šalda's and Nietzsche's thought are also discussed in Pavel Kouba, "Kritérium Života: Šalda a Nietzsche," *Kritický sborník* 3 (1992): 6–11; and Michael Špirit, "'Guten Tag, wir sind in Böhmen!' Deutsche und italienische Einflüsse bei F. X. Šalda," in *Deutschland, Italien und die slavische Kultur der Jahrhundertwende,* ed. Gerhard Ressel (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005), 385–87.

4. For the impact of Šalda's Nietzscheanism on Czech writers, see Antonin Mestan, "Die erste Nietzsche-Rezeption bei den Polen und Tschechen," in *Nietzschekontrovers,* ed. Rudolph Berlinger and Wiebke Schrader, vol. 5 (Würzburg: Königshausen u. Neumann, 1985), 50–51; for Nietzsche's influence on the so-called Toman generation (named after Karel Toman, 1877–1946), to which both S. K. Neumann and Fráňa Šrámek belonged, see Jiří Holý, *Geschichte der tschechischen Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts,* ed. Dominique Fliegler, trans. Dominique Fliegler and Hanna Vintr (Vienna: Edition Praesens, 2003), 25, 39. Vítězslav Nezval's poem "The Acrobat" (1927) contains allusions to Nietzsche's Zarathustra (ibid., 105). Nietzschean motifs in Jan Zahradníček's poetry are mentioned in Urs Heftrich, "Vögel am Lehmfirmament," in Jan Zahradníček, *Vogelbeeren (Jeřáby)* (Vitalis: Furth im Wald and Prag, 2000), 78. For Vladimír Holan's literary response to Nietzsche, see the afterword in Vladimír Holan, *Gesammelte Werke,* vol. 1: *Lyrik I (Das Wehen; Der Bogen; Stein, kommst du . . .),* ed. Urs Heftrich and Michael Špirit (Köln: Mutabene, 2005), 347–48.

5. See Heftrich, "Early Czech Nietzsche Reception," 107.

6. According to Derek Sayer, Weil's novel *Moskva—hranice* (*Moscow—The Border,* 1937) is "the first work of European fiction to bring to life the Moscow of Stalin's show trials"; see Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 229. Reliable information on the circumstances of Weil's stay in Moscow, his expulsion from the Bolshevik party, and his subsequent exile in Soviet Central Asia is scant. For Weil's biography, see Petr Nový, "Člověk: Jiří Weil," in Jiří Weil, *Moskva—hranice* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1991), 7–13; Blahoslav Dokoupil and Miroslav Zelinský, eds., *Slovník české prózy, 1945–1994* (Ostrava: Sfinga, 1994), 421–25; Růžena Grebeníčková, *Literatura a fiktivní světy,* vol. 1, ed. Michael Špirit (Prague: Český spisovatel, 1995), 408–37; and Alexej Mikulášek,

Viera Glosíková, and Antonín B. Schulz, eds., *Literatura s hvězdou Davidovou: Slovníková příručka k dějinám česko-židovských a česko-židovsko-německých literárních vztahú, 19. a 20. století* (Prague: Votobia, 1998), 366–70.

7. Quoted in Heftrich, ''Early Czech Nietzsche Reception,'' 107.

8. For Lukács's condemnation of Nietzsche, see Alice Freifeld, ''Nietzscheanism and Anti-Nietzscheanism in East Europe,'' in Freifeld, Bergmann, and Rosenthal, *East Europe Reads Nietzsche,* 14.

9. The final version of *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* is in fact a compromise between Weil and the censors, who refused to publish the book unless Weil agreed on radical alterations; see Jiří Holý's commentary in Jiří Weil, *Život s hvězdou; Na střeše je Mendelssohn; Žalozpěv za 77 297 obětí,* ed. Jiří Holý and Jarmila Víšková (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 1999), 481–517; and Alice Jedličková, ''Nepublikovaná kapitola Weilova románu *Na střeše je Mendelssohn,*'' *Česká literatura* 2 (1990): 151–56.

10. Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil,* trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 88.

11. Jiří Weil, *Dřevěná lžíce* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1992); unpaginated.

12. Quoted in Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil,* 226.

13. In my presentation of the tragic concept of guilt I rely on Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil,* especially 211–31.

14. See Walter F. Otto, *Theophania: Der Geist der altgriechischen Religion* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1956), 47–55.

15. Wolfgang Johann von Goethe, ''Shakespear und kein End,'' in *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens,* ed. Karl Richter et al., vol. 11, pt. 2 (Munich: Hanser, 1994), 180. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

16. Otto, *Theophania,* 47–50.

17. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil,* 218.

18. Ibid., 223.

19. Ibid., 220.

20. See ibid., 221.

21. George Steiner wrote: ''Of western literary genres . . . , tragic drama is the least separable from religion. . . . In essence, tragedy is a questioning and an enacted testing of theodicy. . . . To ask whether 'the gods kill us for their sport' is, by definition, to make plausible, to make enforcedly questionable, their existence and that of our possible place in that existence.'' George Steiner, ''Absolute Tragedy,'' in *No Passion Spent: Essays, 1978–1996* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), 136–37.

22. Ibid., 140, 129, 133.

23. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil,* 229.

24. See Steiner, ''Absolute Tragedy,'' 139.

25. See Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil,* 217.

26. Compare the concept of the tragic as developed by G. W. F. Hegel, Friedrich Schiller, and Max Scheler. For Hegel see Peter Szondi, *Versuch über das Tragische,* in *Schriften I* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), 165–74. Schiller and Scheler are discussed in Léon Wurmser, *Die zerbrochene Wirklichkeit: Psychoanalyse als das Studium von Konflikt und Komplementarität,* 2nd ed. (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 1993), 94–100.

27. See Wurmser, *Die zerbrochene Wirklichkeit,* 117.

28. ''Nur als *aesthetisches Phänomen* ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig *gerechtfertigt.*'' Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie,* in *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienaus-*

gabe in 15 Bänden, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980, 1:47; italics in the original.

29. See Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels,* in *Gesammelte Schriften,* ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, vol. 1, pt. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 281.

30. See ibid., 283.

31. See ibid., 285–86, 288–89.

32. See ibid., 288. For a presentation of Benjamin's theory of tragedy as opposed to tragic drama, see Michael Rumpf, *Spekulative Literaturtheorie: Zu Walter Benjamins Trauerspielbuch* (Königsstein: Verlag Anton Hain, 1980), 132–54; and Rainer Rochlitz, *The Disenchantment of Art: The Philosophy of Walter Benjamin* (New York: Guilford Press, 1996), 87–92.

33. Sewall, quoted in Wurmser, *Die zerbrochene Wirklichkeit,* 80.

34. See the prologue in Jiří Weil, *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof,* trans. Marie Winn (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991), unpaginated.

35. George Steiner writes: ''In the absolutely tragic, it is the crime of man that he is, that he exists. . . . During the Holocaust, the Gypsy or the Jew had very precisely *committed the crime of being*'' (Steiner, ''Absolute Tragedy,'' 129); italics in the original.

36. The term ''tragische Gegenmacht'' is used by Johannes Volkelt, *Ästhetik des Tragischen* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1897), 115.

37. See Weil, *Mendelssohn,* 22, 173. Weil employed a similar technique in *Life with a Star,* where historical names and places are defamiliarized. Owing to censorship, in *Mendelssohn Is On the Roof* Weil had to somewhat modify this technique in favor of a more concrete, historical style; see Jedličková, ''Nepublikovaná kapitola,'' and Weil, *Život s hvězdou,* komentář, 488–517. A detailed discussion of Weil's language can be found in Zuzana Stolz-Hladká, ''Jiří Weil a pravdivost slova,'' *Literární archív* 32, no. 22 (2000): 175–86.

38. See Weil, *Mendelssohn,* 36.

39. See ibid., 46–47: ''One of the common features of all members of the National Socialist Party was this: they never revealed their goals. Thus they were able to lull and gull and dupe their opponents.'' ''It was . . . important to give the victims temporary hope, so that they wouldn't be inclined to resist.''

40. Ibid., 172–173. For detailed information on Jakob Edelstein, the historical Chief Elder of Terezín, see Ruth Bondy, *''Elder of the Jews'': Jakob Edelstein of Theresienstadt,* trans. Evelyn Abel (New York: Grove Press, 1989).

41. Weil, *Mendelssohn,* 183.

42. ''Justice would no longer stand in anyone's way'' (ibid., 128).

43. Compare Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil,* 213–18.

44. See ibid., 219–21.

45. Weil, *Mendelssohn,* 46, 64–65, 202.

46. Ibid., 72–73.

47. Ibid., 205.

48. ''They were going to their deaths . . . , even he, even his family. . . . Everything had been planned and figured out long before. How the head of the Central Bureau must be laughing now! . . . All the others sitting in this car, and he as well, had made a pact with the devil, and now the devil had come for their lives. Only one of them . . . had nothing in common with the devil; he was fighting against him, in

fact. That man was one of the legendary thirty-six Just Men and he would share their fate with them.'' Ibid., 211.

49. See Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels,* 288.

50. ''It was good that a Just Man would be in their midst. He would speak for them at the hour of their death.'' Weil, *Mendelssohn,* 211.

51. See Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels,* 288.

52. ''One day a member of the ghetto guards disappeared. They searched for him long and hard, but they didn't find him. . . . the trail grew cold. Nobody knew what had become of number BA 450. In the end they dissolved the ghetto guard and sent all its members on a transport to the East.'' Weil, *Mendelssohn,* 196–97. In the Czech original, the causality that links Reisinger's escape with the deportation of the remaining ghetto guards is more pronounced than in the English translation. In the Czech text, the ghetto guard is dissolved immediately after Reisinger's disappearance, not sometime afterward, as the translation implies by adding the expression ''in the end,'' which is missing in the original: ''Jednoho dne zmizel člen ghettowache. Hledali ho dlouho, a nenašli. . . . stopa se ztratila, nikdo nevěděl o čísle Ba 450. Rozpustili ghettowache, poslali její příslušníky nejbližším transportem na východ'' (Weil, *Život s hvězdou,* 429).

53. Statues, music, and the river are the most conspicuous leitmotifs in Weil's novel. The river is clearly a symbol of indestructible, ever changing life (see Weil, *Mendelssohn,* 24, 130), ''tamed'' by culture: ''It laughed, it was timeless. . . . People tamed it with floodgates, locks, weirs, and bridges. It changed its face a thousand times. The boat crossed the river to drift toward the first lock, at the end of which rose a statue of a lovely slender young girl. She was meant to represent the river surrounded by its tributaries. . . . Statues made by foreign hands stood on the stone bridge that spanned her, unfriendly ones, put there by previous invaders. . . . On yet another bridge stood several substantial statues with solid limbs that seemed to be growing out of the ground.'' Ibid., 212–13. Seen from above, Prague seems to possess an almost rhythmic flow; it is ''rising and falling away, embracing the river with its quays and bridges, flowing with the current and against it, unshakable and indestructible.'' Ibid., 58. The city's musicality is admired even by the Nazis: ''The minister said, 'Music in stone,' and truly this phrase, bandied about by authors of art books, described Prague well. The city was, indeed, steeped in music and brought into harmony by it.'' Ibid., 79.

54. Ibid., 79.

55. Quotes from ibid., 59, 130, 139, 200, 210, 212–16. For the association of Heydrich with music of fife and drum, see ibid., 113, 129–30. The imagery of fife and drum as symbols of death occurs in Weil's earlier novel *Life with a Star* and his *Lament for 77 297 Victims;* in Weil, *Život s hvězdou,* 174, 464.

56. The former music lover Heydrich ''no longer plays in an amateur quartet . . . his hand can no longer hold a bow, because he has used it too often on police duty.'' Nowadays, even concerts and opera performances ''bring him little pleasure'' (Weil, *Mendelssohn,* 77). The head of the Central Bureau in Prague likewise loses interest in music; it even begins ''to annoy him'' (ibid., 200).

57. ''All that remains for him is music; it always helps when he feels tired . . . ; the tensions of the day melt away in it. He remembers listening to Beethoven's Fourth after the Night of the Long Knives, remembers how it gave him renewed strength to carry on, to continue interrogating enemies and beating confessions out of them. The music cleansed everything that time, even the blood.'' Ibid., 77.

58. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente,* I [153], in *Sämtliche Werke,* 12:45.

Nietzsche, Artaud, and Tragic Politics

Geoffrey Baker

> In countries under the rule of fear, the theatre is the form the dictators watch closely and dread the most.
>
> —Peter Brook, *The Open Door*

> The Right, unfortunately, is practically ignored here, although the theater can surely be geared to reactionary purposes as well.
>
> —Reinhold Grimm, ''Dionysus and Socrates''

In his book on what he terms ''Nietzsche's tragic regime,'' Thomas Heilke contextualizes anecdotally the inception of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (*Die Geburt der Tragödie,* 1872), positing that ''the critical experience that showed him the need for aesthetic horizons and induced him to create them appears to have been the rumored burning of the Louvre in 1870.''[1] Nietzsche himself, in the ''Attempt at a Self-Criticism'' (Versuch einer Selbstkritik) that accompanied a later edition of his essay in 1886, similarly situates his first work in that historical moment, ''the exciting time of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. As the thunder of the Battle of Wörth was rolling over Europe, the muser and riddle-friend who was to be the father of this book sat somewhere in an Alpine nook, very bemused and beriddled, hence very concerned and yet unconcerned, and wrote down his thoughts on the *Greeks.*''[2] The other thinker about theater on whom this essay will focus, Antonin Artaud,[3] commences his *The Theater and Its Double* (*Le théâtre et son double,* 1938) in a related vein, with an appeal to a historically documented world exterior to his book: ''The archives of the little town of Cagliari, in Sardinia, contain the account of an astonishing historical fact.''[4] Why the opening gesture toward practical history in two texts whose destination is ostensibly a theorization of the tragic? If there is a handy, seemingly binarized organizational motif to this essay, it is this undefined dance of the theoretical and practical; the texts to be discussed treat

the nature of an aesthetic genre and therefore must, by extension, reveal something of the interaction between that aesthetic realm and the real, physical world in which it lives and breathes, from which it draws its breath. Yet perhaps the framework itself upholding the distinctions between the aesthetic/theoretical and the practical will prove unstable and lead us onto other ground.

This approach may already sound predictably deconstructive, but, on the contrary, I intend to argue in favor of the preservation of such distinctions as will permit Nietzsche's and Artaud's formulations on the theater to serve as models of politically transformative art that works through metaphysical and epistemological channels toward tangible political change. Ultimately not concerned with deducing the political orientation of Nietzsche or Artaud, this essay will concern itself with (and critically evaluate) the mechanisms whereby their versions of the theater pretend to operate in the political sphere. Theodor Adorno's pithy discussion of politically effective art will help to situate my reading; Adorno refers repeatedly to Brecht and Sartre as examples of misguided dramatists (and, it should not be forgotten, as theorists of drama) who intended their work to open avenues of engagement. Following Adorno's cue, I will demonstrate that both Nietzsche and Artaud can be read in a manner supportive of Adorno's notions of—bluntly and crudely put—what works and what fails in a politically committed theater. Alongside those of Adorno, Nietzsche's and Artaud's blueprints for drama contribute to a transformative tragic politics that seeks to overcome unpalatable social regimes by disabling them, by interrogating the epistemological formations and structures of representation from which they spring. However, perhaps diverging from Adorno, this version of political aesthetics is firmly grounded in what can only be categorized as a spiritual or metaphysical collectivization. This emphasis on the collective as against the interests of the subject raises its own set of issues, addressed by way of a conclusion.

I

Two concerns before proceeding: First, it will quickly become evident that I do not intend to invest much in Nietzsche's philosophical development away from his early declarations in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Such readings usually demean Nietzsche's historiography of the theater, which is too often passed over as a mere stage on the

life's way of his intellectual development. This is certainly an aspect of Julian Young's argument in *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art,* which treats *The Birth* merely as the first of four phases in Nietzsche's thought, and which occupies itself more with what Young calls ''Nietzsche's philosophy'' than with his ''philosophy of art.''[5] By contrast, Tracy Strong's argument in his seminal book on Nietzsche as a political thinker—on which I will lean later—refuses to proceed in such a chronological fashion, but also forcibly embeds *The Birth* in the huge context of Nietzsche's evolving thought, as if that thought were one synchronous, always-present entity. It is true that *The Birth of Tragedy* can be located within the discursive arc (following Young) or totality (following Strong) of Nietzschean thought, but it also belongs, by itself and outside of Nietzsche's oeuvre and oblivious to his later clarifications and qualifications, to a tradition of theater theory and aesthetics, and to the question of art and the world outside of it. It is in this context that I wish to consider the book, along with Artaud's *The Theater and Its Double.* For if the argument here engages the question of aesthetic *theoria* and political *praxis* in the thought of two men in particular, it also hopes to consider the nature and power of effective art in general.

Second, it may be useful at this point briefly to characterize my use of the term ''political,'' which will be central to this argument. Heilke commences an article on Nietzschean politics by reminding his reader that ''the everyday problems of our time have come to include not merely the typical problems of political rule, but large-scale alienation, displacement, and even genocide on a grand scale.''[6] He seems to insist that this knowledge ought to lead us to broaden our understanding of politics to a scope commensurate with the ubiquity of our political problems. Elsewhere, he has spoken specifically of Nietzsche's own quite broad understanding of the political: ''Nietzsche does not offer us an analysis of politics for the use of practitioners. How states are obtained, how they are kept, and how they are lost, for example, are not items of interest in his analysis of politics; neither are world-historical panoramas of political purposes in the tradition of Hegel and his intellectual progeny. Nor are his books public policy manuals for modern legislators or administrators.''[7] Nicola Chiaromonte opines similarly in an essay on Artaud and political theater: '' 'Politics,' for the Greeks, meant 'what concerns the *polis,*' and the *polis* was not only the place of everyone, a free space protected by sacred laws, but also the place of *everything,* that is of all that concerns man as a human being, and not just his

private affairs; and, by the same token, not only the public affairs of the moment.''[8] Both Heilke and Chiaromonte support a conception of politics capacious enough to include what was once labeled the social, and in this they reflect a certain trend within the discourse of our discipline. Joan Scott, for example, from within a debate over the English working class, enforces a distinction between broad politics, or ''any contest for power within which identities . . . are created,'' and narrow politics, or ''formal participation in government or the state.''[9] It is precisely this conceptual separation that Nietzsche, Artaud, and Adorno might contest; at the very least, they would maintain a role for the social in the political, just as Strong, Heilke, and Chiaromonte do, and—on a level more germane to the subject of this paper—a role for theory in practice.

Indeed, the role of the theoretical in the realm of praxis is the watermark of Adorno's articulations on properly political art, and especially theater:[10] ''Committed art in the proper sense is not intended to generate ameliorative measures, legislative acts or practical institutions—like earlier propaganda plays against syphilis, duels, abortion laws or borstals—but to work at the level of fundamental attitudes [Haltung].''[11] Adorno never offers a specific methodology for this ''work at the level of fundamental attitudes,'' but one can infer from another passage in ''Commitment'' (as well as from the whole of *Aesthetic Theory*) the shape that it might assume: ''Eulogists of 'relevance' are more likely to find Sartre's *Huis Clos* profound, than to listen patiently to a text whose language challenges signification and by its very distance from meaning revolts in advance against positivist subordination of meaning.''[12] The goal, then, is a transformation that first manifests itself as an epistemological duel, interfering with the fixedness in structures of meaning that enables, at its worst, catastrophic political formations and historical events. In an essay on Hölderlin, Adorno's most succinct engagement with this question, he pinpoints the paratactical textual moments that mold this variety of theoretical resistance, these ''artificial disturbances that evade the logical hierarchy of a subordinating syntax.''[13] It is in Hölderlin's works, Adorno claims, that the ''poetic movement'' [dichterische Bewegung] first disrupts ''the category of meaning.''[14] The transposition of this disruption into the register of political action merely expresses the practical ramifications of an epistemological shift, brought on by what Adorno calls the *Schock des Unverständlichen,* ''the shock of the unintelligible.''[15] This position is cogently summarized by Herbert Marcuse in the preface to his *The*

Aesthetic Dimension: ''Literature can be called revolutionary in a meaningful sense only with reference to itself, as content having become form. The political potential of art lies only in its own aesthetic dimension. Its relation to praxis is inexorably indirect, mediated, frustrating. The more immediately political the work of art, the more it reduces the power of estrangement and the radical, transcendent goals of change. In this sense, there may be more subversive potential in the poetry of Baudelaire and Rimbaud than in the didactic plays of Brecht.''[16] Marcuse's unqualified pairing of the radical and the transcendent foreshadows my examination of Nietzsche's and Artaud's essays that will, in this Adornian spirit, necessarily focus on the tangled relations between *theoria* and *praxis*; anyone who can envision, as Nietzsche does, philosophizing with something so solid as a hammer surely bears such relations in mind.

The somewhat uncomfortable simultaneity of theoretical and practical desires in Nietzsche and Artaud is readily noticed in a glance at the reception of *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Theater and Its Double*. There is a sort of unexpressed critical controversy over *The Birth of Tragedy* that takes the form of an occasional silence in the discourse on Nietzsche's essay; in short, critics who engage the political aspects of Nietzsche are split when it comes to this first book. David Owen's book-length study of Nietzsche's politics barely devotes four pages in passing to Nietzsche's work on tragedy, and Ike Okonta and Mark Blitz decline to mention it at all, ignoring any broader influence of the aesthetic and implying that the Nietzschean tragic has no significant political bearing. Contrast these critics with Bruce Detwiler, who incorporates readings of *The Birth*'s Dionysian principle into his *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism*; with Silk and Stern, who laud *The Birth of Tragedy* as ''Nietzsche's most sustained attempt at a theory of art''; and with Peter Sloterdijk's triumphal declaration that it is one of the ''most fundamental texts of modernity.''[17] Any effort at critical consensus becomes murky. Nietzsche himself points out later, in *Twilight of the Idols* (*Götzen-Dämmerung,* 1889), that *The Birth of Tragedy* was the first site of his ongoing transvaluation of all values, a project rife, as critics such as Tracy Strong have noted, with political implications.

Strong's attention to the political import of Nietzsche's greater project has had groundbreaking influence on political exegeses of Nietzsche, but *The Birth of Tragedy* is an indeterminate entity in his study. His reading of Nietzsche's predilection for pre-Socratic thinkers ends with the assertion that ''the pre-Socratics make possible a

dialogue between philosophy, science, and politics,'' a key contention on which Strong will build an entire assessment of Nietzsche's historiography of Greek tragedy.[18] What is missing in this triumvirate of philosophy, science, and politics, however—and what must be elemental to a discussion of Nietzsche's aesthetics—is the aesthetic. This omission, which takes the reins from the moment Strong declares that *The Birth of Tragedy* is not about tragedy but rather ''concerned with the self-definition of Greek culture,'' reverberates throughout the readings of Greek literature and Nietzsche on the Greeks offered in *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*; whether treating Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, or Euripides, Strong renders the texts as positively lesson-conveying ethical or political statements.[19] Though Strong will elsewhere cite the ''turn toward aesthetics as the basis for the political realm'' in Nietzsche, his emphasis on what the plays seem explicitly to say ignores what one perhaps ought to bring to the fore: that is, what Nietzsche's favored version of tragic theater either does not say explicitly or does not say at all, what is communicated through the Adornian ''shock of the unintelligible.''[20] Strong does in fact recognize this penchant in Nietzsche—indeed, ''Nietzsche would argue,'' he writes, ''that some forms of acceptance or understanding, what I have called the unquestioned, simply *do not admit of being didactically taught*. Either they are presented in such a way that they penetrate below conscious assessing, or else they are simply unmeaningful.''[21] However, he does not elaborate on the enormous potential of this unconscious moment, and certainly not in relation to the potential of tragedy. Thus must Strong finally argue that, for Nietzsche, ''*myth is a* consciously *held illusion,*'' while the passage of *The Birth of Tragedy* being explicated says, to the contrary, that ''the images of myth are *unnoticed* [unbemerkt].''[22] In spite of this, though, the summation of the political Nietzsche in Strong's work is invaluable, and I hope here merely to flesh out the political aspects of Nietzsche's tragic aesthetics and the potency of its negativity.

