

PORTRAITS OF THE ARTIST:
DIONYSIAN CREATIVITY IN SELECTED WORKS BY
GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO AND THOMAS MANN

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Modern Languages

The University of Birmingham

2015

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Abstract

My thesis argues that Gabriele d'Annunzio and Thomas Mann both conceive of artistic creation as a process which is influenced by their interpretations of Nietzsche's notion of the Dionysian, and that striking affinities characterise their respective literary portrayals of the relationship between the artist and (a version of) the Dionysian. D'Annunzio and Mann, who were contemporaries, are rarely considered together, and it is widely assumed that there is little common ground between them. This thesis will demonstrate that their creative and critical engagement with Nietzsche, especially his idea of the Dionysian, offers a productive way of comparing the two writers and illuminating hitherto overlooked parallels between their understandings of creativity. The relationship between the artist and the Dionysian will constitute the main point of comparison. For both d'Annunzio and Mann, the Dionysian appears as a drive that can promote creativity, through encouraging liberation from repression and the rediscovery of primordial energies, but also destruction, by threatening self-dissolution, chaos and annihilation. The Dionysian will be seen to offer a highly precarious form of creativity. The artist's success, and even survival, will depend upon his ability to master this potentially lethal drive, and channel the impulses it triggers into artistic production.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of Nicholas Martin and Clodagh Brook, whose advice and encouragement have been invaluable.

Warm thanks also go to my partner and family, especially my parents, whose love of books inspired me, and who have instilled me with a love of literature.

List of Abbreviations

References to Nietzsche's writings are to the texts as they appear in the electronic version published in the Nietzsche Source collection (<http://www.nietzschesource.org/eKGWB>), edited by Paolo d'Iorio.

Citations are identified by abbreviations of the titles of the works in which they appear, followed by Arabic numerals referring to the relevant sections or paragraphs. Where necessary, Roman numerals are used to identify the parts of the works in which they are located. This form of citation should enable the reader to find the passages cited in German or English editions of Nietzsche's works. Nietzsche's letters are identified by the abbreviation BVN ('Briefe von Nietzsche'), followed by the year in which the letter was written, which is followed by the number given to the particular letter in question by d'Iorio. Nietzsche's notes are identified by the abbreviation NF ('Nachgelassene Fragmente'), followed by the year in which the note was written, which is followed by the number given to the note by d'Iorio.

BVN Briefe von Nietzsche (letters from Nietzsche).

DS *David Strauss*, 1873.

EH *Ecce homo*, 1888.

FW *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft (The Gay Science)*: Books I-IV, 1882; 2nd edn incorporating Book V and new Preface, 1887.

GD *Götzen-Dämmerung (Twilight of the Idols)* 1888.

GM *Zur Genealogie der Moral (On the Genealogy of Morality)* 1887.

GT *Die Geburt der Tragödie (The Birth of Tragedy)* 1872.

JGB *Jenseits von Gut und Böse (Beyond Good and Evil)* 1886.

M *Morgenröthe (Dawn)* 1881.

MA *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches (Human, All Too Human)*: I, 1878. II/1 – *Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche (Assorted Opinions and Maxims)*, 1879; II/2 – *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten (The Wanderer and his Shadow)*, 1880. New edition of MA (I and II), 1886.

NF Nachgelassene Fragmente (Notes and Fragments).

Za *Also sprach Zarathustra (Thus spake Zarathustra)*: Parts I-II, 1883; Part III, 1884; Part IV, 1885.

Chapter One: Introduction

It is widely assumed that there is little common ground between the near-contemporaries Gabriele d'Annunzio (1863-1938) and Thomas Mann (1875-1955). While the former is most commonly regarded as an aesthete or decadent, as well as a warrior-poet, the latter is generally seen as a writer of highly psychological and intellectual works; and while the biography of the former contains many wild and bohemian episodes – such as dodging creditors, participating in air-raids, and, famously, much womanising –, the latter pursued a seemingly more conventional way of life, settling down with a wife and family (at least until 1933, when the Manns were forced to relocate to avoid National Socialist persecution).

Perhaps because of these apparent differences, very few studies have directly compared d'Annunzio and Mann: no book-length comparison pre-exists this thesis, and the few (fairly brief) articles which do compare the two writers tend merely to highlight affinities and similarities between specific texts, often in rather general terms. Such affinities are largely noted without any suggestion of influence or interaction between the two writers; only Santoli (1971), Riccobono (2006) and Galvan (2007) go as far as suggesting that Mann's encounter with d'Annunzio's works may have impacted upon his own literature. Santoli's brief study highlights themes common to the two writers (such as beauty, Schopenhauer and Wagner), and suggests that Mann inherited the technique of incorporating 'ausgedehnte Umschreibungen und Interpretationen von Werken des großen sächsischen Meisters und andere Musiker'¹ (1971, p. 196) into his narratives. Santoli does not pursue this theory, however, and offers very little by way of evidence. He also points out that the technique had not been unique to d'Annunzio. Riccobono posits Mann's *Tristan* (1903) as a parody of