Criticism of Artaud, by contrast, is split within itself. Chiaromonte, for example, tries to grasp the big picture: ''What is one to conclude, then? I think we must recognize the fact that his idea of the theater is not merely ambiguous but self-contradictory to the point of schizophrenia. On the one hand, his theater must strive for internal effectiveness and the purity of poetry. On the other, it must cling furiously to the corporeal, to the physical evidence, to the brutal and exterior effect.''[23] Most Artaud scholars concede, like Chiaromonte,

that Artaud fails to achieve any logical, systemic unity—also one of the claims held in Ulrich Wilamowitz-Moellendorf's early diatribe against Nietzsche's *Birth*—but they are quick to recall that Artaud's widespread and powerful influence over contemporary theater pointedly establishes the importance of *The Theater and Its Double.* Establishing the essays' importance by recourse to their real-world influence, these pronouncements on Artaud return us to the theory-versus-practice opposition, and, interestingly enough, Chiaromonte sends his reader finally back to ''Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy,* where the two opposed principles so at odds in Artaud are defined with considerably greater clarity.''[24] Clearly, Chiaromonte sees Nietzsche as being in collusion with Artaud's cultivation of ''internal effectiveness'' to produce ''the brutal and exterior effect.''

At the risk of appearing to digress, I want briefly to mention here the writings from the early 1980s of the German Green Party founding member and political thinker Rudolf Bahro on rescuing a radical politics in decline; Bahro's thoughts, in addition, open a window through which notions of subjectivity (a theme crucial to the political aesthetics of Nietzsche and Artaud) and its role in political transformation can enter the discussion.[25] Bahro invigorates what would otherwise be an argument from the theorists' corner, for, coming from a political activist, Bahro's voice is an intriguing one in a debate over the roads to real, measurable political change. In an editorial called ''Dare to Form Communes'' (first published in the journal *Befreiung,* in 1983), Bahro castigates the Left for ''reacting superficially—in a merely political way.''[26] He calls instead, elsewhere, for a ''spiritualization of politics,'' in a manner one cannot but relate to Chiaromonte's assessment of Artaud and Nietzsche, the interior metamorphosis that will culminate in the outward effect.[27] Of course, for Bahro, such a spiritualization entails a communitarianism centered on almost Benedictine strategies of retreat and a meditative mode of life—yet, oddly, this centripetal urgency tethers him to the general theoretical scaffolding this essay will employ to read Nietzsche and Artaud. Herbert Marcuse, in the above-mentioned essay on politically effective art, posits the retreat of the subject into itself, into a state of ''inwardness,'' as a politically valuable and viable ''counter-force against aggressive and exploitative socialization'' once that subject returns to the world outside.[28] Peter Sloterdijk goes even further than Marcuse: ''All 'inner paths,' even when they appear awfully unrealistic, flow together in the single tendency that furthers real pacification. . . . Meditation and disarma-

ment discover a strategic common interest.''[29] Marcuse's and Sloterdijk's versions of attention to subjectivity as a means of political action resonant within a collectivity deserve space, as does the hinted-at role of Eastern meditative modes. The pertinence of the issue of subjectivity itself will be clearer when Nietzsche and Artaud begin to speak on it and against it.

Where in Adorno's rubric for political theater, tacitly reconstructed above, can *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Theater and Its Double* come in? For both Nietzsche and Artaud, the underlying problem with which we are confronted is an elemental one, a problem of knowledge. Jacques Derrida, in a very Nietzschean mode in his first essay on Emmanuel Levinas, remarks that such problems of knowledge are, ''by right of birth, and for one time at least, . . . problems put to philosophy as problems philosophy cannot resolve''—problems philosophy cannot resolve, that is, because it figures in them.[30] Nietzsche anticipates this dilemma in his ''Attempt at a Self-Criticism,'' in a moment of apologia for art (and specifically for theater), which he has chosen as the forum for engaging the ''problem of science'' [das Problem der Wissenschaft], a problem that ''cannot be recognized in the context of science'' [kann nicht auf dem Boden der Wissenschaft erkannt werden]; (*Birth of Tragedy,* 18/1:13]. He calls one's attention to it again, much later, in *The Genealogy of Morals* (*Zur Genealogie der Moral,* 1887): ''Science conceived of as a problem; what does science mean? Consult the preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*.''[31] (5:403; translation mine). Science and scientism cannot be employed to interrogate science and scientism, Nietzsche would argue; our Socratic, positivistic, and objectivity-geared strategies of knowing, with their attendant impulse to realism and their naive aesthetic faith in the *Schein des Scheins,* cannot be brandished against the problem of such knowledge. As aware of this as was his later theoretical heir Artaud and their later reader Derrida, Nietzsche responds to this epistemological problem with a formulation of tragedy that revolts against unshaken faith in systems of representation, against naïveté. It is this epistemological and metaphysical uprising against the evil spirits of Socrates, mimesis, and the *principium individuationis* that organizes Nietzsche's and Artaud's efforts at political transformation.[32] The locus of resistance must reside outside of Socratic logic, and Nietzsche and Artaud choose as their weapon an anti-Socratic aesthetics.

II

It may help to begin by ascertaining exactly how Nietzsche and Artaud know their enemy—that is, how these two thinkers understand the reigning epistemological modes they intend to counter. For Nietzsche, one begins with his strident critique of Euripides' Socratism and its deleterious effects on what was once a vibrant Greek tragic culture: ''The deity that spoke through [Euripides] was neither Dionysus nor Apollo, but an altogether newborn demon, called *Socrates,*'' the forebear of a ''*Socratic* tendency with which Euripides combated and vanquished Aeschylean tragedy'' (*Birth of Tragedy,* 82, emphases Kaufmann/1:83). Nietzsche labels this trend *aesthetic Socratism* and accuses Socrates himself of acting as the ''opponent of tragic art'' (87/1:89). One of Nietzsche's concrete problematizations of aesthetic Socratism as it relates to Greek tragedy will serve to illustrate his protest: the advent of the expositional prologue. As Nietzsche relates the history, before Sophocles and Aeschylus the audience sat in bewilderment, confused at the play's start, until characters' roles were clarified by the action, and this prolonged confusion interfered with the sympathic aims of the plays: ''So long as the spectator has to figure out the meaning of this or that person, or the presuppositions of this or that conflict of inclinations and purposes, he cannot become completely absorbed in the activities and sufferings of the chief characters or feel breathless pity and fear'' (84/1:86). Sophocles and Aeschylus alter this by innovation, by inventing the ''most ingenious'' (*geistreichsten*) artistic means for more natural and less interfering exposition. Euripides throws any residual uncertainty on the part of the spectators right out the window by inserting a prologue directly into the mouth of a trustworthy character. From that godlike fount of expositional truth, Nietzsche argues, it was just a short step further to the implementation of the deus ex machina, the end of all theatrical negativity. His emphasis on the prologue as a means of banishing the discomfort of narrative uncertainty from the stage speaks to a tenet of Socratic theater: ''to be beautiful everything must be intelligible'' [alles muss verständig sein, um schön zu sein], a parallel to the Socratic ''only knowledge is virtue'' [nur der Wissende ist tugendhaft] (83–84/1:85). (Nietzsche likes this particular point well enough to reiterate it, barely a page later: ''to be beautiful everything must be conscious,'' an aesthetic warping of the Socratic ''to be good everything must be conscious''

[86/1:87].) Contrast this with Adorno's notion of politically polyvalent theater, effective through its unintelligibility, and it is clear that aesthetic Socratism runs counter to any brand of theater that hopes to effect change at the most fundamental levels.[33]

Artaud similarly targets the demystifying mind-set, a penchant for psychologizing that has dominated occidental theater since, he asserts, the Renaissance. His essay "No More Masterpieces" (En finir avec les chefs-d'œuvre) says: "We have been accustomed for four hundred years, that is since the Renaissance, to a purely descriptive and narrative theater—storytelling psychology. . . . Psychology, which works relentlessly to reduce the unknown to the known, to the quotidian and ordinary, is the cause of theater's abasement and its fearful loss of energy" (*Theater and Its Double*, 76–77/119). Setting his conception of real theater against the Socratic heritage of Western thought, Artaud opposes philosophy to the true theatrical project, *le théâtre alchimique,* proposing that "to analyze such a drama philosophically is impossible" (50/77). He convincingly places himself within the early Nietzschean aesthetic tradition when he demands, "This empiricism, randomness, individualism and anarchy must cease" (79/122). The distrust of empiricism and individualism squares readily with Nietzsche's critique of Socratism, but Artaud's inclusion of *anarchie* on his hit list might be surprising; I would suggest that Artaud here understands the word in its etymological shading toward "without origin" or "without beginning" rather than its more political context of "without rule," a reading that agrees with the stated desire of both Nietzsche and Artaud to return to what they perceive as the roots of tragedy, the purer and pre-Socratic origin.

Derrida's essay on Artaud, "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" (Le théâtre de la cruauté et la clôture de la représentation), helps both to open and to temper the rebellion against representation in *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Theater and Its Double*. Derrida concludes in the essay that, following Artaud, "To think the closure of representation is to think the tragic: not as the representation of fate [destin], but as the fate of representation."[34] Derrida's reading of Artaud correlates fairly closely with Adorno's reading of absurdist theater. If Derrida ends dramatically, though, he begins no less so:

> If throughout the world today—and so many examples bear witness to this in the most striking fashion—all theatrical audacity declares its fi-

> delity to Artaud (correctly or incorrectly, but with increasing insistency), then the question of the theater of cruelty, of its present inexistence and its implacable necessity, has the value of a *historic* question. A historic question not only because it could be inscribed within what is called the history of theater, not because it would be epoch-making within the becoming of theatrical forms, or because it would occupy a position within the succession of models of theatrical representation. This question is historic in an absolute and radical sense. It *announces* the limit of representation.[35]

In other words, Artaud is the originator of a theater that historically (because first) brings emphatically to attention—and tackles as one of its primary subjects—the problem of representation. Unlike Adorno, Derrida has remembered to look to Artaud to ground a reading of the ''shock of the unintelligible,'' even if he does not attempt to unravel its full practical implications; yet, like Adorno, Derrida has overlooked Nietzsche in this equation.[36] Although Derrida's essay stops short of fully engaging all that is at stake in Artaud's and Nietzsche's politics of tragedy, however, he undoubtedly frames Artaud in a manner that will help similarly to illuminate *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Derrida holds that Artaud's ''theater of cruelty is not a *representation*. It is life itself, in the extent to which life is unrepresentable.''[37] Michael Hinden has likewise reminded us that the Nietzschean Dionysian state is ''unrepresentable,'' and one recalls that the Dionysian stands confidently at the center of Nietzsche's construction of the tragic.[38] However, for the most concise articulation of representation and its role in Nietzsche's vision of tragedy, one must turn toward his description of the role of music in the (re)birth of the tragic state. Nietzsche invokes Schopenhauer's belief that music appears as Will and goes on to employ a tempered Schopenhauerism, carefully differentiating between the idea of music-as-Will (an idea that, following Nietzsche's reading of Schopenhauer, is impossible, since the Will and the aesthetic—to which music belongs—are antithetical to each other) and that of music-as-appearance (*Erscheinung*)-of-the-Will (*Birth of Tragedy,* 55/1:50–51). He retreads this claim later in *The Birth,* glossing a long citation of Schopenhauer (103/1:107). The difference between music and its less perfect outgrowth, tragedy, becomes clear in surprisingly Platonic terms toward the essay's end, when Nietzsche declares that ''music is the real idea of the world, drama is but the reflection of this idea, a single silhouette of

it'' (129/1:138). Nietzsche ascribes this distinction between music and drama—and hence his implied verdict on the limitations of tragedy as opposed to music—to the poverty of the symbolic order operational in the theater: language. ''Language can never adequately render the cosmic symbolism of music, because music stands in symbolic relation to the primordial contradiction and primordial pain in the heart of the primal unity, and therefore symbolizes a sphere which is beyond and prior to all phenomena [Erscheinung]. Rather, all phenomena, compared with it, are merely symbols: hence *language* [Sprache], as the organ and symbol of phenomena, can never by any means disclose the innermost heart [das tiefste Innere] of music'' (55, Kaufmann's emphasis/1:51).

This is not the first time in the essay that Nietzsche raises the linguistic issue; earlier in the same chapter, in a philological move of which Derrida would be envious, Nietzsche gestures to a cleft between the language of *Erscheinung* and the language of *Musik* in classical Greek: ''In this sense we may discriminate between two main currents in the history of the language of the Greek people, according to whether their language imitated the world of image and phenomenon or the world of music'' (54/1:49). The presence here of the notion of *Nachahmung,* imitation in the vein of mimesis, is crucial, for it conceptually links language itself, and linguistic representation, to the mimetic act—which becomes, at its extreme, the Socrates-inspired penchant for *vraisemblant* realism in tragedy.

The emphatic shift toward mimesis in Greek tragedy belongs to the intellectual lineage of Socratism, according to Nietzsche; it is part and parcel of the paradigm that must banish myth and mystery, that must *know* something in order to consider it good or beautiful. Thus arrives the moment at which ''the spectator is no longer conscious of the myth, but of the vigorous truth to nature and the artist's imitative power. Here also we observe the victory of the phenomenon over the universal, and the delight in a unique, almost anatomical preparation; we are already in the atmosphere of a theoretical world, which values scientific knowledge more highly than the artistic reflection of a universal law'' (108/1:113).

Against the mimetic tendencies of aesthetic Socratism, Nietzsche calls for an abolishment not just of representation in the form of theatrical *Naturwahrheit,* but of linguistic representation as well: ''We need a new world of symbols, the entire bodily symbolism, not the mere symbolism of the lips, face, and speech but the whole pantomime of dancing, forcing every member into rhythmic movement

[Tanzgebärde]'' (40/1.33–34). The terms used to describe this new symbolic order are clearly meant to suggest the force of music and its ''trembling violence of the tone.'' When one recalls that Nietzsche broaches music as the ideal conduit for the appearance of the Schopenhauerian Will—as opposed to conventional dramatic structures, which can only be a ''reflection of this idea''—then what Nietzsche demands in this new symbolic order approaches something like what Derrida refers to in his essay on Artaud as *présence pure.*[39] Camille Dumoulié, comparing cruelty in Artaud and Nietzsche, seems to have seized on Derrida's reading of Artaud and the notion of pure presence; he describes it as an effort toward ''l'introduction du réel dans le symbolique.''[40] Indeed, Artaud explicitly ascribes the problems of the times to the space between signifier and referent: ''If confusion is the sign of the times, I see at the root of this confusion a rupture between things and words, between things and the ideas and signs that are their representation'' (*Theater and Its Double,* 7/12). On an important short list of artists Dumoulié feels have made this epistemological demand for the union of signifier and referent alongside Artaud are Hölderlin and Nietzsche.[41] Nietzsche's role here is of course the scope of this essay, while Hölderlin's will remind the reader of Adorno's notion of paratactical resistance against subordinating structures of linguistic representation. In what seems to be the Nietzschean take on pure presence, Speech (*Mund*), expression (*Gesicht*), and language (*Wort*) give way to the musicality of rhythm and dance, to the already mentioned ''cosmic symbolism of music'' [Weltsymbolik der Musik], the ''real idea of the world'' [eigentliche Idee der Welt].

If Nietzsche envisions the new symbolic order and mode of representation in musical terms, he also expresses them in quite physical ones, in dancing limbs. This vocabulary of gesture creates an interesting point of contact with *The Theater and Its Double,* where Artaud proffers a similar alternative to linguistic representation: a symbolic order of the gesture to replace that of spoken language. Artaud goes so far as specifically to oppose the gestured to the spoken or written, and he intimates that it is through the gesture that the theater will stand against categories of linguistic representation: ''What is essential now, it seems to me, is to determine what this physical language consists of, this solidified, materialized language by means of which theater is able to differentiate itself from speech [*parole*]'' (*Theater and Its Double,* 38/56). The goal of the *théâtre pur* is to ''élimine[r] les mots,'' a move surely related to Artaud's dictum against written

scripts in his Theater of Cruelty (82). This ''langage solide et matériel'' of which he speaks implies a pure presence—as Derrida asserts, not *representation*. This is reinforced by Artaud's second manifesto on the Theater of Cruelty, in which he directly relates the *espace* of the stage with the *esprit* of the spectator (195). There is no intervening separation; as implied by the notion of pure communicative presence, what happens on the stage in Artaud's conception of the theater happens as well and simultaneously in the minds of its intended audience. Nietzsche comes again into the picture here, not merely in his reiterating Schopenhauer's consideration of music-as-Will-itself, but in his examination of the tragic chorus. He opens the discussion with a mention of the role of metaphor in the Greek poetry of antiquity. His understanding of the poetic use of metaphor departs from the realm of representation and veers toward that of presence: ''For the genuine poet, metaphor is not a rhetorical figure but a vicarious image that he actually beholds in place of a concept. A character is for him not a whole he has composed out of particular traits, picked up here and there, but an obtrusively alive person before his very eyes'' (*Birth of Tragedy,* 63/1:60). Nietzsche's judgment of properly tragic theater as a less perfect descendant of music and his emphasis on the physicality of a newly conceived symbolic order draw him near to Artaud's novel vocabulary of gesture and to Derrida's tethering of the Theater of Cruelty to a desire for pure presence. This is the antidote for the abstraction and mythlessness of a scientism inherited from Socrates, the destroyer of myth, Nietzsche claims; the rebirth of tragedy, like Artaud's projection of the theater, is an attempt to reverse the Socratic epistemological development and its echoes within the practical world.

Once again, one confronts the question of the relationship of theory to practice, the manner in which Nietzsche and Artaud both hope to effect tangible social or political change via a recalibration of our theatrical impulses. As mentioned above, Derrida astutely observes the strategy (the revolt against representation) that Artaud's Theater of Cruelty plans to employ to this political end but ignores the political end itself, the broader practical implications, readily apparent in Artaud's essays, of this mode of tragic action. This oversight is certainly at play in a blatantly self-contradictory passage from Derrida's treatment of Artaud: ''These simultaneously technical and 'metaphysical' questions (metaphysical in the sense understood by Artaud), arise spontaneously from the reading of all texts in *The Theater and Its Double,* for these texts are more *solicitations* than a sum of

precepts, more a system of critiques *shaking the entirety* of Occidental history than a treatise on theatrical practice.''[42] Derrida himself points to the ''technical'' issues raised by *The Theater and Its Double* but then locates Artaud's work away from the area of ''theatrical practice''; surely, though, questions of *technē* are analogous to questions of *praxis*—especially within the theater, and especially in light of the reading of Artaud's thought that I have offered here.[43] Derrida appears to want to make more connections here, but he restricts himself to a tiny throwaway clause early in ''The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation'': ''For Artaud, the future of the theater—thus, the future in general . . .''[44] What explodes in the Theater of Cruelty thus resounds everywhere else. Richard White has made a remarkably similar claim with respect to the transformative desire that undergirds Nietzsche's articulation of the theater: ''In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche recovers the mythical origins of Greek drama not as an exercise in historical scholarship but in order to force the hand of the future.''[45] Nietzsche and Artaud seek change at a deeper cultural level, the ''soil of a different culture'' of which Bahro writes.[46]

Given the clear desire to be effective and the prescriptive tone of both *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Theater and Its Double,* Derrida's statement that Artaud's collection of essays is not really a treatise might merit further analysis, as does the imagined readership of these texts. Derrida opposes the ubiquity of critiques aimed at the foundations of Western culture in *The Theater and Its Double* to the text's potential as a cogent system. Derrida is convincing when he suggests that one might wish to exclude *The Theater and Its Double* from the category of systematic treatise, and if one focuses on what he terms ''solicitations'' in Artaud, then perhaps the essays should be viewed as a manifesto. Artaud himself labels several of the chapters as such, and the sermonic tone of *The Birth of Tragedy*'s final chapters certainly bear the mark of a collective call to arms, in the style and rushed rhetorical breath of a manifesto. One question that arises from the consideration of tone and genre in these two works concerns their intended destination: Whether treatise or manifesto, for whom were these lengthy compositions on the theater written? Who is to ignite the groundswell of cultural transformation to which Nietzsche and Artaud tend? At least one of Nietzsche's early defenders, Richard Wagner, saw Nietzsche's intended audience as a broad one indeed, and he applauded Nietzsche for ''speaking to us and not to [other] scholars.''[47] (As Silk and Stern point out, Wagner's

defense of Nietzsche was really a self-defense, because attacks on Nietzsche's unabashedly pro-Wagner essay were easily reducible to attacks on Wagner himself.) Nietzsche himself does not appear to have been so optimistic when discussing the readership of *The Birth* in his later "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," which he begins by referring to *The Birth* as "almost inaccessible" [schlecht zugänglich] (*Birth of Tragedy,* 17/1:11). More specific later, he wryly considers it "a book perhaps for artists who also have an analytic and retrospective penchant (in other words, an exceptional type of artist for whom one might have to look far and wide and really would not care to look)" (18/1:13). The Nietzsche who authored the "Self-Criticism" in 1886 clearly believes he intended to target a crowd of creators, those capable of bringing to fruition precisely the brand of theater he champions, if such exceptional artists exist. Artaud, on the other hand, makes no overt mention of his intended readership, but one can gather that it was fairly broad; the vast majority of the chapters contained in *The Theater and Its Double* were published by André Gide's institutional *Nouvelle revue française,* while others were presented at academic conferences at the Sorbonne.[48] So, although one can guess with some confidence—based on the text itself and the fact that it was published in an important and fairly widely distributed academic journal—that Artaud, like Nietzsche, targeted readers in a position to implement his suggested theatrical strategies, no hypotheses are required to compile a quick list of those in whom Artaud's influence has been perceived: Jean Genet, Jean-Paul Sartre, Peter Weiss, Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Shaffer, and Richard Schechner.[49] Michael Hinden's roll call of those influenced by Nietzsche in his article on *The Birth of Tragedy* contains, perhaps not surprisingly, many of the same names: Genet, Shaffer, Brook, Schechner, Grotowski, and, of course, Artaud himself.[50] Not only did Artaud's text influence many of the same people Hinden sees influenced by Nietzsche, but both texts appear to have reverberated among the very writers and directors with the potential to shape or reshape the Western theater and thus Western culture.

III

It is tempting here to follow a Derridean and perhaps Adornian line of reasoning to its most logically extreme end. That is, after arguing that Nietzsche and Artaud select as their weapon against the

destructive governing Western epistemology of Socratism a form of theater that attempts to disrupt the structures of representation, and as this essay moves into a discussion of their focus on collectivity (as against individualism), it is tempting to see the collapse of the subject as a necessary result—to say, for example, that when one asserts pure presence one abolishes the difference that maintains ordered systems of representation as well as the conceptual separation required to demarcate one subject from other subjects, to uphold individuation. I submit this line of reasoning here for consideration, although I am neither entirely convinced that one can push the argument this far without parting ways with or at least drastically imposing upon Artaud and Nietzsche, nor am I convinced that one must go to such an extreme. The move from the individuated subject to the unified collective is simply both an immediate effect of the theater that the two thinkers propose and a radical first step toward practical change. If the birth of tragedy is the death of the *principium individuationis* and the Theater of Cruelty is the theater of collectivity, they are so because thus have Artaud and Nietzsche elected to articulate the shift in register from epistemological and theoretical transformation to practical and political change. That Artaud and Nietzsche resort to couching this shift in the very unpragmatic language of mystery, magic, and spirituality shows both the influence of Eastern spiritual thought and a reification of their commitment (akin to that elucidated by Adorno and Bahro) to eventually tangible progress through paradigmatic and epistemological adjustment. In the interest of adducing complexities, I will add to my discussion of collectivization and the spiritualization of the collective a brief examination of precisely why both these themes prove so continually problematic for critics of Nietzsche and Artaud.

Though a close approximation could have been said about *The Theater and Its Double,* Peter Sloterdijk roughly summarizes *The Birth of Tragedy* as "a theory of the drama that then expands into a protohistory [*Urgeschichte*] of subjectivity."[51] Pursuing this further, one sees in sharper relief Nietzsche's treatment of the subject; from the collectivizing tendencies of early Greek tragedy, the scene shifts to the meddling insertion of Socratic individualism and the separation of subjects, and then, finally and triumphantly, the collective is reborn as tragedy itself is resurrected. For Nietzsche, acknowledging his debt to Schopenhauer, the subjective opposes itself to the world of *Kunst.* He goes so far as to affirm that "the subject, the willing individual that furthers his own egoistic ends, can be conceived of

only as the antagonist, not as the origin of art'' (*Birth of Tragedy,* 52/1:47). Such distinctions as those between individuals are ultimately dissolved by proper art, even in its early stages of composition: the artist ''is at once subject and object, at once poet, actor, and spectator'' (52/1:48). Nietzsche views individuation as the source of all suffering, a notion borrowed, he claims, from Dionysian mysteries, and he counters this source of suffering with *die Kunst,* ''the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken in augury of a restored oneness'' (74/1:73). Nietzsche prescribes an abandonment on the pathway to true sociopolitical change of the illusory needs and determinations of the subject in favor of the united polis. The ''joy involved in the annihilation of the individual'' is the openness to being part of a unified whole (104/1:108); in its last gestures, Nietzsche's essay even mirrors this tragic process, as his voice shifts dramatically from the first-person singular to the more embracing and inclusive plural, *wir* (120–22/1:128–30, for example) and the concept of *Volk* is upgraded to the level of a disturbing recurrent motif (124–25/1:132–33). These final chapters of *The Birth of Tragedy* confirm Nietzsche's belief that although a *Führer* can point the way, the *Heimat* to be reclaimed will be taken not by a *Subject* but by a collective *Volk*.

Artaud's insistence on the collective as against the individual can be classed in terms related to those used by Nietzsche—though conspicuously lacking in nationalism—and so one must briefly broach a couple of the essays in *The Theater and Its Double*. In ''The Theater of Cruelty,'' Artaud claims that ''the Theater of Cruelty proposes to resort to a mass spectacle; to seek in the agitation of tremendous masses, convulsed and hurled against each other, a little of that poetry of festivals and crowds, the days, all too rare today, when the people pour out into the streets'' (*Theater and Its Double,* 85/132). Theatrical collaboration in Artaud's model of tragedy oversees the dissolution of individuality, as it does in Nietzsche's, even at the level of composition or performance; it is in this theater that ''the old duality between author and director will be dissolved, replaced by a sort of unique Creator upon whom will devolve the double responsibility of the spectacle and the plot'' (94/144). Of course, in true effectively political fashion, the aim of theater's effect on its audience—an effect compared to the randomness and totality of a plague—is an entirely practical one: ''For if the theater is like the plague, it is not only because it affects important collectivities and upsets them in an identical way'' (27/39). The notion of theater as

plague is another point at which Artaud would have to admit to Nietzschean influence, and specifically to the influence of *The Birth of Tragedy,* although Artaud certainly makes more of it than does Nietzsche. Nietzsche refers once in passing to the pestilential nature of his conception of tragedy: ''And this phenomenon is encountered epidemically: a whole throng experiences the magic of this transformation [fühlt sich in dieser Weise verzaubert]'' (*Birth of Tragedy,* 64/1:61).[52] Artaud, in contrast, devotes an entire chapter to it, elaborating on the ways in which the plague strikes regardless of social standing and other differentiating factors. The thematization of a theater that behaves like an epidemic outbreak emphasizes the extent to which both Artaud and Nietzsche see the stratum of tragedy's activity as a fundamental one, at the Adornian level of ''fundamental attitudes'' (*Haltung*).

As is evident from the passage of Nietzsche's just cited, the theater swells over its audience like an epidemic, and ''a whole throng experiences the magic of this transformation.'' The vocabulary of magic, metaphysics, and spirituality seems to enter Nietzsche's lexicon in *The Birth of Tragedy* most insistently at moments where his discursive focus is the collectivization of an audience of illusorily separate subjects. To an extent, one can attribute this to Nietzsche's confidence in quasi-spiritualistic metanarratives such as myth: ''The myth,'' he contends, ''wants to be experienced vividly as a unique example of a universality and truth that gaze into the infinite'' (107/1:112). Nietzsche's faith in the culturally and socially redemptive power of mythography cannot totally account for his incorporation of religious tropes in his revisionary tragic aesthetics, though, and there are a few instances in *The Birth* that attest perhaps to another motive for the attention to the spirit. For example, despite Nietzsche's derision of theater that plays to its audience's more *moralisch-religiöser* side, Nietzsche himself employs certain Judeo-Christian motifs (133/1:143). He refers to his sponsorship of the collective as an ''Evangelium der Weltharmonie'' and enfolds his agenda for sociopolitical transfiguration in occasionally biblical terms, lifting a reference to ''Milch und Honig'' from Exodus (37/1:29–30). The presence of Exodus in what I have tried to situate as a text devoutly interested in radical political change should not surprise, perhaps, if one recalls Michael Walzer's study of the Hebrew exodus as an authoritative historical blueprint for political transformation. But Nietzsche is often, whether correctly or not, associated with the discourse of secularization and desacralization that also lays claim to

Darwin, Marx, and Freud, despite the fact that he denigrates, in later works, the German embracing of hypersecular positivism and empiricism and mercilessly attacks the naturalists. Thus, what may startle some readers is the way Nietzsche deploys these religious tropes in *The Birth of Tragedy*. They do not appear to be even so much as tinged with irony; they are not the Habermasian ''diabolical inversions'' that run rampant in later works from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to *The Antichrist* and *Ecce Homo*.[53] Perhaps Nietzsche's use of such imagery in his writing on tragedy represents an early attempt to tap into available cultural resources, a rhetorical strategy that recalls both the self-consciously forward-looking visionariness and the sense of returning to lost origins that dominate the final chapters of the essay.

Julia Kristeva has argued that modern literature—and she explicitly mentions Artaud—''becomes a substitute for the role formerly played by the sacred.''[54] This would seem to be truer, though, of Nietzsche than of Artaud. The mysticism of Artaud's articulation of the collectivity seems far less calculated and coherent. His explanation for his use of spiritual and metaphysical metaphors most often runs in a tautology that goes something like this: To be properly effective, theater must target the spirit, and spiritualized theater is the optimal variety because it is properly effective. There is one moment of great clarity in *The Theater and Its Double* that treats this specific topic, however, and it speaks eloquently to Artaud's reversion to ''primitive'' (his word) models of spirituality as a means of expressing a need for political reformation: describing the costuming and symbolism of the Balinese theater, he writes that ''these spiritual signs have a precise meaning which strikes us only intuitively but with enough violence to make useless any translation into logical discursive language'' (*Theater and Its Double,* 54/83). This careful dichotomization of the spiritual and the logical recalls one to the very impetus behind the Theater of Cruelty, the dismantling of subordinating epistemological structures—the sort that Nietzsche attributes directly to Socrates and aesthetic Socratism—en route to a wider cultural renewal. Artaud's spiritualization of the theater is, like Nietzsche's, a deliberate contestation of an inherited and damaging logical tradition.

Both the collectivization and the spiritualization of tragedy espoused by Nietzsche and Artaud raise questions that revolve around

issues of political orientation. Although I have already given assurance that this essay would steer clear of attempting to assess or reassess these thinkers' ideological bent, I would be remiss if I were to neglect to give at least a cursory invocation of the debate. Nietzsche and Artaud articulate the spiritual and mystical sides of their aesthetics as a sort of progressive regression, a reversion to long-abandoned but, in their view, positively valorized cultural paradigms. Anyone essaying to reach backward in history to recover such a lost moment runs the risk of being branded reactionary; indeed, during the recent furor over the opening of the new Reichstag, Hans Stimmann gestured toward this tendency, which has, in almost knee-jerk fashion, instantly ''associated nostalgia with conservatives.''[55] Bahro submitted himself to similar criticism when he declared the necessity of a return to Benedictine models of communitarianism in order to breathe life into the flagging Left. Coupled with the general historical circumstances that flowered in Europe soon after Nietzsche's passing and that seemed uncomfortably prefigured in *The Birth of Tragedy*'s insistence on the primacy of the unthinking and unindividuated mass, a call for a return to the roots of anything was to be shadowed later by considerable critical suspicion. Artaud escapes the most scathing attacks by a defense of anachronism, for Mussolini, Franco, and Hitler were well ensconced in power before the Theater of Cruelty gained any sort of widespread currency.[56] Nietzsche, however, was not so fortunate, either in his historical position—he cannot be said to postdate fascism and National Socialism—or in certain of his posthumous editors, who slanted his words in a manner that would reflect him unfavorably for decades and make the final *Volk*-filled passages of *The Birth of Tragedy* an even more chilling read.[57] Luminaries led the tsunami-like charge of accusations against Nietzsche—scholars such as Georg Lukács, in his *The Destruction of Reason* (*Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*), and Georges Bataille, in an essay titled ''Nietzsche et les fascistes.'' M.-P. Nicolas, in his book *From Nietzsche Down to Hitler,* continues the trend, as has Howard Williams more recently. Maurizio Serra, treating Nietzsche and the extreme Right in France in ''Nietzsche und die französischen Rechten,'' is far more cynical toward the possibility of reading Nietzsche into fascism, or, for that matter, of reading fascism into Nietzsche; Serra does seem to me, though, unhealthily skeptical in his certainty of the apoliticality—or at least the absolute political neutrality—of *The Birth of Tragedy*.[58] One major aim of this essay has

been to establish the political importance and engagement of Nietzsche's aesthetics.

Rather than function contentedly as theories on the state or origin of the theater, Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* and Artaud's *The Theater and Its Double* occupy a space within a tradition of aesthetics that openly confesses its practical goals. In prescient accordance with Adorno's model for properly political art, which works initially not at the surface of governmental policies and legislative action but rather at far more fundamental levels, Nietzsche's and Artaud's formulations of an effective tragic theater seek political change through a remolding of the foundational structures of culture that enable and determine political formations. The deeply embedded nature of this change is emphasized by their focus on collectivities and broadly spiritual effects, and it is precisely this bearing that gives today's readers of Nietzsche and Artaud such tremendous pause. However, lest one feel compelled unreflectively to discount this strategic turn to the collective, it might be best to recall here that Nietzsche is not the only thinker to inscribe change in such collectivizing terms. Consider this passage, from Fredric Jameson: ''For Marxism, indeed, only the emergence of a post-individualistic social world, only the reinvention of the collective and the associative, can concretely achieve the 'decentering' of the individual subject called for by such diagnoses; only a new and original form of collective social life can overcome the isolation and monadic autonomy of the older bourgeois subjects.''[59] Delete the conditioning, introductory phrase, ''For Marxism,'' and Jameson—a critic whom one would be at pains even hypothetically to situate within the fascist or totalitarian camp—sounds here quite Nietzschean.

It is toward a different hypothetical that one could turn in conclusion. What would have happened if, rather than departing from the destructive subject-centered ontology of the Western tradition—the Socratism that has burrowed its way into occidental consciousness via Descartes and others—by moving toward the collective, Nietzsche and Artaud had attempted instead a move from the subject to the object, from the same to the other, in the way that more recent thinkers such as Levinas, Jean-François Lyotard, and Derrida have done? Levinas, disturbed by what he terms the ''egology'' of Western philosophy and the sociopolitical apparatuses erected upon and around it, certainly starts on the same ground as Nietzsche and Artaud, but he intriguingly chooses a different remedy. There is not space here to tease out the fuller implications of this hypothesis, to

theorize exactly how this otherness might have registered itself in visual terms (be they theatrical or cinematic); concentrating the necessary theoretical acumen to undertake such a project, however, could lead to productive new territories.

Notes

This essay has benefited immensely from the criticism and suggestions of the anonymous reviewers for *Comparative Literature,* where it was first published in a slightly different form (55, no. 1 [Winter 2003]) and of Nicholas Rennie, David Wellbery, and Walter Sokel.

1. Thomas Heilke, *Nietzsche's Tragic Regime: Culture, Aesthetics, and Political Education* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), 110. Heilke continues: ''News of the fire—in which the Tuileries were burned by the communards on May 25, 1871, but (unbeknownst to Nietzsche) the Louvre remained untouched—reached him while he was serving as a medical orderly in the Franco-Prussian war. It was during this time, he would write in 1886, that *The Birth* first was conceived and sketched. The possibility of a rabble summarily destroying a significant portion of the cultural heritage of the West made a deep impression on Nietzsche.'' Julian Young glances to a different historical event—the founding of the Festival Theater in Bayreuth in 1872, the same year *The Birth* was published—as the practical touchstone. See Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 25.

2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *''The Birth of Tragedy'' and ''The Case of Wagner,''* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), 17; italics in the original. Page numbers from Kaufmann's translation will be followed by corresponding page numbers in the *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden,* ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), here 1:11. Where necessary, I have modified translations in the interest of more direct fidelity to the original; where no translation is cited, translations are my own.

3. Passing references abound to cosmetic similarities between Artaud and Nietzsche, and I will try to give a quick accounting of some: Martin Esslin touches upon a few similarities and differences between *The Birth* and *The Theater* in *Artaud* (London: J. Calder, 1976), 80; Henri Gouhier briefly discusses *The Birth*'s effect on Artaud in *Antonin Artaud et l'essence du théâtre* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1974), in an appendix, ''Artaud et Nietzsche,'' 179–89; Ronald Hayman, following Michel Foucault's example from *Madness and Civilization,* sees Artaud and Nietzsche in their visionary madman guise in *Artaud and After* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); and Michaël La Chance plays them very close to the Nietzschean ''will to power'' in ''Artaud et Nietzsche: Une métaphysique des forces,'' in *Antonin Artaud: Figures et portraits vertigineux,* ed. Simon Harel (Montréal: XYZ, 1995), 63–71. However, the only truly comprehensive comparison of which I am aware is Camille Dumoulié's *Nietzsche et Artaud: Pour une éthique de la cruauté* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), treated more substantially a bit later.

4. Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double,* trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 15. Page numbers from Richards's translation are

followed by corresponding page numbers in the French from Artaud, *Le théâtre et son double,* ed. Paul Thévenin (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1964). Here, 21.

5. Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art,* 2.

6. Thomas Heilke, ''Nietzsche's Impatience: The Spiritual Necessities of Nietzsche's Politics,'' *Interpretation* 24, no. 2 (1997): 201.

7. Heilke, *Nietzsche's Tragic Regime,* 125.

8. Nicola Chiaromonte, ''The Political Theater,'' trans. Richard Koffler, in *The Worm of Consciousness and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 131.

9. Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (London: Princeton University Press, 1988), 56. The trend to which I referred, of widening the scope of the political to include things outside the mere workings of government, owes itself at least in part to other trends—the efforts of Foucault, for example, and his vision of power/knowledge as pervasive in all social structures. Not everyone is convinced of the advantage of this labeling of everything as ''political''; Denise Riley, for one, feels that what was formerly known as ''political,'' ''juridical and governmental power,'' has been ''dislocat[ed]'' by the ''social,'' to the point where problems such as poverty, for example, become ''divorced from politics and assigned . . . to the social sphere.'' Riley, *Am I That Name?: Feminism and the Category of ''Women'' in History* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 51. Certainly, the political ramifications of the social must be recognized, but Riley is correct in asserting that a distinction must be made between the levels at play. See, for a useful discussion of what gets termed ''the abuse of 'politics' '' in contemporary theoretical discourse, Bruce Robbins, ''The Politics of Theory,'' *Social Text* 18 (1987): 3–18.

10. One can hardly fail to recall the somewhat uncomfortable relationship Nietzsche's thought has to that of Adorno and other members of the Frankfurt school, and constructive examples of this ambivalence can be found in Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1969). Despite the occasional discomfort, however, Horkheimer and Adorno remain aware of and acknowledge what one might term Nietzsche's particular progressive potential or revolutionary moment. See especially the third chapter, ''Juliette oder Aufklärung und Moral,'' 88–127.

11. Theodor Adorno, ''Commitment,'' trans. Francis McDonagh, in *Aesthetics and Politics,* ed. Fredric Jameson (London: New Left Books, 1977), 180.

12. Ibid., 179. The context of this statement is a defense of absurdist antirealism such as that found in the plays of Samuel Beckett. Among others, Alan Sinfield disagrees with Adorno on the transgressive nature of the theater of the absurd: ''Absurdist theatre does not require that disaffection be pushed through to action; indeed, it implies that any attempt would be futile. The overall drift was complicit with existing society.'' Sinfield, ''The Theatre and Its Audiences,'' in *Society and Literature, 1945–1970,* ed. Alan Sinfield (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983), 184.

13. Theodor Adorno, ''Parataxis: On Hölderlin's Late Poetry,'' in *Notes to Literature,* vol. 2, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press), 131.

14. Ibid., 136. Adorno goes further, claiming that Hölderlin's poetry also expresses a sort of triumph of subjectivity (ibid., 477–78, 136–37), a point that would finally set him against Nietzsche and Artaud and their move from the subject to the collective. Strong ultimately stresses that Nietzsche's final pronouncement on the

subject is that it *is* a collectivity, a ''multiplicity.'' Tracy Strong *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 301. See especially the chapter entitled ''Texts, Pretexts, and the Subject,'' 294–309. The argument of Bonnie Honig tends in this direction as well, toward a notion of the inevitability of ''the conditions of massness'' in Nietzsche's thought; see Honig, ''The Politics of Agonism: A Critical Response to 'Beyond Good and Evil: Arendt, Nietzsche, and the Aestheticization of Political Action,''' *Political Theory* 21, no. 3 (1993): 531. Leslie Paul Thiele likewise refers to a Nietzschean ''pluralism of the soul.'' Thiele, ''Nietzsche's Politics,'' *Interpretation* 17, no. 2 (1989–90): 282.

15. Adorno, ''Commitment,'' 180.

16. Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), xiii.

17. M. S. Silk and J. P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 225; and Peter Sloterdijk, *Thinker on Stage: Nietzsche's Materialism,* trans. Jamie Owen Daniel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), xxv.

18. Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche,* 160.

19. Ibid., 137 and esp. 145–82.

20. Tracy Strong, ''Nietzsche's Political Aesthetics,'' in *Nietzsche's New Seas: Explorations in Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Politics,* ed. Michael Allen Gillespie and Tracy B. Strong (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 162.

21. Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche,* 174; italics in the original.

22. Ibid., 183. I have de-italicized Strong's italics in the first quote and italicized a portion of the second for emphasis. The passage of Nietzsche from which Strong is drawing here is found in the first paragraph of section 23 (135/1:145).

23. Nicola Chiaromonte, ''Antonin Artaud and His Theatre,'' trans. Miriam Chiaromonte, in *The Worm of Consciousness and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 125. The English translation here has been drastically modified to correspond more closely to Chiaromonte's words; I mention this specifically here because I will find it necessary to return to his language later.

24. Ibid., 126.

25. I am indebted to the work of John McClure, starting with his *Late Imperial Romance* (London: Verso, 1994), for informing my entire discussion here of the role of traditional religious models in Bahro's Green politics.

26. Reprinted in Rudolf Bahro, *Building the Green Movement,* trans. Mary Tyler (Philadelphia: New Society, 1986), 86.

27. Ibid., 108.

28. Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension,* 4–5. I will add here, for consideration, the alpine retreat mentioned by Nietzsche in the ''Attempt at a Self-Criticism'' as the impetus behind *The Birth of Tragedy* (*Birth of Tragedy,* 1:11), and the retreat from which Zarathustra famously emerges prior to embarking on his mission (*Knitische Studienausgabe in 15 Einzel bänden,* ed. Giorgio Colli and Messimo Montinari, (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), vol. 4, p. 11.

29. Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason,* trans. Michael Eldred (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 132.

30. Jacques Derrida, ''Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas,'' in *Writing and Difference,* ed. and trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 79.

31. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zurbenealogie der Moral,* in Colli and Montinari, vol. 5, p. 403, 5:403, translation mine.

32. Nietzsche's relationship to Socrates is, of course, much more nuanced in the context of his total oeuvre. For useful amplification, see Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche,* esp. 112–23, and his accompanying notes, which expound on the evolving treatment of this relationship in the scholarship on Nietzsche. For a differently grounded but certainly related examination of the twentieth-century stage's war against mimesis, see Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theater* (London: Routledge, 1997).

33. Adorno, ''Commitment,'' 178.

34. Jacques Derrida, ''The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation,'' in *Writing and Difference,* ed. and trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 250.

35. Ibid., 233–34; emphasis mine.

36. Derrida does, however, come perilously close to linking Artaud and Nietzsche in this manner, and within a debate over representation, in two lengthy notes to ''La parole soufflée,'' in *Writing and Difference,* 326–27.

37. Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 234.

38. Michael Hinden, ''The Five Voices of *The Birth of Tragedy,*'' *Comparative Drama* 22, no. 2 (1988): 112.

39. Dumoulié, *Nietzsche et Artaud,* 363.

40. Camille Dumoulié, ''Antonin Artaud ou la cruelle exigence du réel,'' *Critique* 46, no. 522 (1990): 949. Monique Borie opts for slightly different vocabulary, making a case similar to Derrida's regarding Artaud's *présence pure* but labeling it instead *oralité véritable,* in *Antonin Artaud: Le théâtre et le retour aux sources; Une approche anthropologique* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1989). See especially the chapter entitled ''Briser la maison des mots,'' 56–63.

41. Dumoulié, ''Antonin Arteud,'' 956.

42. Derrida, ''Theater of Cruelty,'' 235; italics in the original.

43. Derrida's desire to keep the two terms apart could probably be traced back to Aristotle's *Politics,* which relies on a similar separation. See also the first chapter of Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice,* trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), which patiently troubles Aristotle's divorcing of the terms.

44. Derrida, ''Theater of Cruelty,'' 232. Georges Bataille echoes Nietzsche's view of theater's close relation to historical life: ''L'Existence, c'est-à-dire la tragédie.'' Bataille, ''Chronique nietzschéenne,'' in *Œuvres complètes,* vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 482.

45. Richard White, ''Art and the Individual in Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy,*'' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 28, no. 1 (1988): 59.

46. Bahro, *Building the Green Movement,* 86.

47. Qtd. in Silk and Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy,* 97.

48. See Artaud, *Le théâtre et son double,* 233–51, for Thévenin's extensive notes on the composition, presentation, and publication history of individual chapters.

49. To this list, Bettina Knapp would add Eugène Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, Harold Pinter, and Günter Grass. Knapp, *Antonin Artaud: Man of Vision* (New York: David Lewis, 1969), xiii. Bernd Mattheus would add Albert Camus, Samuel Beckett, and Heiner Müller. Mattheus, '' 'Das Theater der Grausamkeit': Ein kapitales Mißverständnis,'' in *Das Theater und sein Double,* by Antonin Artaud, trans. Gerd Hen-

niger (Munich: Matthes und Seitz, 1996), 230–31. Hayman offers an overview in *Artaud and After.* Gene A. Plunka, ed., *Antonin Artaud and the Modern Theater* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994), provides the most comprehensive look at Artaud's wide-ranging influence. Individual essays within the volume contain more focused treatments/comparisons after the manner, for example, of Thomas Hocke, *Artaud und Weiss: Untersuchung zur theoretischen Konzeption des "Theaters der Grausamkeit" und ihrer praktischen Wirksamkeit in Peter Weiss' "Marat/Sade"* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1978). It should be noted, though, that the inclusion of Genet's name on this list must not be taken uncritically. In his contribution to Plunka's tome, Thomas Akstens maintains that "the question of the direct influence of Artaud on Genet remains problematical," and he directs the reader to several discussions of the matter. See Akstens, "Representation and De-Realization: Artaud, Genet, and Sartre," in *Antonin Artaud and the Modern Theater,* ed. Gene A. Plunka (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994), 181 n. 11.

50. Hinden, "Five Voices," 97.

51. Sloterdijk, *Thinker on Stage,* 16.

52. Nicholas Rennie has recently argued that Nietzsche follows an Enlightenment line of thought (Lessing's in particular) in embodying historical trauma, projecting it through the body. See Rennie, "'Schilderungssucht' and 'historische Krankheit': Lessing, Nietzsche, and the Body Historical," *German Quarterly* 74, no. 2 (2001): 186–96.

53. Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice,* trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), 65.

54. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror,* trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 26. See, in addition to Kristeva, Merab Mamardašvili, "La metafisica di Artaud," trans. Roberto Salizzoni, *Rivista di estetica* 36, no. 3 (1996): 51–62; and Mattheus, who asks, in his introduction to a recent German translation of Artaud, "Did Artaud seek, with his theatre project, an equivalent to what were and still are, in ancient societies, ritual, cult, shamanism, magic, and the festival?" (Mattheus, "'Das Theater der Grausamkeit'": 228).

55. Quoted in Alan Riding, "Building on the Rubble of History: A Capital Reinstated and Remodeled," *New York Times,* April 11, 1999. Thanks to Lutz Koepnick for bringing this article to my attention.