¹ 'extensive descriptions and interpretations of the works of the great Saxon maestro [Wagner] and other musicians'. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

d'Annunzio's *Le vergini delle rocce* (*The Virgins of the Rocks*, 1895), and Galvan claims that Mann's exposure to d'Annunzio's fame (during visits to Italy) may have left 'Spuren' ('traces' [2007, p. 262]) in Mann's literature. While Riccobono fails to offer a thoroughly convincing argument (largely relying on tenuous links such as the use of similar names in both texts), Galvan's consideration of *Il fuoco* (*The Flame*, 1900) and *Der Tod in Venedig* (*Death in Venice*, 1912) highlights striking and intriguing affinities, particularly regarding the shared dual focus of each text, namely 'Liebespassion' ('passionate love') and 'ästhetische Produktion'² (p. 264). These shared pivotal threads will be discussed throughout this thesis.

Even among the articles that discuss d'Annunzio and Mann together, parallels that are drawn are often fairly superficial. Schoffman, for example, finds that, ultimately, 'fundamental [differences]' (1993, p. 514) divide the two writers, despite their common interest in Venice and Wagner. What is perhaps overlooked, though, by some of the scant existing comparisons of d'Annunzio and Mann, is the ambivalence and ambiguity of both writers: neither is entirely dogmatic in his aesthetic, political and social views, and both undergo shifts in their artistic values and practices. Schoffman is arguably guilty of this when he summarises the substantial differences that he finds between the two writers:

Mann's characters are bourgeois; d'Annunzio's are bohemians. Mann's artists are sickly and isolated from society; d'Annunzio's are supermen. [...] D'Annunzio relishes decadence; Mann confronts the problem of decadence. D'Annunzio celebrates the sensuous life; Mann ponders the human condition. (p. 514)

While rapturous depictions of sensuality, for example, are mainly d'Annunzio's terrain, reflections on sensuality are certainly to be found in Mann's literature, as this thesis will show. Equally, while d'Annunzio may portray 'decadence' more often than Mann, Mann

² 'aesthetic production'.

himself noted the ambiguity of his feelings regarding this cultural phenomenon, and portrays it frequently with fascinated disapproval.

This thesis will argue that d'Annunzio and Mann lie closer together than has hitherto been maintained, based on an analysis of selected texts. The central point of comparison will be the two writers' shared engagement with (Nietzsche's) Dionysian, and their portrayal of this drive as one that can promote artistic creativity. This thesis will demonstrate that both view the Dionysian as a potentially valuable source of creative inspiration, but also as a drive that can promote death and destruction, and that striking affinities exist in their literary portrayals of Dionysian creativity. Throughout this thesis various aspects of d'Annunzio's and Mann's versions of the Dionysian will be compared: the third, fourth and fifth chapters of this thesis will each deal with a different – but related – aspect of the Dionysian that is common to the two writers' depictions of this potent drive. They will be seen to portray the Dionysian functioning in similar ways for the artist, and to involve the same dangers. Both also offer comparable strategies for dealing with the Dionysian in the healthiest and most creatively beneficial way. The affinities uncovered in this thesis will allow for a better understanding of d'Annunzio's and Mann's conception of creativity, and of the psychological processes that lie behind artistic production. In shedding light on the hitherto overlooked relationship between d'Annunzio and Mann, this thesis simultaneously seeks a better understanding of the two writers individually. A more nuanced understanding of their respective receptions of Nietzsche, and respective literary treatments of creativity, will be pursued.

A common theme that does link d'Annunzio and Mann, which has been noted by commentators, is the prominence with which art and the artist feature in their literature. Mann explicitly discusses the artist through characters such as Tonio Kröger (*Tonio Kröger*, 1903), Detlev Spinell (*Tristan*), Gustav von Aschenbach (*Der Tod in Venedig*), and Adrian

Leverkühn (*Doktor Faustus* [*Doctor Faustus*, 1947]). He also offers implicit comments on the artist through characters such as Klaus Heinrich (*Königliche Hoheit* [*Royal Highness*, 1909]), Cipolla (*Mario und der Zauberer* [*Mario and the Magician*, 1929]), and Felix Krull (*Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull* [*The Confessions of Felix Krull*, 1954]). In d'Annunzio's (fewer) novels, conventional artists include the characters of Andrea Sperelli (*Il piacere* [*Pleasure*, 1888]) and Stelio Effrena (*Il fuoco*), but almost all of d'Annunzio's protagonists are highly artistic, and are profoundly moved by art. Giorgio Aurispa (*Il trionfo della morte* [*The Triumph of Death*, 1894]) and Claudio Cantelmo (*Le vergini delle rocce*) are examples of these figures, artists by sensibility if not by profession. Of course, d'Annunzio and Mann are not the only writers of their time to have offered literary reflection on the nature and role of the artist: Wilde's *A Portrait of Dorian Gray* (1891), Fogazzaro's *Il mistero del poeta* (*The Mystery of the Poet*, 1888) Hesse's *Gertrud* (1910) and Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1913), to give a few examples, also offer portraits of the artist. As this thesis will argue, however, a more interesting and valuable comparison between d'Annunzio and Mann can be drawn when their portrayals of the experience of creativity are more closely compared.