56. This does not prevent Artaud, albeit during a time of troubled mental health, from speaking and writing in praise of fascist dictators. See Naomi Greene, "'All the Great Myths Are Dark': Artaud and Fascism," in *Antonin Artaud and the Modern Theater,* ed. Gene A. Plunka (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994), 102–16.

57. See Bernd Magnus, "Nietzsche's Philosophy in 1888: *The Will to Power* and the '*Übermensch,*'" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 24 (1986): 79–99.

58. Serra's stance is of course much rarer today than it was when Tracy Strong first crusaded against it in 1975, in the first edition of *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration.* "Perhaps no opinion about Nietzsche has been so readily accepted," Strong wrote, "as the claim that he was 'anti-political.' Throughout this book, however, I have claimed that Nietzsche's understanding of contemporary times goes in fact in a 'political' direction" (Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche,* 186).

59. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 125. Of course, Jameson is no great fan of Nietzsche's class politics (201).

Nietzschean Neurotheater: Apollinian and Dionysian Spirits in the Brain Matters of *Our Town*

Mark Pizzato

In 1871, Nietzsche described the Apollinian and Dionysian aspects of ancient Greek theater, arguing that they applied to modern culture as well. Today, neuroscientific research on the human brain's left and right hemispheres provides a material basis for Nietzsche's theory of these distinctive aspects in ancient and modern performance. The classic American ghost drama *Our Town,* by Thornton Wilder, written midway between Nietzsche's time and ours, expresses the Apollinian and Dionysian spirits of the brain in various ways through productions onscreen that show changes in the social constructions of a ghostly Self and reality from the modern to the postmodern.[1]

Nietzsche theorized that the ''symbolical dream image'' of transcendent Apollinian beauty could arise only, in either ancient or modern times, through its opposite: the intoxicating music and movement of Dionysian ritual ecstasy, as in the festival context of Greek theater, where ''savage natural instincts were unleashed.''[2] Nietzsche found a creative dialectic between the Dionysian and Apollinian, between communal and individual forces of ancient theater: the ecstatic chorus in the orchestra evoked in the audience a dreamlike vision of the heroic actor onstage.[3] Nietzsche valued the chaotic, disruptive power of the Dionysian chorus. Yet, he also defined the Apollinian communal order that emerged in the sculptural ideal of the mask and figure of the individual performer, transformed by choral energies and passions. Today, we can see both the chaotic, savage, instinctual passions of the Dionysian chorus and the formal, civilized, communal ordering of the Apollinian hero as they arise not only through the architectural and ritual heritage of

ancient theater, but also from the anatomical and evolutionary structures of the human brain.

In the vast time scheme of evolution, a few thousand years is a very short period. Thus, we (and Nietzsche) share our basic brain anatomy with the ancient Greeks. But we have much greater scientific tools today with which to explore specific brain areas and their functions. The ''reptilian brain'' (the brain stem and basal ganglia), the oldest region of the human brain, serves as the foundation of our instinctual reactions to the environment and our body's internal regulatory mechanism. The ''paleomammalian'' limbic system, the second of the human brain regions to evolve, produces emotional communications between the body and brain regarding internal drives and external perceptions. The last brain region to evolve in humans was the ''neomammalian'' neocortex, which controls higher-order consciousness in the left and right hemispheres.[4] The left hemisphere (the dominant one in most people) specializes in prosocial identity, executive controls, verbal language functions, narrative linear processes, and formal analysis.[5] It thus corresponds in certain ways to Nietzsche's definition of the Apollinian—the symbolic, civilized, and formal aspect of performance. The right hemisphere bears further connections to the natural emotions and instincts of the limbic system and brain stem while specializing in spatial awareness, poetic prosody, holistic intuition, and skeptical disruptive anxieties. This ''devil's advocate'' of the neocortex relates to the ''savage,'' kinetic, musical, choral, rebellious, Dionysian passions that Nietzsche valued in ancient Greece and that evolved in various ways throughout Western theater history.[6] The right brain matures before the left in the human, just as the Dionysian ritual chorus preceded the ''birth'' of theater and its individual Apollinian actors. The foundation of a ''social brain between 18 and 24 months is driven by the [emotional] attunement between the right hemisphere of the parent and the right hemisphere of the child. . . . It is through this process that the unconscious of the mother is transferred to the unconscious of the child.''[7] Thus, a Kristevan maternal *chora* or Nietzschean choral ''womb'' becomes the repressed, abject, yet potentially disruptive foundation of the ideal, symbolic, socialized, Apollinian self.[8] The left brain eventually becomes more optimistic and ''prosocial'' as it helps the dreamlike ideal of self ''connect with others and decrease anxiety,'' while the right brain's

''bias toward anxiety, suspiciousness, and negativity keeps the body alert to danger.''[9]

Such parallels between Nietzsche's theater gods and current neuroscience are not just a matter of left- or right-brained artistry, despite the popular tendency to oversimplify these terms. The two hemispheres do operate somewhat independently, especially in men,[10] with perceptions and ideas processed separately in each, until their unconscious communications combine to form conscious realizations.[11] But there are no left- or right-brained people. Except for those individuals in whom a stroke or surgery has disabled one of the hemispheres or cut the connection between them, all of us use both sides in varying degrees all the time. (For example, as you read this, you might experience right-brain skepticism about my use of binary,[12] scientific, and historical categories while using your left-brain verbal skills to analyze them.) And yet, the human brain's basic evolutionary structures of the brain stem and limbic system, in relation to the asymmetrical specializations of the neocortex, reveal significant motives for the mind's inner theater to produce and value different styles of performance outside. The brain's evolutionary structures and their expression by a Dionysian-Apollinian dialectic may even show the primal reasons, from nature to culture, why humans create theater in the first place.

Humans continue to bear certain remnant instincts of the animal kingdom, such as the four Fs of fighting, fleeing, feeding, and fornicating—driven by the genetic goals of survival and reproduction. These natural instincts are produced by cortico-limbic pathways of rage, fear, and panic within the human brain. But our huge success as a species through the evolution of higher-order consciousness, mind-sharing language, and environment-transforming technologies came with a tragic flaw: a self-awareness of mortality that vastly extends nature's creativity and destructiveness. Unlike other animals, which exist in the narrow range of recent past and present, guided mostly by instinctual patterns of perception, thought, and action, humans evolved tremendous variability in their long-term and short-term memories, their internal theaters of imagination, and their collective orders of symbolic analysis and control. The instinctual brain stem drives of survival and reproduction, expressed through the emotions of the four Fs in the limbic system, became transformed in humans as illusory ego desires and selective social demands far beyond the body's needs.

Ancient cultures projected their ego desires and social demands

beyond mortality into ghosts and gods as extensions of the right and left brain's different interpretations of primal instincts and emotions. Theater arose in ancient Greece, Nietzsche emphasized, with the transcendent Apollinian mask of character as the heroic ego-ghost onstage.[13] Yet theater also involved the ''shattering'' of that *principium individuationis* in the ''mysterious primal unity'' of the Dionysian chorus.[14] Ever since then, theater artists have stressed either a more Apollinian, left-brain, formal transcendence or a more Dionysian, right-brain, intuitive communion.[15] Both hemispheres are involved through the various artists and spectators of each cultural period, exploring the puzzle of a species that knows itself and feels its mortal vulnerability, yet strives to survive and reproduce in fictional ways.

Specific modern and postmodern permutations of Apollinian and Dionysian spirits, from brain matter to drama and performance, are exemplified by Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* (1938) in its initial film version of 1940 and subsequent screen productions of 1977, 1989, and 2003.[16] *Our Town* shows not only spirits from the grave, but also the living, as phantoms, exposing the mortal angst and metaphysical yearning of the human limbic system and neocortex, with many conscious and unconscious mechanisms operating to produce the ghostly fiction of an individual self in the brain. For this reason, as well for as its small-town nostalgia and minimal staging requirements, *Our Town* has long been one of the most frequently produced plays in America, especially in schools and community theaters.[17] This essay will investigate the theatrical devices and metaphysical ideas of Wilder's drama in relation to its various screen versions to consider how each work displays a confrontation with particular ghosts, involving Apollinian and Dionysian structures within the human brain that produce ideologically diverse yet interrelated visions of life and death.[18] The pages ahead will show that *Our Town* is not just a quaint parochial classic, but a (post)modern, Nietzschean tragicomedy, and the different screen versions demonstrate to varying extents its transcendent Apollinian ideals and disruptive Dionysian edges.

Choral and Individual Ghosts

Various specters populate *Our Town*. In the play's final act, a chorus of mourners gives birth to the ghost of the dead Emily, who

then joins a separate community of the dead in their graves. They are being ''weaned away from earth,'' and their connections to this life,[19] in a gradual Dionysian shattering of individuality and at the same time an Apollinian purifying of their transcendent souls. An invisible chorus of prior ancestors haunts the town through the names on the earliest tombstones. The Stage Manager mentions this in the first act while presenting an Apollinian, prosocial, left-brain history of the community (with the help of Professor Willard and Editor Webb). He is a theatrical ghost as well, moving inside the proscenium to walk through the town or to play certain roles (Mr. Morgan and the Minister), yet standing outside the frame to narrate. Through his lead, the audience becomes a chorus of future ghosts haunting the town. The spectators become specters, like Emily visiting her home after death, as they project their personal memories, fantasies, and ideals onto the empty stage and mimed actions of the past.

The Stage Manager also uses the choral audience to conjure Dr. Gibbs, Mrs. Gibbs, and Joe Crowell as heroic ghosts onstage. They are dead in the Stage Manager's time, in 1938 or later, as he addresses the audience outside the frame, but they materialize onstage as he speaks. Later in the play, Mrs. Gibbs appears as the Apollinian leader of the dead, despite her unfulfilled dream of an identity beyond ''our town.'' During the first act, while she is still alive, Mrs. Gibbs confesses to Mrs. Webb (as the actresses mime the trimming of beans) that she always wanted to see Paris and might have the money soon because an antique dealer offered a large sum for a piece of her furniture (*Three Plays,* 13). But in the last act we learn that she gave the money as a ''legacy'' to George and Emily, her son and daughter-in-law (56). The ghost of what might have been, through the vector of Mrs. Gibbs's desire to go to Paris, appears at the edge of the stage—as with Joe Crowell's education coming to ''nothing'' because he was killed in World War I (8).

Where do the ghosts in *Our Town* exist? Like Pirandello's six characters, Wilder's are seeking an author who will give significance to their existence. But they meet alien spectators from the future, rather than a troupe of actors. Even the Stage Manager must insist on something eternal that is known in his and the spectators' bones, holding onto the ideal of Apollinian transcendence and communal order in a world of increasing fragmentation, diversity, and individual alienation. The main character, Emily, also benefits from a strongly social brain, through the Dionysian, right-hemisphere, cho-

ral foundation of her Apollinian, left-hemisphere, prosocial identity. She is not shown meeting death alone. Instead, she emerges in the last act from the black umbrellas of the living in their funeral procession, wearing a white dress of purity, her hair tied ''like [that of] a little girl,'' as she joins the other ghosts in their grave chairs onstage, moving immediately from one group to another (55).

Earlier in the play Emily demonstrates both rebellious Dionysian impulses and her right-brain anxiety about being alienated from the community when she aspires to more independence of mind than will fit into her small town and limited time period. She likes high school and discovers she has a talent for public speaking. She tells her mother (who is still stringing beans in the afternoon) that she made a speech in class that day and performed ''like silk off a spool'' (20). As a sixteen-year-old girl, Emily decides: ''I'm going to make speeches all my life.'' But then her concerns turn back to the conventional; she asks her mother whether the beans she is helping her trim are ''long enough'' and whether she is ''pretty.'' Instead of spinning off the spool as a distinctive public performer with a silky voice, Emily will remain bound by the familial and communal desires that have already pruned the neural talents in her brain.[20] Growing up in a small town at the start of the twentieth century, when women still vote ''indirect,'' as her father explained earlier (*Three Plays,* 16), Emily Webb will use her prettiness to attract a good husband—her next-door neighbor, the young George Gibbs—and settle down to farm life with him. She will not address a future public audience like her Apollinian father, Editor Webb (who also addresses the theater audience). She will die in childbirth and then wait with the other dead in the cemetery for her earthly aspirations and her mortal body to burn away.

Emily leaves behind the ghost of what she might have been, like her mother abandoning the dream of being in Paris. Emily's drama reveals the downside to her idyllic, communal identity in a small, conservative town: the terror of alienation engendered by deviating from the norm. Likewise, George shows talent as a baseball player and plans to go to college to study agriculture. But instead he marries Emily right out of high school and works on his uncle's farm, which he then inherits, without expanding his mind in college or finding individual fame beyond his hometown team. As someone who does not plan on higher education herself, though she likes the classroom more than George, Emily warns him that he might ''get out of touch with things'' if he goes away to college (42). Hearing

this, George changes his mind: ''I don't need to go and meet the people in other towns'' (43). Here Wilder presents not only the optimistic, prosocial, left-brain bias of small-town life, but also its right-brain anxiety as ideals of communal order conflict with Dionysian passions of ''excess''[21] that seek an alternative heroic identity through a different community elsewhere.

Simon Stimson, the church organist and choir director in Grover's Corners, finds his communal significance through the hymns he conducts, such as ''Blessed Be the Tie That Binds,'' as well as through the gossip of others about his drinking problem (*Three Plays,* 21). He is bound by the ties of his job and by the group mind interpreting his personal rebellion—as Wilder shows with Mrs. Gibbs, Mrs. Webb, and Mrs. Soames arguing after choir practice about whether Simon's drinking is getting better or worse (25). The gossip of Mr. Webb and Constable Warren also grooms Simon's wayward late-night walks (27).[22] The Apollinian order of a dreamlike community attempts to control this eccentric, intoxicated villain lest he demonstrate that some people ''ain't made for small town life,'' as Dr. Gibbs warns (*Three Plays,* 26).

Simon is the most rebellious of the dead in the afterlife of gravestones, Mrs. Gibbs the most sanguine. Together they (along with other voices of the recently dead) form something like the split hemispheres of the group mind, between Mrs. Gibbs's optimistic, cognitive, left-brain authority and Simon's pessimistic, angry, right-brain anxiety—a Dionysian devil's advocate to her Apollinian leadership. ''I'm always uncomfortable when they're around,'' he says about the living in the funeral procession (53). Mrs. Gibbs silences him by saying his name. But he is right to be uncomfortable, for a visitor looking at his gravestone then begins to gossip about his drinking problem and suicide (54).

Mrs. Gibbs already knows, somehow, that the funeral is for her daughter-in-law, who died in childbirth, and calmly reports this to the others in the graveyard's group mind (55). Mrs. Soames, who exists between the right-brain cynicism of Simon and the left-brain confidence of Mrs. Gibbs, responds, ''My, wasn't life awful . . . and wonderful.'' ''Wonderful, was it?'' Simon retorts—with a ''sideways glance,'' according to the stage directions. But Mrs. Gibbs, as Apollinian executive officer, again controls Simon, snapping at him, ''Simon! Now remember!'' Mrs. Soames then relates her memories of Emily's wedding and farm and of Emily ''reading the class poem at Graduation Exercise.'' Emily has continuing significance to the

spectral group and its selection of memories. However, if the Stage Manager is correct, the community of the dead must gradually give up such identifications: ''lose hold of the earth . . . and the ambitions they had . . . and the pleasures they had . . . and the things they suffered . . . and the people they loved'' (52). These recently dead in the cemetery, though they form a collective mind like their counterparts in life, are evolving beyond those living brains and experiences, beyond the ties to loved ones, beyond the memory traces of pain and pleasure, beyond the ghosts of what might have been as their ''eternal'' parts become even higher orders of advanced cortical consciousness, transcending the animal brain and decaying body. Yet this Apollinian vision of the dead in their graves as human minds evolving in the afterlife toward pure left-brain transcendence is also contradicted by the right-brain reminders of Simon Stimson's anxiety and by the newly deceased Emily's divergent desires.

When Emily joins the dead, she still feels strong ties to the living community through the limbic emotions of her animal brain. She has not yet reached the higher-order consciousness that Wilder shows in the ghosts who have been in their graves longer, the earthly part of them burning away. The Stage Manager calls this process ''get[ting] weaned away from earth'' (52). Some in the audience might see a Christian parallel here: the dead souls are gradually purified as they wait for the Final Judgment before they go to heaven or elsewhere. Yet, the weaning can also be seen as a cyclical process throughout life, shown from the beginning of the play. The verbal gossip and mimed habitual actions in various scenes of daily life reveal the gradual communal sculpting and grooming of individual brains through the nurturing rewards or pruning punishments of the ''ties that bind,'' making a significant place for each person in the group mind and its social behaviors. Wilder allows his audience to see Emily's death as a rebirth, to see the movement of her soul away from the Dionysian womb of our town and Mother Earth despite her (and Simon's) abject, wayward, choral desires. This metaphor of weaning, from infancy to the afterlife, idealizes an increasingly independent Self, beyond the mother's body and one's own corpse. However, parts of Wilder's play also undermine the ideal of transcendent identity, showing the natural Dionysian emotions of living brains and their ghosts. The degree of Apollinian order or Dionysian revolt, in individual and choral ghosts, depends upon different historical interpretations of this drama.

In *Our Town* characters are weaned throughout life, in various

stages of growth and independence. But they continue to be part of the cultural womb, even in the afterlife, nurtured again and again for further weaning. A flashback scene in the second act shows George and Emily as young adults falling in love, idealizing each other through the phantom ideals they have of their parents. During the wedding, though, they fear being weaned away from their original families to marry and form another one (47–48). Emily balks at the ceremony, wanting to stay her father's girl by eloping with him: ''There must be lots of places we can go to. I'll work for you. I can keep house'' (48). Still, she goes through with the marriage, as demanded by the communal mind. After her death, Emily discovers that those who have died before her form a new community—a group mind extending from the living toward ''the Mind of God,'' as Rebecca Gibbs expressed it earlier (28). The dead of *Our Town* are also, in a postmodern sense, being weaned away from earth, from their own time period, through the grooming gossip and mimed repetitions of the drama, until the evolution of their group consciousness (in various generations of artists producing the play) meets the future ghosts of the audience.

Some spectators might believe, like the Stage Manager, in something eternal about human beings: a ghost or soul surviving beyond the mortal machine of brain and body. Others today might take a neuroscientific view that the ghosts in Wilder's play need to inhabit living brains in order to survive. The community of ghosts at the end of *Our Town* is, in that sense, a projection from the minds of still living characters mourning at Emily's funeral and of the Stage Manager as surrogate author when he involves the brains of the audience members and their personal interpretations. Either way, the weaning of those graveyard ghosts away from earth engages the Dionysian terror of loss and transformation that all humans experience in specific ways, from the primal traumas of infancy through later life-changing events such as marriage to the final threshold of death. Emily shares with the audience, in her return as a ghost to her twelfth birthday, a paradoxical discovery: the intense cherishing of life as something that is always being lost and the ultimate acceptance of mortal change. She thus shows an inherent contradiction (or further Nietzschean dialectic) in the modernist ideal of an increasingly independent self or soul as the highest order of human consciousness, a self dominating the environment and moving away from the earth toward a purified, divine Mind, weaned free from the animal brain yet still bound to community, place, and time—like the

transcendent Apollinian actor tied to the passionate Dionysian chorus.

Emily's journey in the play's last act evokes tragicomic terror and hope in the audience members if they share her desire to meet lost friends and family in the afterlife or to revisit the living through memories of the past. Emily's intrepid ghost demonstrates the survival instincts of the (Dionysian) animal brain, projecting an ideal (Apollinian) self beyond the mortal body to enter a different, intersubjective environment in the cemetery chairs. She is uncertain of her place in this new community even though she recognizes some of its members, including her mother-in-law, Mrs. Gibbs, and Simon Stimson. As she speaks with naive enthusiasm to the transcendent, linear left brain of Mrs. Gibbs (who does not remember the legacy she left behind), Emily gains a new perspective through her remnant limbic ties to the living with an anxious, holistic, right-brain view more like Simon's. ''Live people don't understand,'' Emily realizes. ''They're sort of shut up in little boxes'' (56). Mother Gibbs agrees, but, when Emily asks how long her sympathies with the living will last, tells her to ''wait and be patient'' (56–57). Emily has become a spectator at the play, a ghost watching the living drama, like the theater audience. But she cannot simply wait in her grave for the gradual weaning of her soul away from earth, letting go of those boxes in ''our town,'' of brain and body habits, of neural and social attachments. In order for her higher-order consciousness to evolve and join the graveyard's group mind, she acts out one more scene from the past, creating a climax for the living ghosts in future audiences.

The other dead warn Emily not to go back in time (57). But she sees only the joy in nostalgia and its ties of memory. ''I won't live over a sad day. I'll choose a happy one—I'll choose the day I first knew that I loved George.'' The Stage Manager cautions her that she will not only live it again, but watch herself living it and ''see the thing that they—down there—never know . . . the future'' (58). This is precisely the view he has offered to the theater audience from the beginning of the play, to the degree that spectators project their personal, nostalgic ghosts onto the characters and the stage's absent scenery. But the Dionysian choral audience will experience the pain of nostalgic joy more deeply in the final act through Emily's view of being dead, all of life lost. As the act begins, the Stage Manager also warns the audience, ''The dead don't stay interested in us living people for very long. . . . Some of the things they're gonna say maybe'll

hurt your feelings—but that's the way it is.'' (52). He then addresses the spectators more directly: ''And what's left when memory's gone, and your identity, Mrs. Smith?'' A double horror is evoked by this final act through its depiction of the disinterested dead in their graves and Emily's naive decision to go back in time. The audience knows that in life, through Alzheimer's or other diseases of memory, people may lose their ties to the past, also undermining their present, intersubjective identity. But *Our Town* shows that all of us lose the earthly Self in the end, whether we have an eternal soul that is weaned away from earth or we just come to nothing, like Joe Crowell's education. The play shows us yet another Dionysian horror in the present: our dead loved ones, whose ghosts we carry in us as neural models of identity, are already moving away, changing, becoming disinterested, and turning into eternal, Apollinian others—except through the characterizations of them that we invent in life, using aspects of their spirits, in the mortal theater of our brain matter.

Emily dares the choral audience to follow her, to fully sympathize with her fearless enthusiasm to revisit the past and reconnect with limbic emotions and memory traces against the higher-order disinterest of others in the cemetery. Mrs. Gibbs tells her not to pick a happy day, lest she be overwhelmed by its emotions in memoriam: ''Choose the least important day in your life. It will be important enough'' (58). But Emily's rebellious, right-brain spirit insists on a birthday return—to her twelfth, half a lifetime before her death at twenty-six. Emily is amazed at how young her mother, Mrs. Webb, looks (59). This may remind the audience that each of us reconstructs memories of the past as we live, recasting more familiar ghosts in prior roles (unless these are contradicted by photographs and home videos). It also begins to show Emily's changing perspective as a phantom spectator returning, at the end of life, to act her past role as twelve-year-old birthday girl.

After watching and participating a bit in her birthday encore, Emily exclaims, ''I can't bear it. They're so young and beautiful. Why did they ever have to grow old?'' (61). But Emily must encounter more of the death drive in her mortal past before she can fully let go of life and join the disinterested survival instinct of her eternal community in Wilder's vision of the afterlife. Emily struggles to cross the threshold of the imaginary kitchen onstage and return to the physical embrace of her mother in the past. While playing the role of her self as twelve-year-old, she says, in an aside to the Stage Manager and audience, ''I can't—I can't,'' casting him an ''anguished

glance.'' She discovers in her unconscious, postmortem memory traces of some things she had ''forgotten,'' such as the present George left on the doorstep for her birthday. But the Dionysian choral audience also participates in making those gifts of the past become present by imagining the props in the empty space onstage.

Breaking character, Emily as a ghost tries to explain her self to her mother: ''Oh, Mama, just look at me one minute as though you really saw me. Mama, fourteen years have gone by. I'm dead'' (61–62). But her mother does not hear or see Emily as a ghost of the future—as an actor, impostor, trickster, and spectator (even though Mrs. Webb herself moved briefly outside the proscenium frame in act 1). Her mother goes on with the daily mime of cooking breakfast and what was said about Emily's gifts fourteen years before she died (62). When her father calls from offstage, ''Where's my birthday girl?'' Emily again tells the Stage Manager, ''I can't.'' Her earthly desire to return to those conscious and unconscious memories has been broken by a new Dionysian view of her entire life as transient, her past individuality shattered: ''It goes so fast. We don't have time to look at one another.'' She says good-bye to the world, her town, her parents, and many little things: sunflowers, food, coffee, dresses, baths, sleeping, and waking up. She calls earth ''too wonderful for anybody to realize you.'' When she asks the Stage Manager whether any human beings fully realize life while they live it, he answers with both right- and left-brain awareness, plus some degree of limbic compassion: ''The saints and poets, maybe—they do some.''

Our Town gives the still-living audience a chance to value ordinary life, in each moment, through the nostalgic wonder and pain of having lost it all. Imagining the present through a future postmortem nostalgia gives a great richness to every detail of life, a gift in each breath, miraculously returning just when it seemed lost forever. That mystical experience of saints and poets, or of some spectators, evolved along with language and theater as a function of the human brain.[23] It can become an overwhelming ecstasy, though, so it is often masked by the formal orders of Apollinian left-brain normality. In Wilder's play, the poetic Stage Manager helps the audience to see that the further evolution of human consciousness requires both a full appreciation of the past and acceptance of unending change. Even in this life, being fully aware of each moment can bring the joyful ecstasy of mindfulness, with a multitude of otherwise unconscious sensations flooding the conscious brain, along with powerful

emotions of loss as the self magnifies and shatters, in Nietzsche's Dionysian sense.

Mrs. Gibbs's aloof Apollinian mask is countered by Emily's Dionysian desire to return to the wonder of earth, embracing the full heritage of the human brain instead of being weaned away from it toward eternal disinterest. Each human life contributes in some small way to the evolution of consciousness here on earth, through the drama of self and other in various areas of the brain. As Emily remarks about her loved ones, before her trip back in time, ''From morning till night, that's all they are—troubled'' (*Three Plays,* 57). After she experiences the wonders of earth that the living ignore, she realizes how limited their troubled minds are: ''That's all human beings are! Just blind people'' (63). Mr. Stimson agrees, with his Dionysian, right-brain sensitivity to human tragedy: ''That's what it was to be alive. To move about in a cloud of ignorance; to go up and down trampling on the feelings of those . . . of those about you. To spend and waste time as though you had a million years. To be always at the mercy of one self-centered passion, or another.'' But Mrs. Gibbs reprimands Simon with her left-brain idealism: ''That ain't the whole truth and you know it. Emily, look at that star.''

The Apollinian Mrs. Gibbs leads the other ghosts toward the stars, urging them to let go of all the memories, regrets, and remorse about human failings on earth. As she told Emily earlier, ''Our life here is to forget all that, and to think only of what's ahead'' (58). After Simon's declaration about the destructive ignorance of human self-centered passions that we retain despite millions of years of evolution, Mrs. Gibbs and others among the dead turn their perspective toward the stars, whose light takes ''millions of years . . . to git to the earth'' (63). But Emily continues her concern for humanity as she watches her mournful husband, George, sink to his knees at her grave: ''They don't understand, do they?'' Eventually she may lose her right-brain awe and limbic passion for life, becoming like the other dead, who wait patiently in their graveyard ''for the eternal part in them to come out clear,'' as the Stage Manager puts it (52). But the audience of *Our Town* will not stay in their chairs when the play ends. They are left with the task of understanding their troubled lives more fully, with both starbound Apollinian idealism and earthly Dionysian wariness, if they want to evolve further in this life. They must work out the particular legacy of genes and ghosts, of memories and hopes, in their brains and towns to find the significance in each moment of daily life as it makes specific contributions

to a higher order of human consciousness, one shared with others whether the self survives in the end or not. In this material way, the ghosts of *Our Town* wait for their eternal parts to come out clear through their future audiences and actors. But various screen productions of Wilder's play also demonstrate that Dionysian and Apollinian right- and left-brain choices must be made in this evolutionary process in order to reintegrate the natural and supernatural elements of the human brain.

Dionysian Passions in Apollinian Dreams

In 1940, just two years after the Pulitzer Prize–winning success of Wilder's drama on Broadway, *Our Town* appeared onscreen as a feature film starring the same actor, Frank Craven, who had created the role of the Stage Manager on Broadway. (Wilder himself had also played the Stage Manager for two weeks on Broadway while Craven was sick.) Although Wilder was involved in translating the play to the screen, many changes were made. The film version of *Our Town,* directed by Sam Wood and with a screenplay by Harry Chandlee and Frank Craven, did achieve popular audience success, garnering an Oscar nomination for best picture in 1941. But the changes made for this black-and-white screen adaptation masked the play's existential Dionysian anxieties, filling in the open stage with a formal Main Street, with realistic fenced and landscaped two-story houses for the Gibbs and Webb families, a real horse and cart for Howie Newsome to deliver actual milk, a drugstore for the Stage Manager as ''Mr. Morgan,'' a church interior with full organ for the choir rehearsal and wedding, and many real-life props in all settings. The end of the film was changed to make Emily's death, her graveyard communion with other ghosts, and her spectral visit to the past just a dream that she wakes from to hold her newborn baby—a happier ending for the mass American audience in 1940, about to enter the Second World War.

The published correspondence between Thornton Wilder and the film's producer, Sol Lesser, shows their debate about these Apollinian changes toward a dreamlike realism.[24] Wilder argues against a planned opening of the film with ''Mr. Morgan appearing at the door of his drugstore,'' favoring instead a jigsaw puzzle behind him, ''setting the background against the whole United States, [with] that constant allusion to larger dimensions of time and place, which is

one of the principal elements of the play'' (*Three Plays,* 815). Wilder's Dionysian, right-brain, holistic intuition also favors the possibility of beginning with a ''model town,'' putting Mr. Morgan in the audience time frame of 1940, as long as the movie can avoid an impression of ''Giant Man looking upon Toy Village'' (818). However, in the finished film, Craven's Mr. Morgan simply walks along a wooden fence on a hilltop overlooking Grover's Corners—probably the cemetery hill of the play's final act. He does not speak about the oldest tombstones, as in the play's first act, nor are any graves shown. He just describes the town, pointing with his pipe at the tiny lights in the darkness below. Then he calls to an offscreen ''operator,'' and the town is fully lit from above. Mr. Morgan tells the audience that we have moved back in time, from 1940 to 1901, and that it is dawn, with the townspeople waking below. The film shows Joe Crowell walking along a fully pictorial street on his newspaper delivery route as Dr. Gibbs walks home from delivering twins and Mrs. Gibbs comes downstairs, seen through the window of their home.

The end of the film returns to the hilltop fence, which has a gate that Mr. Morgan opens to pass through as he begins the cemetery scene, speaking about the tombstones and telling the audience about Emily's illness. We then see her at home in bed, falling asleep, with her concerned parents around her. Through Apollinian film magic, the photos of family members on Emily's bedroom wall fade into gravestones as the voice-over dialogue of the dead begins. The quilt on her bed also transforms into a distant view of the funeral procession crossing the hill to get up to the cemetery. Emily then stands with the dead in the cemetery and later floats through her dreamlike flashback to her birthday.

The film never shows a jigsaw puzzle or a theater stage. The Stage Manager, as the avuncular Mr. Morgan, addresses the audience directly from the screen. But some of his harshly ironic, more Dionysian lines are cut, such as his comment that loving life to have it and having life to love it is a ''vicious circle'' (*Three Plays,* 31). *Our Town* becomes softer in the film version, protecting its mass audience from the emptiness of the stage and the vast spaces between the stars in the eternity of the disinterested dead. Wilder eventually agreed to the ''new opening'' and marveled at the producer's willingness to ''spare no expense'' with actual fences and trees in the studio sets, as well as convincingly painted villages and clouds in the background (''Correspondence,'' 823). He also agreed to let Emily wake up from a dream in the end: ''Insofar as it's a concrete happening [in the

movie] it's not important that she die; it's even disproportionately cruel that she die'' (824). While they were developing the final screenplay, Lesser's Christmas gift to Wilder of a new car, a Chrysler convertible with a rumble seat, may have helped make such changes seem to the playwright less ''cruel'' (821). But the changes also show Wilder's recognition of the different medium and audience for his small-town ghosts, as he and Lesser discussed the Apollinian dream of ''40 millions'' who would watch the play as a movie (816).

Wilder argued with Lesser (prior to the Christmas gift) that a more ''realistically done'' wedding scene would not be ''interesting enough'' (816). He recognized that there ''may be an audience-risk to be[ing] bold'' with the mass medium of cinema. But he saw an even greater risk in making his play more realistic onscreen and thus ''dwindling to the conventional.'' Wilder stated that the innovative staging techniques in his original script were an ''almost indispensable reinforcement and refreshment of a play that was never intended to be interesting for its story alone.'' However, the left-brain, linear-narrative expectations of the movie producer and mass audience eventually dominated the playwright's right-brain, provocative, Dionysian creativity. The movie became less innovative than the play onstage, giving the audience complete Apollinian scenes onscreen that required the spectators to provide less in the way of personal associations to create the details of ordinary life, the wedding, and the afterlife that the actors in the play had evoked through mime and imagination.

Rather than the Stage Manager, an actor playing the minister is heard in voice-over speaking about the wedding scene directly to the audience: ''Once in a thousand times it's interesting'' (*Three Plays,* 49).[25] Mrs. Webb's voice-over is heard, too, as she sits in church and wipes away her tears. But her internal dialogue expresses only the loss of Emily from her home, not her Dionysian aside to the stage audience: ''You know, there's something downright cruel about sending our girls out into marriage this way. . . . I went into it blind as a bat myself'' (*Three Plays,* 46). The sexual dimension of marriage is repressed even more in the 1940 film than in the original play. Emily's voice-over presents her wedding confusion in a quiet tone, expressing alienation and a desire to stay with her father, but not her sudden, passionate hatred of George and herself, as she says in the play: ''I *hate* him. I wish I were dead'' (47; italics in the original). George's voice-over reveals his doubts about the ceremony and his fear that he is growing old by getting married. In the film, however,

there is no Dionysian chorus of baseball pals as in the play, taunting George about the rite's sexual implications: ''We know what you're thinking. Don't disgrace the team, big boy'' (46). In the original drama, the Apollinian Stage Manager represses the boys' erotic disruption: ''That's enough of that.'' Yet, he connects this perverse choral display to ''weddings in the old days,—Rome, and later. We're more civilized now.'' In the film, Mr. Morgan stays out of the wedding, and so do the baseball satyrs.

The movie still includes the Stage Manager's direct address to the audience and his Apollinian control of the drama as framer of the first act's ''daily life'' scenes. Mr. Morgan stops the conversation between Mrs. Gibbs and Mrs. Webb about a desire to see more of the world beyond their town (''That'll do, ladies'') and then introduces Professor Willard, who meets him in front of the drugstore. After the professor's lecture, which Mr. Morgan also abbreviates, Editor Webb gives the political and social report from his open upstairs window—without the Dionysian delay of his mortal body's being injured while eating an apple, as in the play. Mr. Webb then fields questions from unseen voices in the ''audience.'' But the Belligerent Man's inquiry is moved from the middle to the end and cut short by Mr. Morgan, who says, ''We haven't time for any more questions. We must be getting on with the picture.'' Mr. Morgan embodies the motion picture's repression of more Dionysian elements in the original script, with his left-brain, superegoistic control of how the cinema audience experiences the town in its three-dimensional depiction onscreen, in what characters are allowed to say, and in the initial lighting and time travel from the mountaintop above. The film takes some risks in surprising its mass audience with things beyond the conventional but calls for fewer right-brain sensitivities and personal associations by the spectators to fill in the gaps.

There is not much ''culture or love of beauty'' in Grover's Corners, as Editor Webb explains in both the stage and screen versions; he lists a few famous works of literature, music, and painting that the townspeople know, but no dramas (17). They do have ''pleasures of a kind,'' Editor Webb says, including the sun coming over the mountain at dawn, the birds, and the change of seasons. In moving from act 1 to act 2, the film shows Mr. Morgan catching a fly in his drugstore, then letting it go outside—an added detail that demonstrates his Apollinian mastery over the Dionysian disruptions of nature. To introduce the flashback scene of George and Emily realizing ''they were meant for one another'' (39), Mr. Morgan also shows his mas-

tery, putting his hand over the camera to end the previous scene in a blackout. Then he pulls back his hand to reveal his jovial, yet controlling countenance. Likewise, darkness is used in the first act, albeit briefly, to indicate a wilder Dionysian alternative to Mr. Morgan's Apollinian authorship over lighting and cuts. A large, gesticulating shadow appears on the wall of the church loft, as a drunken Simon Stimson conducts the choir rehearsal with one hand and plays the organ with the other. The women gossip about him after rehearsal, as in the stage drama. He then walks down the street in a drunken haze (under the full moon), ignoring the offer of Editor Webb to walk him home, while the Constable looks on. Thus, the communal attempt to regroom Simon's Dionysian behavior is shown onscreen. But his bitter alienation in act 3 is not. He still greets Emily in the graveyard scene. In her Apollinian dream, however, Simon's right-brain sensitivity and limbic anger about the cruelty, selfishness, and ignorance of the living is omitted. The gossip by the living in the graveyard about Simon's suicide is also cut from the film. Mr. Morgan mentions the information instead, as he points to Simon's gravestone and its Dionysian epitaph—which no one understands, according to the play, because ''it's just some notes of music'' (54).

The movie of *Our Town* in 1940, made for the ''40 millions'' of a current mass audience, rather than the time-capsule archaeologists of theater's future, increases the Apollinian left-brain censorship already in the play, showing less of the rebellious, right-brain passions in the script's Dionysian characters and *chora.* Emily does not die in childbirth. She merely has a bad dream that makes her say, at its beginning and end: ''I want to live.'' While a ghost in that dream, she sees her father, kneeling at the grave, as ''troubled.'' But she does not view all the living as shut up in boxes, blind to the wonders of life, like she says onstage (56, 63). She goes back to her sixteenth, not her twelfth birthday, and meets her younger self there (played by the same actress, Martha Scott, in a different costume), while floating as a translucent phantom through the scene. She sees her parents and her other self mostly ignoring one another. The ghostly Emily does not move into the role of the living Emily; she just observes the past. Like the Apollinian movie viewers, she hovers at the edges of the scene, with her glowing form overlapping other characters, while she remains unseen and unheard by them.

Our Town as a film reflects the phantom spectatorship of movie viewers: watching lifelike dramas from an immortal, controlling,

Apollinian position—like Mr. Morgan who returns after Emily's dream to narrate the happy ending. The film masks the darker side of that Apollinian dream: Simon's Dionysian rage at the communal ideal of ties that bind and Emily's painful alienation from the living. In the original script, she cannot reach the living world onstage with her right-brain message of holistic awe at the earth's ordinary wonder. She can only convey that to the spectral spectators. But the film lets Emily live again, rejoining her parents, George, and the new baby. It does not offer Emily's question to the Stage Manager about whether humans can fully appreciate life while living it and his answer that some, like saints or poets, do, thus suggesting that the audience might (62). Instead of giving this Dionysian and Apollinian challenge to spectators, evoking their limbic emotions and personal memories to value the beauty of what is always being lost in the present, the film gives an idyllic closure to this small-town drama. The characters live happily ever after in the past, rather than moving toward a higher consciousness of human mortality—in the future, living minds of the mass audience.

Phantom Rebellions

The 1977 NBC television production of *Our Town* was directed by George Schaefer. It starred Hal Holbrook as a charming, Apollinian, Mark Twain–like storyteller, with just a wink of Dionysian mischief.[26] This commercial-television version of Wilder's drama opens with a vast stage on which a Dionysian community of actors in contemporary clothes greet one another as Holbrook walks through their midst, kissing cheeks and shaking hands. When he reaches a desk near one wall, there is a brief blackout, then the play begins. Holbrook wears reading glasses as the Stage Manager, consulting the script in a large promptbook on his desk, while addressing the TV audience. He uses a model of the town to describe it, as Wilder had wanted for the 1940 film. A high-angle view shows that the stage floor, which was all white during the actors' initial meeting, is now painted with overhead illustrations of the street and the Gibbs and Webb homes, including the floor plan of the kitchen and one other room in each house, with bushes and lawns outside. Tables and chairs are in the kitchen spaces, and there is a translucent roof over each house. The Stage Manager's face and upper body are superimposed over the Apollinian god's-eye view of the two homes.

This TV version of the play, presented after the Dionysian cultural turmoil of the 1960s and during the folksy presidency in the late 1970s of Jimmy Carter, a Georgia peanut farmer, takes a bigger risk with its mass audience than did the 1940 film, evoking spectators' imaginations to complete the picture onscreen. Yet, it reassures the watching public with an Apollinian overview of the town model, street, and floor plans in a simpler, nostalgic, communal time. The pseudocommunion of television encourages the mass audience to fill in the emptiness of the Webb and Gibbs homes, using the domestic spaces in spectators' personal memories and in the home theater through which they watch. The numerous experiences in particular family environments, stored in millions of mass-audience skulls, join imaginatively with the stage maps, mimed actions, and communal ghosts onscreen to interpret the Apollinian mapping and grooming of wayward Dionysian impulses and individuals in ''our town.''

Sound effects and mimed actions help to evoke the lost life of the town on an empty stage, as in the original play's stage directions. A cock crowing, Howie Newsome's horse and milk bottles, kitchen utensils clattering, and cooking sounds are heard. This TV version does not have the soothing melodies of the film's Aaron Copland soundtrack; it evokes the silences of the stage instead. But the play's various Dionysian eruptions are minimized for television. The Belligerent Man, with his concerns about social injustice, and the women who question Editor Webb as spectators are kept offscreen. Only their voices are heard. Simon Stimson's church has its own rooftop and pews as stage furniture. He mimes the organ playing, with no ominous shadow (or wall for it) while he conducts the choir.

This screen version does include certain Dionysian moments. Simon delivers his bitter lines in the final graveyard scene—lines cut from the film version of the scene. Mrs. Webb expresses her doubts about the cruelty of sending Emily into marriage without any sexual education, initially as her voice-over, then spoken out loud to the TV audience during the wedding. George's baseball buddies briefly interrupt with their Dionysian taunts. The Apollinian Holbrook soon controls them with his comments about being more ''civilized'' now, but a close-up shows him smiling mischievously as he asks the mass audience to remember being young, in love, and ''just a little bit crazy'' while they watch the beginning of George and Emily's plan to be together (*Three Plays,* 39).

George performs a brief Dionysian rebellion against the selective fate of marriage, as in the original script. But this TV version shows

a phantom double of George, who says ''Why's everybody pushing me so?'' while stepping away from the George and Emily figures standing with the Stage Manager as Minister (47). A double of his mother replies, ''I'm ashamed of you.'' Then there is an added line spoken by George: ''What's the matter? I'm dreaming.'' His Apollinian confidence is reawakening from the Dionysian nightmare, even if it is shamed by his internalized mother (or *chora*) as right-brain social foundation. George's dream mother and paranoid phantom self disappear when he finds himself standing again next to Emily, his left-brain executive ego completing the matrimonial union.

Emily also rebels and in this television version expresses her right-brain, holistic glimpse of the romantic marriage trap with a phantom double, who steps away from her coupling at the altar and says, with limbic panic and rage, that she hates George and wants to die. Her internalized father appears as another dream ghost to reform her, bringing over the Apollinian George to promise he will take good care of her and love her, as she demands love from him: ''For ever and ever'' (48). Emily's spectral double then rejoins her proper self in the communal rite. Yet, near the end of the ceremony, the Stage Manager expresses his doubts about believing in marriage (49) as still images are shown of him and others at the ritual's end for the TV audience to ponder in a more complex future.

In the final act, the dead are not parallel to the stage edge, as is called for in Wilder's script (50). Instead, the grave-chairs point haphazardly in various directions, suggesting diverse, postmodern views of the afterlife. Points of light are visible in the background, signifying the stars where Mrs. Gibbs focuses her Apollinian interest as well as the Dionysian darkness between them. George expresses a Dionysian chora of physical passion and loss when he kneels and clutches Emily's legs at the end of the drama instead of falling to the floor as the script directs (64). In Wilder's play, Emily is merely a gravestone to George, as her soul is weaned away from earth toward a higher-order, left-brain clarity. This Emily, however, defies the Apollinian dream of becoming a disinterested, eternal soul, showing that she feels George's head on her lap.

Coming Out Clear On-screen

More of that earthy Dionysian materiality appears in the 1989 PBS television version of *Our Town* directed by Kirk Browning, a film of

the 1988 stage production directed by Gregory Mosher at Lincoln Center that was billed as the fiftieth-anniversary celebration of Wilder's classic. A half century after Frank Craven premiered the Stage Manager role on Broadway, Spalding Gray gave a postmodern spin to the author's stand-in. Gray was a cast member in the Wooster Group's 1981 deconstruction of the play and in other productions by that company before gaining fame as a monologist, performing the character of himself, with various neurotic and paranoid symptoms, talking directly to the audience while alone onstage.[27] For those in the New York theater audience who knew Gray's prior avant-garde work, Mosher's casting of this actor as the Stage Manager exemplified his attempt to bring out ''the darker side'' of the play.[28] But many reviewers attacked Gray's performance, while otherwise praising the production, because his celebrity persona clashed with the classic drama.[29] As Frank Rich put it in the New York Times, ''Gray's flip stage manager constantly disrupts the fragile text . . . [with his] smart-aleck attitude and lapsed preppie outfit.''[30]

Yet Gray continued to play with the criticism, and the pain it caused him, by quoting from the reviews in his subsequent self-scripted one-man show *Monster in a Box,* which eventually became a film directed by Nick Broomfield in 1992. Gray's smart-aleck flipness in that film, as in the PBS presentation of *Our Town,* shows his Apollinian sculpting of a playfully transcendent Self.[31] But both works also demonstrate the Dionysian vulnerability of any performer's identity—to viewers and critics who may shatter the ego through the mirrors of self onstage and onscreen.

Even for those in the television audience who did not know Gray's monologist persona, his interpretation of the Stage Manager ''substantially alters traditional readings of the text.''[32] So does the rest of the production. It begins with a high-angle shot of Gray walking out alone onstage, not placing table and chairs there as in the script (*Three Plays,* 5), or taking a commanding view of the town from the cemetery mountaintop as in the 1940 film, or greeting other actors communally as in the 1977 NBC version. This 1989 PBS production emphasizes the mortal Dionysian echoes of ''our town'' onstage against the patriotic media slickness of the Reagan-Bush era and the play's folksy, sentimental tradition. Gray points to various areas of the empty stage and to what the audience might imagine in describing the town and cemetery—without hills and houses being shown or a model and floor plan, as in the earlier screen productions. Here

just a trellis, a table, and several chairs suggest each of the two homes in the first act, along with the roving, alienated Stage Manager's verbal descriptions and the theater's permanent pipes, visible in obscure geometric patterns on the backstage wall.

Like Gray, the other adult actors in this production speak rapidly and dryly while hurrying through their mimed routines of daily life. Yet, they also reveal Dionysian cracks of despair and terror in their Apollinian facade of resigned persistence. Howie Newsome, suddenly alarmed by Bessie, backs away and yells at her, as if the primal fear and rage in his animal brain, and in the imaginary horse, were playing phantom tricks at a certain point in the empty stage space. (He yells at Bessie again in the second act, when the imaginary horse starts to pull away as he talks with Si Crowell.) George wrestles boisterously with Emily's younger brother, Wally, as they all run to school after a rushed breakfast in their homes. Gray as Stage Manager hurries the Professor through his speech about Grover's Corners, stressing the point that ''our time is limited'' (15). He reads the women's questions for Mr. Webb from cards he pulls out of his pocket, but the Belligerent Man shouts his question from offstage. Gray asks him to come forward, and a bitter young man appears on the stage with them (not in the auditorium as the script indicates), like a workman from backstage, nearly spitting his question about social injustice, then shouting his follow-up: ''Well, why don't they do something about it?'' (17). Editor Webb shouts back: ''Well, I don't know.''

Applying the ''poor theater'' and ''empty stage'' styles of the experimental theater artists Jerzy Grotowski and Peter Brooks, as well as Wilder's original directions, Mosher puts George and Emily at the top of bare, very tall, precarious-looking A-frame ladders to represent the windowsills of their homes—unlike the full house of the 1940 film or the solid platform ledges of the 1977 TV show. George fights with his little sister, Rebecca, pushing her head down as she tries to climb the ladder, making their Dionysian competition for a view of the moon seem dangerous as well as childish. A board over the backs of two chairs creates the drugstore counter, and Gray plays Mr. Morgan with no change in costume or demeanor. Simon Stimson appears with his choir in the side balcony of the empty theater where the play is being performed. Other seats in the auditorium and balcony are covered with white sheets, as if only ghosts were watching the play in this screen version. Simon looks drunk as he conducts the choir; this makes the subsequent gossip about him

seem crueler as communal grooming. Likewise, Dr. Gibbs points a stern finger at George as he criticizes his son's failure to chop wood for the hardworking Mrs. Gibbs. Dr. Gibbs also snaps at his wife angrily and puts his hand to his neck in quotidian pain when she advises him to get some rest and perhaps take a vacation with her, using her legacy.

Gray as Stage Manager stresses the ''vicious'' Dionysian circle of having and loving life, and Mrs. Webb shouts a forceful ''Good-by'' at George to make him leave her home and not break the superstition about a groom seeing the bride before the wedding. The actors playing her and her husband (Roberta Maxwell and Peter Maloney, respectively) also reveal how both characters are afraid to talk with their future son-in-law about conjugal matters, giving him no advice on marriage and hiding their daughter from him at breakfast. After a close-up of Mrs. Webb in the wedding congregation as she laments the fact that Emily will enter marriage as ''blind as a bat'' about sex, as she herself did (46), George's baseball buddies taunt him from the theater balcony, where one boy raises a bat between his legs, holding the phallus high, even after the Stage Manager dismisses them. When Mrs. Soames gives her comments on the wedding, she pops onto the screen from outside the frame. The Stage Manager grabs her and pulls her back as she tries to continue at the scene's end. As the minister for the wedding, Gray holds a copy of *Our Town* instead of a prayer book. These brief disruptions expose the Dionysian cracks in this production's hurried Apollinian surface, revealing perverse, postmodern edges and echoes of the unsaid.

In act 3, Gray as Stage Manager emphasizes the line about ''layers and layers of nonsense'' (51). He mentions the ''something eternal'' about human beings in a speculative, rather than adamant, tone (52). During her trip back in time, the ghostly Emily holds her mother's shoulders while standing behind her and playing the role of the twelve-year-old. Yet, she is taller than Mrs. Webb. Emily strokes her mother's neck in mature, nostalgic pain while grasping her shoulders in childlike reassurance. The actress (Penelope Ann Miller) also shows on her face, with tears flowing, that Emily is experiencing that touch both as her child self and as the ghost of self from the afterlife. She is now a twenty-six-year-old mother who has died in childbirth, touching her mother of fourteen years ago with childlike wonder, adult pain, and fatal nostalgia—looking back and reconnecting to the past from the end point of life, then letting go. The Mosher-Browning production of *Our Town* illustrates not only

the Apollinian dream of a simpler, communal time in America's past, but also the Dionysian horror of mortal awareness as the human brain and its various cultures continue to evolve. In this version, Emily screams her line: ''It goes so fast. We don't have time to look at one another'' (62). We have seen this desperation throughout the drama in the hurried words and mimed actions of her parents and other adults, words and deeds that quickly suture and repress the Dionysian cracks and erotic disruptions of their town's communal bonds. This postmodern production, with darkness (no stars) behind the Stage Manager at the drama's end and someone offscreen whistling the tune ''These Are the Ties That Bind'' during the final credits, reveals a further evolution in the survival struggle of communal and individual identities through mortal attachments and immortal yearnings in the Dionysian and Apollinian parts of the human brain.

In his *Monster in a Box* monologue, Spalding Gray describes a ''unifying accident'' during one particular performance of Mosher's *Our Town* onstage—a strange occurrence that unified the actors and spectators in the realization of theatrical uniqueness, showing the spontaneous creativity of ordinary mortal life. As Emily desires in the play's last act, the cast and audience suddenly realized the fullness of life while they lived it (according to Gray), ''that they are only here for this one moment together. It's not a film. It's not television. And because of the nature of the accident, we all know it probably will never be repeated again in the same way.'' As Gray is telling the story, he reperforms the Stage Manager talking about the dead in the final act: ''They're waitin' for something that they feel is comin'. Something important, and great'' (52). Moving his hand away from his mouth, Gray recounts how the eleven-year-old boy playing the dead Wally Webb in his tombstone-chair ''projectile'' vomited. ''Like a hydrant it comes, hitting one of the dead in the shoulder. The other dead levitate out of their seats in fear and drop back down.'' Not knowing how to improvise upon that spontaneous, earthy creativity from the living actor's mortal body while he is playing an immortal soul, Gray simply continued with his next line: ''Aren't they waitin' for the eternal part of them to come out clear?''

Of course, that particular performance is not included in the Browning television version of Mosher's stage show. But those in the mass audience who see the film *Monster in a Box* and watch the 1989 video of *Our Town* might project even more of a Dionysian spirit upon the play's last act onscreen.[33] Viewers who are aware of Spal-

ding Gray's suicide in January 2004 may find further ghostly dimensions in both shows. These works demonstrate that the best dramas of film and video, as well as of theater, may help performers and spectators to reintegrate their visceral brain stem, emotional limbic system, anxious right brain, and executive left brain, clarifying the mortal and transcendent, the Dionysian and Apollinian elements of the mind, as in Gray's tale of a unifying accident onstage involving projectile vomit, fearfully levitating dead, and a new twist on a classic American play.

Millennial Mortality

The whimsical, prosocial charm in traditional productions of *Our Town* returned to the screen with the 2003 Showtime/PBS version directed by James Naughton. It starred Paul Newman, an even more popular celebrity than Holbrook or Gray. The mass audience not only knows Newman through his long movie career, but also from the Newman's Own brand of salad dressing, every bottle of which bears a picture of his face. Americans have been consuming Paul Newman, onscreen and in salads, for many decades. But the 2003 TV version of *Our Town* showed a different, mortal, changing Newman—aged considerably from his prior characters onscreen and on the salad dressing label, which stay eternally young. It also came at a crucial turning point for American culture, maturing as a superpower, yet traumatized by 9/11, and tempted toward the neomodernist idealism of ''spreading democracy'' through preemptive strikes against terrorism in the oil-based global economy of the new millennium.

In that context, the sentimental charm of *Our Town,* set in a small-town democracy before cars, planes, and skyscrapers, became appealing once again. Joanne Woodward, as artistic director of the Westport County Playhouse where this production began, wanted to do the play because of 9/11.[34] She planned it for the following summer season of 2002 and asked her husband, Newman, who had not acted onstage for fifteen years, to play the lead. (Newman had also played the sixteen-year-old George in a musical version of *Our Town* when in his thirties, nearly a half century before.) With the seventy-eight-year-old Newman as the Stage Manager, the ''fragile text'' that Gray had exposed in 1988 (according to the *New York Times* critic Frank Rich) became refocused through a fragile, elderly, yet com-

pelling figure onstage. As a movie star and older actor, Newman seemed alienated from others in the community of ''our town'' onstage. But he was also more connected to that era a century ago—Newman was actually born just a decade after Emily's death in the play. Thus, many lines of the Stage Manager gained a new Dionysian meaning through Newman's aging body and gestures onscreen, such as, ''The morning star always gets wonderful bright the minute before it has to go—doesn't it?'' (*Three Plays,* 6).

Broadcast first on cable television and then again on PBS, the 2003 *Our Town* reached an even greater mass audience with its time-capsule drama than had prior screen productions. But it begins more humbly, with the star as Stage Manager helping stagehands to move a few set pieces on wheels around the stage while the initial credits roll. Newman wears a gray vest, his tie is crooked, and his reading glasses perch on the tip of his nose. He points with his cane to a sketch of the town on a green chalkboard and again at various empty spaces onstage while detailing the town and the two homes of the first act. Newman pulls a small notepad out of his vest pocket and checks it several times during his initial introductions, taking a long pause to get ''the facts'' right about Julia Gibbs as Hersey before she was married, when he mentions her grave in the cemetery, ''with a whole mess of Gibbses and Herseys'' (7). The Stage Manager's reassuring Apollinian control in setting the simple town life of Grover's Corners onstage for a post-9/11 TV audience is undercut by the Dionysian vulnerability of Newman's elderly body and its props: the reading glasses, the cane, the erasable chalkboard, and the reporter's notepad to help with communication and memory as his voice rises in pitch and falters, then recovers with firm gestures on the open stage.

Various Dionysian reminders of limbic passion arise in this production, through the Stage Manager's Apollinian narrative, other characters' explanations, and the imaginary scenery, props, and gestures. Simon Stimson explodes with anger at his choir for singing too loud. Later he puts his hand on his face and bends over, with abject self-disgust, after Constable Warren and Editor Webb gossip about him and then offer to walk him home. As Mr. Morgan, Newman also loses his former Apollinian cool when responding to George's story about Emily almost getting run over by a hardware store wagon, a lie offered to excuse her tears after their fight. Newman rages about the dangers of traffic on Main Street getting ''worse every year'' and continues to rail against coming changes

with ''auto-mo-biles'' as he mimes making ice-cream sodas for his customers (41–42). This primal rage at loss through change resonates with the Stage Manager's lines a little earlier in the play when he introduces the flashback scene of George and Emily planning their married fate. ''You know how it is: you're twenty-one or twenty-two and you make some decisions; then whisssh! You're seventy'' (38). Newman as the Stage Manager says ''wham,'' instead of ''whissh,'' and slaps his seventy-eight-year-old fist into his hand, evoking bodily memories and primal fears as the play moves toward its final, postmortem act.

Newman adds a cynical post-9/11 spin to the line, ''We're more civilized now,—so they say,'' when he reprimands the Dionysian chorus of baseball buddies who playfully terrorize George at the wedding (46). Likewise, at the start of act 3, his tone seems to embrace current world events when he describes the tombs of Civil War veterans who only knew the symbolic name of our country, not its full geography or place in the world, and then ''went and died about it'' (51). This production emphasizes the passage of time and yet certain lingering ghosts at the end of the wedding scene, as figures in the congregation wave while church bells ring, then fade on-screen. After a blackout, the dead walk back into the frame at a more intimate angle to take their seats in the final act's graveyard even before Newman explains the scene. He pumps his hands vigorously when insisting there is something eternal in human beings, as ''the greatest people ever lived have been telling us . . . for five thousand years'' (52). Thus, both transcendent Apollinian conviction and vulnerable Dionysian mortality are expressed by this aging star as Stage Manager, in an afterlife scene for a new century's audience, haunted by the ghosts of 9/11 and global terrorism.

The director, James Naughton, gives us close-ups of Mr. Webb and others mourning around Emily's burial site as she emerges from their black umbrellas, yet remains near ground zero, unseen by them. Seated later in her gravestone chair, the initial joy of realizing she can travel back in time having faded, Emily shows visceral pain by pressing her fist against her womb in the sorrow of remembering ''the day I first knew that I loved George'' (57). Her subsequent question is given not as a naive rebellion against the warnings of the other dead, but in wonder at the painful joy of memory's right-brain fullness, beyond left-brain linear distinctions of happy and sad events: ''Why should that be painful?'' (58). As she returns to her twelfth birthday, the television audience floats with her into the inti-

mate joy and pain of her memory onstage, with hand-held camera work and close-up shots of Emily, her mother, and her father. Mrs. Webb looks at her for a moment, as if hearing the ghost of her daughter, when Emily demands, ''*Let's look at one another*'' (62; italics in original). Then the mother in the past continues with her ordinary birthday talk about presents. In these ways, *Our Town* onscreen in 2003 tries to ''come out clear'' once more—for a mass audience now haunted by family, friends, or fellow citizens lost on September 11, 2001, or at other points in time. Yet, the spectral selves watching the television screen still have time to look at one another in their own home theaters and towns—to realize life together as they live—despite the vast changes of a new century and a new millennium.

The evolution of American consciousness toward increasing democratic freedoms and virtual realities involves higher degrees of insecurity, anxiety, sensory stimulation, decision making, dispersion of meaning, and thus nostalgia for a simpler, safer, and tighter community. Movies and television, as well as Web sites and online chat rooms, give us the illusion today of more community, yet also alienate individuals toward fixed seats opposite a screen, like the dead in *Our Town*'s final act, waiting in their graves and watching the stars. Wilder's play is not just a folksy American classic with sentimental nostalgia for small-town life a century ago. This drama of mortal awareness and immortal desires, of communal and yet transcendent identity in the evolving human brain, gains a new relevance from the modern to the postmodern through its distinctive 1940, 1977, 1989, and 2003 productions onscreen—and through further associations in the minds of audiences as the play's future ghosts. Likewise, Nietzsche's theory about tragedy's ancient Apollinian heroes, born from a Dionysian choral womb, acquires a new significance through current neuroscience—shown by the left- and right-brain, neocortical, and limbic dimensions of Wilder's drama in various screen versions.

Our Town demonstrates the communal pressures on characters to align their social brains toward Apollinian ideals or to rebel with Dionysian passions. Both sides of the brain involve intersubjective ghosts. Wilder's play values Apollinian ''phantoms or dream images,''[35] with transcendent graveyard souls being weaned away from earth through communal order and strength. As the Stage Manager puts it: ''[E]verybody knows in their bones that *something* is eternal . . . something way down deep . . .'' (*Three Plays,* 52; italics in the original). Yet the play also shows the Dionysian ''substratum of suf-

fering and of knowledge . . . [as an] eternal self . . . at the basis of things.''[36]—through right-brain, disruptive passions in certain characters and their choral longing for earthly reunions, involving sympathetic minds in the audience. Nietzsche expressed enthusiasm for a primordial unity, which he saw in the ''higher community'' of ancient Dionysian trances, where animals talked, men felt like gods, and ''the most savage natural instincts were unleashed, including . . . [a] horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty.''[37] But this also points to the modern dangers of social Darwinism, such as the cruelties of racial and political domination in Nazi Germany, Cambodia, and Rwanda showing a ''survival of the fittest'' through brute force and collective intoxicating savagery. *Our Town* offers a simpler nostalgic view of Darwinian forces, the small-town ''pruning'' of individuals shaping the growth and death of neurons in their brains toward Apollinian dreams of afterlife transcendence through left-brain, executive, communal controls. Yet both Wilder's play and Nietzsche's theory demonstrate the godlike powers of remnant natural instincts when transformed by specific cultural evolutions of the passionate limbic system, anxious right brain, and prosocial left—in humans as talking animals—through the Dionysian ecstasy of ''oneness as the soul of the race and of nature itself.''[38] The combination of Nietzsche, Wilder, and neuroscience presented in this essay only begins to suggest the tremendous creativity and destructiveness of the human social animal, which is continuing to evolve, for better or worse, through today's mass-media stages and screens, and our spiritual choices in that brain matter.

Notes

1. Cf. Mark Pizzato, *Ghosts of Theatre and Cinema in the Brain* (New York: Palgrave, 2006).

2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* [INFO?], 38.

3. Ibid., 66.

4. See Jaak Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 70–72, 341, for an update of Paul MacLean's theory (from the 1950s) of the ''triune'' human brain: reptilian, old mammalian, and new.

5. See V. S. Ramachandran and Sandra Blakeslee, *Phantoms in the Brain* (New York: William Morrow, 1998), 135–47; Louis J. Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy* (New York: Norton, 2002), 110–18, 192; Terri A. Edwards-Lee and Ronald E. Saul, ''Neuropsychiatry and the Right Frontal Lobe,'' in *The Human Frontal Lobes,* ed. Bruce L. Miller and Jeffrey L. Cummings (New York: Guilford, 1999), 306, 314; Daniel H. Geschwind and Marco Iacoboni, ''Structural and Functional Asymmet-

ries of the Human Frontal Lobes,'' in Miller and Cummings, *Human Frontal Lobes,* 53, 62; Daniel J. Siegel, *The Developing Mind* (New York: Guilford, 1999), 197–98; Mark Solms and Oliver Turnbull, *The Brain and the Inner World* (New York: Other Press, 2002), 82, 245–47.

6. See Ramachandran and Blakeslee, *Phantoms in the Brain,* 135–37, on the left brain as a war-room general versus the right brain as a devil's advocate.

7. Cozolino, *Neuroscience of Psychotherapy,* 192. See also Michael S. Gazzaniga, *The Social Brain* (New York: Basic, 1985).

8. Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); Friedrich Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy,* 65. See also Mark Pizzato, *Edges of Loss* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998) and *Theatres of Human Sacrifice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

9. Cozolino, *Neuroscience of Psychotherapy,* 113, 118.

10. According to neurologist Rhawn Joseph, the anterior commissure, which connects the right and left lobes of the amygdala (the emotional gateway of the brain), is 18 percent larger in females. Thus, the female amygdala is more densely packed, with neurons firing more frequently, and its right and left lobes ''can more easily communicate and excite one another.'' Joseph, *The Transmitter to God: The Limbic System, the Soul, and Spirituality* (San Jose: University Press California, 2001), 164. See also Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience,* 235, on the ''tendency of females to use both hemispheres in speech while males tend to use only the left side of their brains.''

11. Andrew Newberg, Eugene d'Aquili, and Vince Rause, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* (New York: Ballantine, 2002), 21–23.

12. See ibid., 196, on the ''binary operator'' in the left inferior (lower) parietal lobe of the neocortex.

13. Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy,* 67.

14. Ibid., 36–37, 65.

15. Cf. Leonard Shlain, *The Alphabet versus the Goddess* (New York: Viking, 1998), on the evolution of left-brain language functions in relation to writing and patriarchal cultures.

16. There was also a 1959 television version starring Art Carney, which will not be examined here.

17. See Jackson R. Bryer, ''Thornton Wilder at 100: His Achievement and His Legacy,'' in *Thornton Wilder: New Essays,* ed. Martin Blank, Dalma Hunyadi Brunauer, and David Garrett Izzo (West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill Press, 1999), 3–20. He claims that *Our Town* ''is performed more than any other American play. Typically, in 1995 alone, it received more than 450 amateur productions. Indeed, it may well receive more performances worldwide than any play in any language'' (4).

18. According to David Castronovo, *Thornton Wilder* (New York: Ungar, 1986), 84, ''Wilder's essentially tragic view of human potential,'' that we are always unaware of the value of life in its simplest moments, caused ''the liberal, progressive mind to recoil,'' even in 1938. The play has been criticized ever since for its sentimentality, while functioning like American folk art (86). Cf. Paul Lifton, *Vast Encyclopedia: The Theatre of Thornton Wilder* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 166–67, on the ''existentialist sympathies'' and yet ''Platonist prejudices'' of Wilder's work. See also Robert Corrigan, ''Thornton Wilder and the Tragic Sense of Life,'' in *Critical Essays on Thornton Wilder,* ed. Martin Blank (New York: G. K. Hall,

1996), 77–83. Corrigan relates Wilder to Kierkegaard and Sartre but finds that ''his plays fall short of tragedy because he takes the Platonic escape'' (80, 82). For earlier views of the play (in the 1950s) as classical tragedy or not, see Arthur H. Ballet, ''*Our Town* as a Classical Tragedy,'' and George D. Stephens, ''*Our Town* as a Failed Tragedy,'' in *Readings on "Our Town",* ed. Thomas Siebold (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 2000), 74–82 and 83–92, respectively.

19. Thornton Wilder, *Three Plays* (New York: Avon, 1957), 52. Subsequent references will be given in the text.

20. See Solms and Turnbull, *The Brain and the Inner World,* 147–48, on the ''pruning'' of neural pathways in the brain through childhood experiences—as neurons grow with usage or die without it.

21. Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy,* 46–47.

22. See Robin I. Dunbar, *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), for his theory that human language evolved from primate grooming to sign language and verbal gossip, primarily for the purpose of social bonding and hierarchical control. See also Cozolino, *Neuroscience of Psychotherapy,* 154–55.

23. See Michael A. Persinger, *Neuropsychological Bases of God Beliefs* (New York: Praeger, 1987), on the mystical ''God Experience'' produced by the temporal lobes of the human brain. See also Joseph, *Transmitter to God;* Ramachandran and Blakeslee, *Phantoms in the Brain;* and Newberg, d'Aquili, and Rause, *Why God Won't Go Away.*

24. Thornton Wilder and Sol Lesser, ''*Our Town*—From Stage to Screen: A Correspondence between Thornton Wilder and Sol Lesser,'' *Theatre Arts* 24 (1940): 815–24. Subsequent references will be given in the text.

25. Cf. Lee Kovacs, *The Haunted Screen* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1999), 126–44. He argues that the voice-overs during the wedding ''add a dimension to the film that the play lacks. They give the characters the poignancy and the sense of reality that Lesser felt was so necessary in the film adaptation'' (142).

26. Holbrook gained fame onstage through his impersonation of Mark Twain, starting in 1954 when he was only twenty-nine years old, in a one-man show that toured the United States. He won a Tony Award in 1966, and eventually played the role on television.

27. See David Savran, *The Wooster Group, 1975–1985* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research, 1986).

28. Jennifer Jones, ''Climbing into Their Graves,'' *New England Theatre Journal* 5 (1994): 51. Gray also states, in *Monster in a Box,* that Mosher wanted his ''dark sensibility'' for the role.

29. Jones, ''Climbing into Their Graves,'' 52–53. Mosher's staging of *Our Town* eventually won the Tony Award for Best Revival, despite the criticism of Gray's performance.

30. Quoted in ibid., 53.

31. Cf. ibid., 59: ''Aside from the structural connections of theatrical minimalism and directed narration, Wilder's text and Gray's persona also share a longing for transcendence and a hope that life is part of some larger, unknowable sequence.''

32. Ibid., 55.

33. Cf. Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), on the ghosts of prior performances in live theater, and Herbert Blau,

Take Up the Bodies (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), chap. 5, on the mortal body's "ghosting" of performance onstage.

34. See the interview with Woodward, Newman, and Naughton at the PBS Web site, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/americancollection/ourtown/ei_newman.html.

35. Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy,* 34.

36. Ibid., 46, 50.

37. Ibid., 37–39.

38. Ibid., 40.

Tragedy, Sight, and Sound: The Birth of Godard's *Prénom Carmen* from the Nietzschean Spirit of Music

Ronald Bogue

WHAT NIETZSCHE MEANS BY HIS 1872 TITLE "THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY OUT of the Spirit of Music" is perhaps nowhere more clearly indicated than in sections 16 and 17 of *The Birth of Tragedy*. Here Nietzsche cites at length a passage from Schopenhauer in which music is described as the direct expression of the will (by which Schopenhauer means something like "universal force"). Music is "an expression of the world," a "universal language" in some regards like the language of concepts, yet one that is not abstract.[1] Music "resembles geometrical figures and numbers, which are universal forms of all possible experience . . . and yet are not abstract but perceptible and thoroughly determinate" (qtd. in *Birth of Tragedy,* 101). Music expresses the "inmost soul" of phenomena, for it is "an immediate copy of the will itself, and therefore complements everything physical in the world and every phenomenon by representing what is metaphysical, the thing in itself." For this reason, says Schopenhauer, "we might just as well call the world embodied music as embodied will" (qtd. in *Birth of Tragedy,* 102). Melodies, like concepts, are to a certain extent abstractions of the actual, but whereas concepts are universals derived from experience, and hence abstractions that come *after* phenomena, melodies give us the universal *before* phenomena, "the inmost kernel which precedes all forms, or the heart of things" (qtd. in *Birth of Tragedy,* 102).

According to Schopenhauer, then, will is the universal, undifferentiated force that expresses itself in the embodied, individuated forms of phenomena, and music is the direct representation of that universal will. Nietzsche concludes from this that music not only expresses "the immediate language of the will" (*Birth of Tragedy,* 103) but also stimulates the creative faculties to fashion individuated con-

cepts and images that embody the will. The Dionysian medium of music stimulates the Apollonian creation of individuated forms, just as the universal will generates and plays through the individuated things of the phenomenal world. The highest Apollonian manifestation of the Dionysian will is in the tragic myth of the annihilation of the hero. Music gives birth to tragic myth, ''the myth which expresses Dionysian knowledge in symbols'' (103). Hence, ''it is only through the spirit of music that we can understand the joy involved in the annihilation of the individual. . . . The metaphysical joy in the tragic is a translation of the instinctive unconscious Dionysian wisdom into the language of images: the hero, the highest manifestation of the will, is negated for our pleasure, because he is only phenomenon, and because the eternal life of the will is not affected by his annihilation'' (104). Through tragedy, ''we are forced to look into the terrors [in die Schrecken] of the individual existence—yet we are not to become rigid with fear,'' for by way of the drama ''we are really for a brief moment primordial being itself'' (104).

In *Cinema 2: The Time-Image,* Gilles Deleuze argues that Nietzsche's Schopenhauerian approach to music holds the key to an understanding of music's function in classic sound cinema. Deleuze notes that some cinema critics treat music as a component of a ''sonic continuum'' made up of sounds, words, and music that is interfused with and inseparable from visual images, whereas others regard music as a kind of '' 'foreign body' in the visual image, a little like dust in the eye.''[2] Deleuze argues that both views are true but are often imperfectly articulated. For Deleuze, the ''moving pictures'' or ''movement-images'' on the screen are merely mobile ''slices'' or ''chunks'' of a moving, open whole of fluctuating, metamorphosing time-space. Each actual movement-image on the screen extends into an offscreen world continuous with the onscreen space (e.g., the character looks off camera to his or her interlocutor across the room), and that continuous offscreen world Deleuze calls a ''relative out of frame.'' But each onscreen movement-image also is part of the open Whole, which in classic cinema is never directly presented, but only indirectly expressed through the images on the screen. Unlike the space of the ''relative out of frame,'' which may be revealed in the next shot, what Deleuze calls the ''absolute out of frame'' of the open Whole remains undisclosed on the screen in any direct fashion. Sounds, words, and music may be part of the relative out of frame, as when the off-camera noise of a breaking glass, the curse of an angry sailor, or the strum of a guitar is shown in the next shot to

issue from an actual glass, sailor, or guitar inhabiting the same space as the preceding shot. But words may also issue from some unspecified realm outside the screen space, as in the case of a voice-over narration or a character's flashback reminiscence. Likewise, music may accompany images without ever being ''justified'' by an offscreen source that belongs to the screen world. In these cases, words and music are part of the absolute out of frame, inhabiting the fluctuating time-space of the open Whole. Within the relative out-of-frame space, music is part of a sonic continuum. Music may also remain within a sonic continuum in the absolute out-of-frame space (such as in a voice-over with accompanying music), yet music has the capacity as well to function as a ''foreign body'' within the visual image. Eisenstein argues that music and visual images should express a harmonious totality, but Eisner and others object that music often is most effective when it contrasts with the screen images, as when a soft lullaby accompanies a battle scene. Deleuze argues that the range of musical effects, from a unifying reinforcement and ''echoing'' of visual images to a disruptive contrast and ''irritation'' of images, is made possible by music's relation to the open Whole. In classic cinema, music is capable of presenting a *direct* image of the open Whole, what Deleuze calls a direct ''time-image,'' which is incommensurable with the open Whole *indirectly* expressed by the visual images. Just as Nietzsche regards music as the immediate expression of the Dionysian will, so Deleuze treats it as the immediate expression of the open Whole. ''In [Nietzschean] tragedy,'' says Deleuze, ''the immediate musical image is like the kernel of fire that surrounds the Apollonian visual images, and that cannot do without their unfolding parade. In the case of cinema, which is first a visual art, one may say that music adds the immediate image to the mediate images that represent the Whole indirectly.''[3] (311). There is a relation between music and visual images, but it is not one of correspondence, for the *direct* expression (music) and the *indirect* expression (visual images) of the Whole are incommensurable.

With the advent of modern cinema, however, Deleuze sees music taking on a different role. Modern directors create direct *visual* images of the open Whole—''time-images''—by disrupting the coordinates of commonsense time-space. Our experience is organized by a ''sensorimotor schema'' that allows us to function in a predictable, manageable world, yet that schema hides from us the paradoxical reality of the universe as an open time-space flux.[4] Modern directors create images of ''sheets of the past,'' in which pasts coexist in a sin-

gle, virtual plane; images of ''peaks of the present,'' in which incommensurable present moments simultaneously occur; and images of ''series of time,'' in which past, present, and future interpenetrate in single images of becoming by disarticulating and disconnecting the continuities and regularities of the commonsense world and rearticulating and reconnecting images in nonrational assemblages, such that the gap between images, the difference between images, serves as the principle of their connection. The sequences of images in modern films force viewers to comprehend the relations produced by the nonrational juxtaposition of images. In this fashion, viewers encounter images unassimilated within conventional codes, standard narratives, or commonsense coordinates and are thereby able to see direct images of time. As part of their effort to undo the sensorimotor schema, modern directors tend to emphasize the difference between sound and sight. They approach the sonic continuum and the visual continuum as autonomous materials, which they juxtapose in nonrational configurations within each continuum and in nonrational relations between the two continuums. Hence, music in the modern cinema, though still capable of directly expressing the open Whole as it did in classic cinema, takes on new associations with other elements of the sonic continuum as well as the images of the visual continuum.

Jean-Luc Godard is among the modern directors Deleuze most admires, and Godard's *Prénom Carmen* (1983) is perhaps his most extended meditation on music and its role in film.[5] *Prénom Carmen* also provides an apt occasion for a reflection on Nietzschean tragedy in modern cinema, for in many ways the film is a parodic disarticulation of the Carmen myth and the tragedy of fate. We recall, of course, that when Nietzsche renounces his early Wagnerism in *The Case of Wagner* (1888), it is Georges Bizet's *Carmen* he salutes as the antidote to the ''*damp* north'' and ''the steam of the Wagnerian ideal'' (*Case of Wagner,* 158; italics in original). Of Bizet's opera, Nietzsche remarks, ''I know no case where the tragic joke that constitutes the essence of love is expressed so strictly, translated with equal terror into a formula, as in Don José's last cry, which concludes the work: *'Yes, I have killed her, / I—my adored Carmen!*'' (159). Godard's film mocks the terror and tragedy of fatal love, but through its handling of images and sounds, I believe, it ultimately creates a certain terror and ecstatic joy that accords in some ways with the Nietzschean ideal of *The Birth of Tragedy.*

If for the Nietzsche of *The Birth of Tragedy* it is myth that is missing

from modern art (indeed, in art from Euripides on), for Godard myth is all too present in the world around us. Early in *Prénom Carmen,* Godard, in the role of Carmen's Uncle Jean, a washed-up film director, types the words ''mal vu mal dit'' (*AS,* 22) on his asylum typewriter, these Beckettian phrases succinctly summing up the modern filmmaker's problem. The world is ''ill seen'' and ''ill said,'' saturated with visual and verbal clichés, with ready-made, prepackaged images and formulas that structure and organize experience in ideological patterns. And the world is often ''ill seen'' because it is ''ill said'': visual clichés arise from the narrative myths that script daily life. Godard undermines the Carmen myth of tragic love and the femme fatale through various parodic alienation effects, including multiple visual and verbal citations, sudden shifts from high seriousness to pop informality or blunt profanity, a deliberately amateurish handling of action sequences, incongruous elements within scenes (such as unperturbed bank customers surrounded by a raging gun battle), derealizing references to the filmmaking process itself, and so on. Godard's object, however, is not simply to parody myth, but also to create something new. As Godard is wont to say, he seeks not ''une image juste,'' but ''juste une image,'' an image cut off from myth and cliché, one granted a certain elemental nakedness and purity. At one point Carmen asks Joseph, ''[W]hat comes before the name [le nom]?'' to which he responds, ''The first name [prénom].'' ''No, before,'' she replies, ''before you are called anything [avant qu'on vous appelle]'' (*AS,* 56). Beyond the dismantling of the Carmen myth, *Prénom Carmen* is above all an effort to extract simple, direct images from a coded network of ''ill-seen'' and ''ill-said'' visual clichés, to fashion images *before* names, *pré-noms.*

Yet *Prénom Carmen* is also a film about sight and sound, about visual images and their relationship to what might loosely be called ''sonic images'' or discrete sonic elements. One might expect Godard's parody of Carmen to focus on Bizet's score, but aside from two fleeting citations of the ''Habañera,'' whistled and hummed by minor characters, the opera's music is absent from the film. Instead, Godard uses portions of Beethoven's Ninth, Tenth, Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth String Quartets as the primary musical elements of his sound track. In a broad sense, *Prénom Carmen* is two films—a film of the Carmen story and a film of a string quartet rehearsing several passages from Beethoven. The fiction that holds the two plots together is that Carmen's lover Joseph is also the boyfriend of Claire, a member of the quartet. The film intercuts between the

quartet's rehearsals and the Carmen plot, with an early scene after a rehearsal establishing the relationship between Claire and Joseph. The two plots converge when the quartet performs in the same Intercontinental Hotel restaurant in which Carmen's gang attempts its ill-fated kidnapping of a Polish ambassador. With only one exception, the visual images of the quartet match up with the sound track of the Beethoven quartets.[6] The musicians onscreen, save Claire, are professional musicians (members of the Prat Quartet, as the opening credits of the film indicate) actually performing the quartets, and the sound track is a live recording of their performance. (Claire's bowing is obviously the unskilled imitation of a violinist's actions typical of a nonmusician actor playing the role of a musician. Godard calls attention to this fact by having the first violinist chide Claire for making too many mistakes during the rehearsals.) The music, however, also accompanies the Carmen plot images for extended stretches of the film. Clearly, Godard is playing with the notion of ''sound on'' and ''sound off'' camera, Beethoven now functioning as ''sound in'' when the quartet is seen playing, now as ''sound off'' when, for example, the music accompanies the bank heist. The ambiguity of the ''sound off'' element emerges in the interplay of the images of the rehearsal and the images of the Carmen plot, the Beethoven accompaniment to the bank heist functioning both as a constituent of the absolute out of field of a standard cinematic score and as a sonic element of the relative out of field of the rehearsal space improbably ''leaking'' into the space of the bank heist.

Why Beethoven? one might ask. Pure chance, Godard suggests in one interview, since the story takes place by the sea and it was ''at the seashore that I discovered, at age twenty, the quartets of Beethoven'' (*AS,* 5). But he also says that he sought ''a fundamental music, a music that had marked the history of music. A music that is both practice and theory of music. That was the case of Beethoven.''[7] In this regard, the Beethoven quartets provide Godard with instances of ''Music'' writ large, paradigmatic compositions fit for an exploration of the theoretical relationship between visual images and music in general. The quartets are also quintessential chamber pieces, and one might argue that *Prénom Carmen* is itself a kind of cinematic chamber music, a work made up of a limited set of materials—created, as the film's closing title card states, ''IN MEMORIAM SMALL MOVIES'' (*AS,* 64). Yet perhaps the primary reason the Beethoven quartets are chosen is that they are *not* associated with the Carmen

story. And most important, they lack any relation to Bizet's musical blending of exoticism and eroticism, instead exploiting a strictly Western art music idiom largely devoid of extramusical associations.[8] Hence, the juxtaposition of the Beethoven quartets and the Carmen images forces a confrontation of differences, creating unexpected resonances and frequent incongruities between sound and sight while instigating a reflection on the relation between "pure," self-referential, nonprogrammatic art music and the realm of the visual.

Still, if there is no preexisting relation between the Beethoven quartets and the Carmen story, such a relation may be created after the fact, as it were, and Godard not only proceeds to fashion such a relation between sounds and images but also offers a verbal commentary on the process of that formation through the remarks of Claire and the other musicians. The quartet leader's first comment, as the group begins its rehearsal, is "With the body" [Avec le corps] (*AS,* 21), which suggests that the body is the medium through which image and music may be related. Shortly after the leader asks that the music be performed "avec le corps," "Uncle Jean" Godard appears on the screen, tapping the window of his room, the metal bars of his bed, the table, the walls, the keys of his typewriter, his own chest, his head, the table again, the bars of the bed, and the mattress. With each distinctly audible tap, Godard demonstrates the corporeal dimension of sound, indicating that it is from bodies that sounds issue, and that it is with and from the body that music is produced. To underline the relationship between bodies, sounds, and music, Godard repeats the tapping movements near the close of the film, this time lightly striking four wine glasses with a fork in the hotel dining room.[9] The first violinist also makes musical comments that have relevance for the action unfolding in the Carmen plot. At one point, for example, he tells the other players, "It has to be more violent" (*AS,* 26), and in the ensuing shots the bank heist escalates into a gun battle. At another, he calls for more passion, exhorting the quartet, "Push . . . one, two . . . rise . . . nothing more . . . pull . . . and vibrate" (*AS,* 31)—i.e., play with vibrato, but also literally, "vibrate"—and in the following sequences the sensual relationship between Carmen and Joseph intensifies.

But perhaps the most complex verbal links between the music and the Carmen plot issue from Beethoven's *Tagebuch* of 1812–18, which Godard cites seven times in the film (see appendix). One such citation is the rather innocuous interjection of the first violinist as he

stops the rehearsal: ''No, no. Take the best phrase built on the harmony'' (*AS,* 29, notebook entry no. 37). Other citations, however, are more significant, and all but one are delivered by Claire (the obvious counterpart to Bizet's Micaëla, the virginal opposite of the femme fatale Carmen). The film's first citation from the *Tagebuch* occurs after the leader observes that ''Claire makes too many mistakes'' [Claire fait trop de fautes], to which she responds, ''This I know well. I recognize it clearly. Life is not the supreme good. Among evils, the supreme evil is the mistake [la faute]'' (*AS,* 25, notebook entry no. 118). Here, Godard playfully emphasizes the importance of art, as Claire indirectly suggests that artistic perfection is the supreme good and hence superior to life.[10] Yet Claire's observation also bears on the Carmen story, for the supreme evil, as we shall see later, may be said to be ''guilt,'' or ''culpability,'' both possible translations of *faute* (and closer to the *Tagebuch*'s original *Schuld*).[11]

Claire's next *Tagebuch* citation comes from an obscure 1802 ''fate tragedy'' by Zacharias Werner in which one character implores another to act and fulfill his being. Claire's interjection, ''Act instead of asking,'' cleverly meshes with the rehearsal discussion of a passage from the Tenth Quartet, and her continuation of the Werner citation functions neatly as a comment on the marvels of the creative imagination and its centrality in the artist's life: ''Do miracles first, if you want to unveil them, thus alone will you fulfill all your destiny'' (*AS,* 27).[12] Claire's most extended citation reiterates the theme of destiny, in this case with a comment that enunciates the traditional theme of the Carmen myth: ''Show your power, Destiny. We are not masters of ourselves. That which has been decided . . . let it be so'' (*AS,* 31–32). Here Godard suggests that Beethoven, at least in his *Tagebuch,* shares Bizet's and Prosper Merimée's sentiments about fate, and to the extent that the quartets express Beethoven's sense of the power of destiny, articulated in this phrase is a direct connection between the film's music and its central plot.

Claire's final two citations are pronounced in close succession as she pencils notations into her part. She first intones the *Tagebuch*'s cryptic fourth entry, ''Verify all in the evening'' (*AS,* 32), and as she finishes the phrase a shot of the ocean shore at night comes on the screen. In the following shot, Claire is seen writing in her part, as she comments to herself, ''And the clouds . . . the clouds, would they reveal torrents of life [feraient-ils voir des torrents de vie]?'' (*AS,* 32, notebook entry no. 6). Here Godard is playfully mapping a line of

association that proceeds from Beethoven's quartets to the film's visual motifs. Godard inserts two shots of a cloud-filled sky in the film (shots 8 and 116), in both cases in close proximity to a shot of the ocean shore. The first sky shot follows the opening shot of the sea, itself preceded by Carmen's voice-over comment (accompanied by the sound of waves and gulls), ''It's in me, in you that it produces terrible waves [des vagues terribles]'' (*AS,* 21). A complex of verbal and visual associations, it would seem, brings together ''torrents of life,'' ''terrible waves,'' and images of the ocean and the sky, with the implication that Beethoven's musical nighttime clouds motivate the appearance of the visual clouds. Implicit as well is that the torrents of life in Beethoven's quartets communicate with the terrible waves of passion that course through Carmen and Joseph—Joseph tells Claire midway through the film that ''there is something taboo, a sort of force that pushes me . . . the tide swells [la marée monte]'' (*AS,* 53)—those waves taking on literal embodiment in the film's twenty shots of the sea.

For the most part, Godard does not directly tamper with Beethoven's music. He does briefly allow the Beethoven score to play over Tom Waits's ballad ''Ruby's Arms,'' and at the moment that the Claire plot and the Carmen plot converge, for a few seconds two dissonant passages from the Sixteenth Quartet are superimposed (the opening of the fourth movement overlaps the close of the third). Occasionally, there are shifts in the volume levels of the recording, which also affect Beethoven's music. Otherwise, however, the quartets are presented as if they were being played by a conventional ensemble in rehearsal. The quartet selections proceed in chronological order, from the Ninth to the Tenth Quartet, and then from the Fourteenth through the Sixteenth. Changes in lighting in the shots of the musicians suggest that we are viewing a series of rehearsals in which the players work their way through the corpus of the quartets, movement by movement. The continuities in the musical passages tend to unify sections of the film, and the changes from one quartet to another coincide with the broad structural divisions of the plot.[13]

But often the musical accompaniment to the Carmen story abruptly stops and then resumes without clear motivation from the plot, such discontinuities in the score calling attention to the music as an arbitrary ''foreign body'' intervening in the visual image. At the same time, the frequent intermingling of the quartets and sound effects forces recognition of music's participation in a sonic contin-

uum. The primary nonmusical sound effects—ocean waves, traffic noises, and seagull cries—are themselves treated like elements of a musical composition, ocean and traffic sounds occasionally merging; ocean waves now surging over the music, now subsiding to form a background motif; seagull cries appearing sporadically, sometimes along with wave sounds, sometimes with traffic sounds, sometimes alone.[14] Visual images of waves and cars occasionally occupy the screen, but the sounds of the ocean, traffic, and gulls often are not aligned with their standard visual counterparts—indeed, in the case of the gull cries, perhaps the most intrusive of the film's sound effects, no visual images of seagulls ever appear on screen.[15] As a result, one becomes aware of the sound track as an autonomous sonic milieu whose compositional elements are ocean, traffic and gull sounds, dialogue sounds, ambient sounds of various settings, and passages from the Beethoven quartets.[16]

The ocean, traffic, and gull sounds serve as aural punctuation marks, discrete elements with little relationship to the plot, that draw attention to the formal patterning of the sonic continuum. In a similar fashion, a discrete set of recurring images punctuates the visual continuum—images of the ocean, of the sky, of the headlight patterns of cars on a freeway, of the lighted windows of two metro trains as they cross one another over the Pont d'Austerlitz, of chandeliers in the Intercontinental Hotel. These visual punctuation marks, like their aural counterparts, have a limited relationship to the plot, and the extended duration of the shots of the waves, clouds, car headlights, and metro window lights emphasizes their status as abstract geometrical forms. Such extranarrative, geometrically patterned images, when interjected at unpredictable intervals into the stream of narrative images, emphasize the formal nature of the visual continuum as a composition in images, a composition in the process of divesting itself of conventional coding and narrative organization while becoming a patterning of images ''before names.''

What has all this to do with tragedy? Late in the film, Godard cites (without attribution) a line from Rilke's first *Duino Elegy:* ''You know, beauty is the beginning of the terror we are capable of enduring'' [Vous savez, la beauté, c'est le commencement de la terreur que nous sommes capables de supporter] (*AS,* 61).[17] As he delivers this line, a close-up of Carmen's face fills the screen. This shot is one of eighteen close-ups of Carmen that appear regularly throughout the film, some for a few seconds, others for extended periods, ranging

from thirty to ninety-six seconds. (The Carmen close-ups comprise a little over eight of the film's eighty-four minutes of running time, or about 10 percent of the film.) Several of these close-ups mark key meditative moments in the film, some of them accompanied by slow, lyrical passages from the quartets. By following the verbal associations that are aligned with the close-ups, one can see what relationship terror has to beauty, and what relationship that terror might have to the terror traditionally associated with tragedy.

During her initial meeting with her Uncle Jean in the asylum, Carmen is shown in close-up for thirty-seven seconds (shot 28) as Godard speaks off camera of her mother: ''The shore of the sea [Le bord de la mer], with your mother [avec ta mère], like little Electra. You're the one who doesn't remember. I've always said that you had a talent for misfortune [que tu étais douée pour le malheur]. How did that end, 'when there's,' you know, 'all the guilty [les coupables] in one corner, and then, and then, the innocent [les innocents] in another'?'' (*AS,* 24). The reference to Electra, besides adding a second sexual and mythic dimension to the figure of Carmen,[18] proves primarily to be an allusion to Jean Giraudoux's *Electre,* a fact that becomes evident in the film's closing shots when the final lines of Giraudoux's play are quoted. The pun on *mer* and *mère* might invite psychoanalytic associations of the mother and primal oceanic forces (the linking of the mother and the feminine here complicated by the murderous hostility Electra exhibits toward Clytemnestra in the myth), but the pun's main purpose is to bring together Carmen, the sea, and Uncle Jean's reference to the apocalyptic judgment of the guilty and the innocent. Uncle Jean's words also recall Carmen's opening voice-over, when she speaks of ''terrible waves'' within (followed by a shot of the sea) and then adds, ''I haven't been to college, but I also know that the world doesn't belong to the innocent'' [le monde n'appartient pas aux innocents] (*AS,* 21). The world she inhabits is not the beatific realm of the Sermon on the Mount, she suggests, but as we shall see, she is not necessarily implying that the guilty or those with a talent for *le malheur,* in the sense of ''evil,'' will inherit the earth.

Midway through the film, Carmen recalls her Uncle Jean's apocalyptic reference. For fifty-four seconds her face is shown in close-up (shot 119) as the Molto adagio strains of the Fifteenth Quartet accompany her question to Joseph: ''What is it called? [Comment ça s'appelle?] . . . There's something about innocents there . . . and then the guilty, over there'' (*AS,* 33). Later, during a forty-second

close-up (shot 151), she asks Joseph what comes before the name, ''avant qu'on vous appelle'' (*AS,* 56). At this point, an association of the motifs of the *prénom* and the division of guilty and innocent is suggested through the verb *appeler,* an association whose full significance only emerges at the close of the film. There, as Carmen is dying, she asks a waiter, ''What is it called [Comment ça s'appelle] when there are the innocents in one corner and the guilty ones in the other?'' (*AS,* 63). The waiter answers, ''Je ne sais pas, mademoiselle'' (*AS,* 63). She then elaborates on her question, citing portions of the penultimate lines of Giraudoux's *Électre:* ''But if when everyone has ruined everything, and everything is lost, but the day rises, and the air nonetheless breathes,'' to which the waiter responds with Giraudoux's final line (and the final line of *Prénom Carmen*), ''That's called dawn, Mademoiselle'' [Cela s'appelle l'aurore, Mademoiselle] (*AS,* 64).

Giraudoux's play is about a judgmental Électre, an idealist who refuses to compromise. For her, the world consists of the guilty and the innocent, and she refuses to taint herself by allowing the crime of Clytemnestre and Égisthe to go unpunished, even though the circumstances of the murder are uncertain and the future of Thebes depends on Égisthe's leadership in the impending battle with the city's enemies. But the world is not so neatly divided into guilty and innocent, as La Femme Narsès implies in the lines Carmen partially cites: ''What is it called, when the day rises, like today, and everything is ruined, everything is pillaged, and nonetheless the air breathes, and one has lost everything, the city burns, the innocents kill each other [les innocents s'entre-tuent], but the guilty are in agony [les coupables agonisent], in a corner of the day that is rising?''[17] When Le Mendiant replies, ''That has a very pretty name [Cela a un très beau nom], Femme Narsès. It's called dawn,'' he suggests that ''dawn'' is the name of a world beyond simplistic judgments, a name for possibilities in the face of universal destruction and ruin. The innocent and guilty alike suffer in such a world, yet still the day rises, the air breathes, and something new begins.

Unlike Électre, Carmen is no idealist, but she does reinforce the distinct categories of ''innocent'' and ''guilty'' in her discourse. She knows that the world does not belong to the innocent, and she is obsessed by an apocalyptic separation of sheep and goats, the innocent in one corner, the guilty in another. Hers is the milieu of crime, of course, and the cops-and-robbers drama of bank heists and kidnappings is all about verdicts of innocence and guilt. Indeed, the

question of verdicts and judgments is directly raised in the film's parodic tribunal section, in which Joseph stands trial for his participation in the bank heist. His lawyer indicts capitalism as the true criminal, stating that his offense is against not *la société,* but *la Société Générale,* large corporations and ''the money of the big banks'' (*AS,* 34). The police, the prosecutor, and the judge all support their actions with supposed aphorisms from Proverbs, and even Joseph counters by citing a reputed passage from Proverbs. (None of the film's references to chapter and verse is accurate, and in fact, the aphorisms are not from Proverbs at all.) The judgments of law and the judgments of religion coincide, and the question of a Last Judgment raises the issue of justice and categorization in general. The division of the world into neat compartments brings with it an ideological classification of reality, in sum, one that masks the relationship between *la société* and *la Société Générale* and supports a simplistic differentiation of the innocent from the guilty.

Carmen asks two questions: what does one call the separation of the innocent and guilty, and what comes before the name? The two are related, but they are not the same question. When she is dying, she initially asks the Valet the first question, which he cannot answer. She then rephrases her query, and in so doing she transforms the first question into the second. When all is ruined, when categories of innocence and guilt have been abandoned, when all the judgmental categorizations of the world have been left behind, then something before categories becomes possible, an unnamed, unclassified, stark image. The Valet's answer, ''Cela s'appele l'aurore,'' is a response to the question ''What comes before the name?'' The prename given it is ''dawn,'' but its name is merely a designation for the space between, the gap between night and day, the undecidable moment between dark and light. It is a name for that which cannot be named. And it is this unnamed, uncategorized world that is the source of the terrifying beauty Rainer Maria Rilke speaks of, beauty that is ''the beginning of the terror we are capable of enduring'' (*AS,* 61).

It is important to note that in the film ''terror'' is not the same as ''fear.'' In her opening voice-over, Carmen says, ''I'm not afraid [Je n'ai pas peur], but that's because I have never been able to, known how to, become attached [je n'ai jamais pu, su, m'attacher]'' (*AS,* 21). Throughout the script, there is a play on the words *attacher* and *detacher,* Joseph's literal tying and untying of Carmen being related to his emotional attachment to her and her refusal to be permanently attached to anything. (A parallel play on the phrases *attirez-*

moi [attract me] and *tirez-vous* [go away] reinforces this motif.[20] Carmen has no fear, for she has no attachments. Joseph, by contrast, does have fear, as Carmen insists. He claims that the reason he took so long in returning to her after his trial was shame: ''I was ashamed'' [J'avais honte]. But Carmen counters, ''Fear, not shame, fear'' [Peur, pas honte, peur]. She then asks the Valet, ''Are you afraid at times?'' [Vous avez peur des fois, vous?], to which he replies, ''Never, Mademoiselle'' (*AS,* 58). This same Valet who knows no fear is the one who answers Carmen's question at the end of the film. He, like her, it seems, forms no attachments. He can detach himself from the codes of the world and name the unnamable. He can free himself from fear and thereby open himself to the terror of beauty.

The unnamable is called *aurore,* but in a sense its name is also ''Carmen.'' At the end of her initial voice-over, Carmen adds the phrases, ''Got to hurry. Later. The one who should not be called Carmen'' [Celle qui ne devrait pas s'appeler Carmen] (*AS,* 21). When Godard says that ''beauty is the beginning of the terror we are capable of enduring,'' Carmen's face is in close-up on the screen. She is the unattached and unattachable, that which cannot be controlled or possessed, but also that which cannot be categorized. The eighteen close-ups of Carmen spaced throughout the film are images assimilable within cinematic codes, as well as within cultural codes of feminine beauty and desirability. The slightly hazy filters and soft lighting of the close-ups echo faintly the conventions of fashion photography, but finally Godard's aim is to detach these images from their conventional moorings while at the same time detaching the narrative figure of Carmen from her mythical coordinates, and to make visible on the screen the pure image of her face. The pure image in its terrifying beauty ''should not be called Carmen'' or anything else, but if it must be given a name, a name before the name, its prename would be Carmen.

One way of detaching an image from its codes is to strip it of its name, to divest it of its associated words, but Godard suggests as well that sounds in general impinge on images and hence must be separated from them in order to render them pure images. In Carmen's initial meeting with Uncle Jean in the asylum, he offers to lend her his ''new camera'' (*AS,* 24), which turns out to be a boom box. He holds the boom box on his shoulder as if it were a camera and plays a tape recording of ''Frère Jacques'' and ''Au clair de la lune,'' accompanied by background sounds of breaking crockery and then

of an aerial bombardment. The nursery songs are performed in a primitive fashion, the melody alone pecked out spasmodically in shifting registers on an out-of-tune piano. The erratic sounds of the piano keyboard and Godard's punching of the boom box's play and stop buttons recall Godard's earlier strokes on the typewriter keys, which spell out "mal vu, mal dit" at the bottom of a page of garbled random letters and symbols. When Carmen asks Uncle Jean if he would like to start making films again, he replies, "Il faut fermer les yeux au lieu de les ouvrir" [You must close the eyes rather than open them] (*AS,* 24). As the sounds of aerial bombardment increasingly dominate the sound track, the boom box on Godard's shoulder comes to resemble both a camera and a rocket launcher, and his haggard, scruffy face resembles that of a shell-shocked victim who has seen too much and needs to learn to close his eyes. The implication is that the camera can be a weapon, as can the tape recorder, and that the violence of visual representation is reinforced by sonic representations. The world is *mal vu, mal dit,* a page of meaningless babble, but it is also *mal entendu,* ill heard and ill understood, a tape of disintegrating nursery songs, breaking dishes, and dive-bombing planes. To create *juste une image,* the image must be detached not only from visual clichés and verbal codes, but also from its sonic counterparts, and sounds themselves need to be detached from their conventional associations if they are no longer to be *mal entendus.*

Godard does indeed separate sight and sound in *Prénom Carmen,* thereby creating what Deleuze would call a truly audiovisual modern film. But the status of music in the film is not simply that of a constituent of the sonic continuum. The sounds of waves, traffic, and seagulls; the ambient noises of the hospital, gas station, and hotel; the dialogue on camera and off—all are treated as elements of a musical composition. But if noises and sounds attain to the level of music within a single continuum, the Beethoven quartets are not thereby rendered mere noise within an undifferentiated sonic mix. Godard plays with the conventions of film scores, often undercutting the narrative by providing the action with incongruent accompaniment from the quartets. The juxtaposition of the ebullient allegro of the Tenth Quartet and the bank heist, for instance, heightens the absurdity of the sequence, and the intensely dramatic cadences of the third movement of the Fifteenth Quartet render melodramatic Carmen and Joseph's reunion in the garage (shots 147 and 148). Yet in neither of these nor in any of the other instances of an ironic pairing

of music and action is the music mocked. Rather, it is always the image that is not adequate to the music. Godard clearly has deep affection for the Beethoven quartets, and though he interrupts the ensemble's performance at several points, he also allows the music to continue undisturbed for extended stretches of time.

There are also a number of sequences in which the music and the images are not ironically juxtaposed. Throughout the film, when music accompanies shots of the ocean or close-ups of Carmen, lyrical, slow, highly emotive passages from the quartets are used, and at no point does the music undercut the image. Particularly striking is the use of the third movement of the Fifteenth Quartet during Carmen and Joseph's romantic interlude at the beach apartment (shots 92–122). The beginning of the third movement coincides with the cut to shot 92, a thirty-eight-second view of sea swells shot from above, the calm ebb and flow of the foam-flecked water gently washing over a small rock as the serene strains of the Molto adagio movement unfold. Passages from this movement accompany nearly half of the fourteen minutes of images set at the beach. Three-fourths of the time the score is matched with shots of the ocean or close-ups of Carmen. Godard is certainly exploiting conventional associations of the feminine and the ocean—be it as a figure of the maternal womb or as a symbol of erotic passion—but the conjunction of Carmen's face and the sea to the accompaniment of Beethoven is meant to undo those associations. Godard is engaged in a pedagogy of images, teaching us to see the images for themselves, and the score guides us in that lesson. Beethoven entitled the opening section of the third movement ''Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart'' [Sacred Song of Thanksgiving to the Godhead on a Convalescence, in the Lydian Mode], and its mood of quiet, meditative tranquility suffuses the entire beach sequence. Its modal tonality, as one commentator observes, produces ''an atmosphere of mysterious and other-worldly remoteness,'' an ''atmosphere of Olympian contemplation'' as well as an ''extraordinary feeling of timelessness.''[21] For the thirty-eight seconds of shot 92, we watch the wash of waves and listen to the quartet, as if we were being instructed ''learn to see this image itself, learn to see it with the calm, serenity and harmony of the music that accompanies it.'' When Carmen's face comes onscreen, the same score reinforces a similar lesson: ''Learn to see this face as you saw the ocean, not as a maternal or an erotic object but as a simple image.'' The music does not illustrate or represent the images, but it establishes a mood and

imbues the images with an affective intensity. The music's slow tempo and the extended duration of the shots of Carmen and the ocean—shots in which visually nothing happens—together encourage contemplation. Narrative is suspended, and a timeless time allows images to emerge as forms of a visual music.

To render visible the image itself requires a detachment of the image from its usual coordinates and an invention of new relationships with other images. The principle of this practice is indirectly suggested by Godard toward the close of the film, when Uncle Jean's nurse reads to him a phrase from Beethoven's *Tagebuch:* ''The perfect union of several voices entirely impedes the progess of one toward the other'' (*AS,* 62, notebook entry no. 2). In music as in cinema, the strict unison of elements impedes the movement of elements toward one another. Only by undoing the unities and uniformities of conventional relations can new relations be forged. The separation and recombination of voices is a principle governing images, words, sounds, and music in *Prénom Carmen,* one that makes of the film a stratigraphic layering of visual and sonic elements. Yet music still has a privileged position within these elements. What Schopenhauer finds in music is a strange sensual abstraction, a direct presentation of an affective geometry of forms immanent within things. A similar intuition informs Nietzsche's approach to tragedy as the outgrowth of the spirit of music. And Deleuze's sense of music in classic cinema as the direct presentation of the open Whole likewise springs from this intuition. For Deleuze, the modern cinema gives sound a new function as the visual and the sonic are detached from one another and recombined in new relations, but it seems that music—even traditional tonal art music—already has within it a force of affective detachment and rearticulation present in the most conventional of films. Godard subverts codes and narratives and undermines visual and sonic conventions, but he accepts Beethoven and allows the quartets to serve as the milieu within which the film takes shape. If there is a dominant spirit to *Prénom Carmen,* it is that of the Beethoven score.

In Nietzsche's view, tragedy makes bearable our terror at the destruction and dissolution of all material forms. In music we are able to embrace the incessant forces of creation that give rise to forms, break them apart, and then refashion them in new configurations. Ultimately, the spirit of music for Nietzsche is the spirit of the artist-god, the ''world-child Zeus'' at play in his world-making, now building, now destroying, with an equally serene joy in his activity.[22] It is

difficult to decide whether Godard finally subscribes to Rilke's view that beauty is the commencement of the terror we can endure, since little in Godard is offered without ironic distance and qualification. I have argued that the revelation of the pure image brings with it the terror of disequilibrium and disorientation, but one might argue as well that Godard's Rilkean reference is to the terroristic violence of conventional aesthetic codes. The creative spirit of the artist-god, however, seems to me to be undeniably present in *Prénom Carmen*. The Olympian serenity of the Fifteenth Quartet's Molto adagio movement suffuses the film, as does the poised playfulness that surfaces from time to time in the late quartets. The coda of Beethoven's last quartet, with its pizzicato chords and light, gay tune, brings Godard's film to its conclusion, as a final shot of the sea comes on the screen. The cheerful seriousness of the playful creator, that expansive spirit of deep feeling and distant reflection so evident in the late quartets (as in *The Tempest,* I would argue), is ultimately the controlling mood of Godard's film. *Prénom Carmen* is no tragedy, but if Nietzsche's spirit of tragedy is that of the artist-creator, and if that spirit is also the spirit of music, then this film, like tragedy, is born of the spirit of music.

Appendix: Prénom Carmen Citations from Beethoven's *Tagebuch* of 1812–18

Claire: Ceci, je le sens bien. Je le reconnais clairement. La vie n'est pas le bien suprême. Parmi les maux, le mal suprême c'est la faute.
Tagebuch, no. 118:

> Dieß Eine fühl' ich und erkenn' es klar:
> Das Leben ist der Güter höchstes nicht,
> Der Uibel größtes aber ist die Schuld.
>
> [This one thing I feel and clearly perceive:
> Life is not the sovereign good,
> But the greatest evil is guilt.]
> —*Schiller,* Die Braut von Messina, *closing lines*

Claire: Agis au lieu de demander.
Claire: Fais d'abord des miracles, si tu veux les dévoiler, ainsi seulement tu accompliras toute ta destinée.
Tagebuch, no. 60:

Robert Nicht *Fragen,* Thaten sollst du spenden, [;] dich selber opfern[,] ohne Ruhm und Lohn? [!]—Erst übe Wunder, willst du sie enthüllen; und [nur] so kannst du dein Daseyn nur [ganz] erfüllen.

[*Robert:* You shall dispense not questions but deeds,
Sacrifice yourself without fame and reward!
If you wish to unveil miracles, first practice them;
Only thus can you fulfill your existence.]
—Excerpt from Zacharias Werner, *Die Söhne des Thals,* part 1: *Die Templer auf Cypern* (Berlin, 1802), act 4, scene 1

First Violinist: Prendre la première phrase venue construite sur l'harmonie.
Tagebuch, no. 37: Den ersten besten Satz in Canons erfunden auf Harmonie gebaut.
The words "in Canons" are crossed out, with dots underneath to signify "stet."
[The best opening phrases in canons are built around harmonies.]

Claire: Montre ta puissance, Destin. Nous ne sommes pas nos propres maîtres. Ce qui est décidé . . . qu'il en soit ainsi.
Tagebuch, no. 73: Zeige deine Gewalt Schicksal! Wir sind nicht Herrn über uns selbst; was beschlossen ist, muß seyn, und so sey es dann [?denn]!——
[Show your power, Fate! We are not masters of ourselves; what has been decided must be, and so be it!]
—Possibly a quotation (source unknown)

Claire: Tout vérifier le soir.
Tagebuch, no. 4: alle Abends durchsehn.
[Look through them all in the evening.]

Claire: Et les nuages . . . les nuages feraient-ils voir des torrents de vie?
Tagebuch, No. 6: Und regneten die Wolken Lebensbäche, nie wird der Weidenbaum dir Datteln tragen.
[And even if the clouds were to rain rivers of life
Never will the willow tree bear dates.]
—Herder, "Verschwendete Mühe," in *Zerstreute Blätter,* 4th ed. (Gotha, 1792), p. 27.

Godard's Nurse: L'union parfaite de plusieurs voix empêche somme toute le progrès de l'une vers l'autre.
Tagebuch, no. 2: Die genaue Zusammenhaltung mehrerer Stimmen hindert im Großen das Fortschreiten einer zur andern—
[The precise coinciding of several musical voices generally hinders the progression from one to the other.]

German citations of the *Tagebuch* from Maynard Solomon, ''Beethoven's *Tagebuch* of 1812–1818,'' in *Beethoven Studies 3,* ed. Alan Tyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 193–293. English translations and commentary by Solomon.

Notes

1. Schopenheuer, qtd. in Friedrich Nietzsche, *''The Birth of Tragedy'' and ''The Case of Wagner,''* trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Vintage, 1967), 102. Subsequent references to either *The Birth of Tragedy* or *The Case of Wagner* will be to this translation.

2. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma 2: L'image-temps* (Paris: Minuit, 1985), 311. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. A splendid shot-by-shot description of the film, prepared by Marc Cerisuelo, is available in a special 1984 issue of *L'Avant-scène Cinéma* 323–24 (March 1984): 19–64. All citations, abbreviated as *AS,* are from this edition (translations my own); subsequent references will be given in the text. Although I speak of the film as essentially a work by Godard, it is important to note that the ''scenario and adaptation'' are credited to Anne-Marie Mieville, his collaborator on a number of important films. This fact, I believe, is especially important if one is to consider the implications of gender in the film, an issue that I do not address directly. For discussions of this question, see Phil Powrie, ''Godard's *Prénom: Carmen* (1984), Masochism, and the Male Gaze,'' *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 31 (January 1995): 64–73; and Verena Andermatt Conley, ''A Fraying of Voices: Jean-Luc Godard's *Prénom Carmen,*'' *L'Esprit Créateur* 30 (Summer 1990): 68–80.

6. The exception occurs midway through the film, when for eight seconds the sound track is dead while images of the performing quartet fill the screen. The effect is jarring, whereas at other points in the film when the visual ambient sound is missing and music accompanies the images, the effect is unremarkable because normalized within cinematic conventions. Clearly, Godard in this eight-second sequence is calling attention to the arbitrary nature of these sonic conventions in representational narrative cinema.

7. Jean-Luc Godard, *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard,* ed. Alain Bergala (Paris: Editions de L'Etoile/Cahiers du Cinéma, 1985), 576.

8. The only exception might be the third movement of the Fifteenth Quartet, the ''Song of Thanksgiving to the Godhead on a Convalescence, in the Lydian Mode.'' Although the movement is decidedly modal, I doubt that few listeners

would describe it as exotic or non-Western. At most, listeners might possibly characterize it as monastic and typically Renaissance in its handling of harmony.

9. Deleuze argues that there is a strictly visual link between the bodies of the musicians and the bodies of the Carmen plot actors. Indeed, he claims that the film repeatedly forces viewers to ask such questions as, what is the relation between the violinist's bowing and Joseph's embrace of Carmen, the arch of the cellist's fingers and the posture of the banks guard, etc.? See Deleuze, *Cinéma 2:* 253–54.

10. In several entries that Godard does not cite, Beethoven expresses his devotion to his art and laments the sacrifices his art demands of his personal life. ''You must not be a *human being, not for yourself, but only for others:* for you there is no longer any happiness except within yourself, in your art'' (no. 1; italics in original). ''Everything that is called life should be sacrificed to the sublime and be a sanctuary of art'' (no. 40). ''Sacrifice once and for all the trivialities of social life to your art'' (no. 169). All citations of Beethoven's *Tagebuch* are from Maynard Solomon's translation. Solomon, ''Beethoven's *Tagebuch* of 1812–1818,'' in *Beethoven Studies 3,* ed. Alan Tyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 193–293.

11. Actually, the lines Godard cites from *Tagebuch* entry no. 118 are Beethoven's transcription of the closing lines of Schiller's *The Bride of Messina.* In the context of the play, *Schuld* clearly means ''guilt'' rather than ''mistake.''

12. It is worth noting that in Werner (and in the *Tagebuch* citation), the character is implored to fulfill his *Daseyn,* his ''existence,'' not his ''destiny,'' as the French translation has it. Claire's reference here to ''toute ta destinée'' echoes her pronouncement later from entry no. 73, ''Montre ta puissance, Destin [Zeige deine Gewalt Schicksal!]'' [Show your power, Fate!], a significant echo, given the standard reading of the Carmen story as a tragedy of fate and destiny.

13. The sequence of quartet passages and corresponding plot elements is as follows: Ninth Quartet, second movement (Andante con molto quasi allegretto): opening rehearsal, hospital scenes with Godard and Carmen; Ninth Quartet, fourth movement (Trio) coda, moving directly into the fifth movement (Allegro molto): transitional scenes, conclusion of Godard-Carmen conversation and Carmen leaving the hospital; Tenth Quartet, first movement, second section (Allegro): bank heist (up to the first embrace of Carmen and Joseph); Tenth Quartet, second movement (Adagio ma non troppo): Carmen and Joseph embrace on bank floor, scenes in the getaway car; Fourteenth Quartet, fifth movement (Presto), final three notes: brief punctuation of restroom scene; Fourteenth Quartet, sixth movement (Adagio quasi un poco andante): Carmen and Joseph on the way to the beach apartment; Fifteenth Quartet, third movement (Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart / Neue kraft fühlend): Carmen and Joseph's romance in the beach apartment, with a reprise of the movement when the two meet again in Paris; Sixteenth Quartet, first movement (Allegretto): brief passages during hotel room quarrel (over Waits ballad); Sixteenth Quartet, second movement (Vivace): Joseph pursuing Carmen, shower scene; Sixteenth Quartet, third movement (Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo): quartet performance in hotel dining room; Sixteenth Quartet, fourth movement (Grave ma non troppo tratto—dramatic tremolo chords): Carmen's death; Sixteenth Quartet, fourth movement (Grave ma non troppo tratto): Valet's closing lines, ocean shot, final credits.

14. Shortly following the last burst of seagull cries, which abruptly and improbably is heard during a scene in the gang's Paris hotel room, Joseph transgresses the

narrative frame as he comments, ''There wasn't any sea sound with it'' [il y avait pas le bruit de la mer avec]; (*AS,* 60).

15. In an intriguing interview, ''Les mouettes du Pont d'Austerlitz: Entretien avec François Musy,'' *Cahiers du Cinéma* 355 (January 1984): 12–17, François Musy, the sound engineer for *Prénom Carmen,* says that the seagull sounds were recorded two years before the film was made. He notes that seagulls cry most distinctly when they are near cliffs, and there was no provision for sea cliffs in *Prénom Carmen*. Fortunately, he already had a recording of gulls near sea cliffs, which he used in the film. Of the film's sound track in general, he remarks, ''[I]t's a musical score in which all the sounds intervene on the same level, like instruments: the dialogue, a sea ambience, the music. . . . The seagulls, moreover, there it's already a composition of songs: you have some that cry louder, you have a sort of movement. The sea as well, even if it's a little more linear. The seagulls are already more musical, closer to dialogue'' (14).

16. A full analysis of the sonic elements of the film would require an inventory of the ambient sounds of the various milieus, which are treated in a very self-conscious fashion. Especially noteworthy are the exaggerated clankings, thunks, and echoing conversations of the asylum, as well as the traffic sounds outside the Intercontinental Hotel room. In both cases, ambient sounds appear, disappear, swell, and subside in improbable fashion.

17. In her insightful essay on *Prénom Carmen,* ''A Fraying of Voices,'' Conley observes that Godard's citation of Rilke should read ''La beauté n'est que le commencement de la terreur que nous sommes *encore* capables de supporter,'' given that Rilke's original reads: ''Denn das Schöne ist nichts / als des Schrecklichen Anfang, den wir noch gerade ertragen.'' She comments that ''the quotation is 'ill said,' since through suppression of the 'encore' the sentence insists less on a limit, becomes more declarative, but is also stripped of its possibility of contemplative value by being introduced in a lower mimetic mode. In Rilke, it refers to the world of absolute beauty or to angels, contrasted with earthen beauty. Terror in Rilke is of a more absolute kind, that belongs to something celestial. . . . In Godard, the same values are taken out of context and reversed. The quotation may seem funny, even pompous in the final, operatic—but also parodic—scene at the Hotel Intercontinental. The terror of beauty is attributed to the dark, hence diabolical Carmen—who, somewhat comically, is also said to have been working at a Prisunic—rather than to the angelic Claire (Myriem Roussel) who rightfully bears her name'' (77–78). I concur that Godard's citation makes Rilke's pronouncement more absolute, but I read the reference differently. Carmen, I argue, is no longer diabolical when divested of her narrative encoding. I might add that the Carmen-Claire opposition, while clearly modeled on the Micaëla-Carmen opposition of Bizet, and hence assimilable within codes of dark/diabolical and light/angelic (reinforced by Godard by the names of the two women and the association of Carmen with a red rose and Claire with a white rose), is not reinforced particularly in the visual presentation of the two women, both of whom have fair skin and dark hair.

18. Powrie, in ''Godard's *Prénom,*'' sees the Electra allusion as a means whereby Carmen is ''remythified twice over'' (72). He gives a Lacanian reading to the sexual dimension of this allusion, interpreting the Giraudoux citation at the film's close both as a distancing theatricalization of the action and a confirmation of the identity of the mother with dawn and the prelinguistic Imaginary.

19. Jean Giraudoux, *Théâtre complet,* ed. Jacques Body (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), 685.

20. Conley, ''Fraying of Voices,'' 70.

21. Philip Radcliffe, *Beethoven's String Quartets* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1965), 116–17.

22. I take this phrase from Nietzsche's account of Heraclitus's cosmos in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks,* trans. Marianne Cowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1962), 67. In Heraclitus's view of the universe, ''only play, play as artists and children engage in it, exhibits coming-to-be and passing away, structuring and destroying, without any moral additive, in forever equal innocence. And as children and artists play, so plays the ever-living fire. . . . Such is the game that the aeon plays with itself. Transforming itself into water and earth, it builds towers of sand like a child at the seashore, piles them up and tramples them down. . . . The child throws its toys away from time to time—and starts again, in innocent caprice. But when it does build, it combines and joins and forms its structures regularly, conforming to inner laws'' (62).

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