Before turning attention to these portrayals of creativity, however, consideration must be given to d'Annunzio's and Mann's views regarding the role of art and the artist, for it is here that the two writers appear most divergent. An understanding of the two writers' beliefs regarding the purpose and responsibility of art and creativity allows for a deeper understanding of the experiences of creativity that will be seen in their literature throughout this thesis, and enables us to gain a clearer idea of the two writers' understanding of the relationship between life and art.

Mann's views regarding the role and social responsibilities of the artist were to undergo significant transformation during his career. Broadly speaking, while Mann was to

find an overt political voice with the rise of National Socialism, his opposition to which was vehement and outspoken, at the time of the First World War (and at the time of the publication of the texts under discussion in this thesis) Mann believed the politically engaged artist to be an abhorrent figure, and lambasted artists who use (or abuse) their position to argue social or political causes. This belief placed Mann in stark opposition to both d'Annunzio and to his brother, Heinrich, resulting in a notorious *Bruderzwist* ('brotherly dispute'), which lasted several years.

In 1915 Heinrich Mann published a long essay entitled 'Zola', which examined the French writer's aesthetic principles and which examined the Dreyfus Affair³ in order to comment upon the political situation in contemporary Germany. Heinrich lauded Zola as a model for other artists, precisely because of his political and social engagement. Zola had been outspoken against the French government during the political crisis and had written an open letter entitled *J'accuse (I accuse [1898])*. Just as Zola had argued for the good of the people and adopted an artistic theory with a social conscience, Heinrich Mann believed German artists and intellectuals should work towards social and political emancipation, and that they should operate as the 'Gewissen' ('conscience' [Heinrich Mann, cited in Reed, 1974, p. 192]) of the German people. As he declared in the essay, 'Der Intellektuelle erkennt Vergeistigung nur an, wo Versittlichung erreicht ward'⁴ (p. 194). Instead, Heinrich Mann found, certain artists and intellectuals – including his brother, Thomas – had abused their position and betrayed the German people upon the outbreak of war, by voicing support for the actions of the German government which had led to war. Heinrich bemoaned the 'enforced solidarity between the governing and the governed, which annihilated all

³ The Dreyfus Affair divided France between 1894 and 1906, and revolved around a conviction of treason made against army captain Alfred Dreyfus, who was Jewish. The case garnered much publicity and caught the attention of many intellectuals. Dreyfus was finally exonerated in 1906, after accusations made against him were found to be unfounded and driven by anti-Semitism.

⁴ 'The intellectual recognises spiritual quality only where some moral effect has been achieved' (translated by Reed [ibid]).

opposition to the military leadership' (Doerfel, 1971, p. 104) and felt isolated in his objections: 'Es ist kein Platz mehr für den, der nicht die ganze nationale Grösse auf die Anbetung des Säbels beschränkt'⁵ (Heinrich Mann, cited in Doerfel, p. 104). Heinrich's sense of isolation may have been exacerbated by his own brother's supposed betrayal.

Several of Heinrich Mann's criticisms in the Zola essay were clearly aimed at his brother, although Heinrich never actually named Thomas. In the latter months of 1914 Thomas Mann had written several articles (including *Gedanken im Kriege* [*Thoughts in War*] and *Friedrich und die große Koalition* [*Friedrich and the Great Coalition*]) which were criticised for displaying ardent nationalism and enthusiasm for war. The historian Wilhelm Herzog referred disdainfully to Mann's *Friedrich und die große Koalition* as 'diese literarisch manikürte Irrlehre der deutschen Seele'⁶ (cited in Reed, 1974, p. 189), and Romain Rolland responded to Mann's articles with an essay (which did not name Mann) positing the artist's rightful position as 'au-dessus de la mêlée'⁷ (ibid.). Mann's *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (*Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*), written between 1915 and 1918 and published in 1918, were intended partly as a response to such criticisms, and to counter Heinrich's essay. Accordingly, many (thinly) veiled criticisms of Heinrich can be found in the *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*. He bears more than a passing resemblance to the *Zivilisationsliterat*,⁸ for example, a 'symbolic figure made to represent the popular democratic political values based on the European Enlightenment' (Lehnert and Wessell, 2004, p. 136). This figure, Mann writes, campaigns for the democratisation and therefore, according to Mann, the 'Entdeutschung' ('de-Germanisation' [1974, p. 68]) of Germany; he practises a politicised art; belongs to the Anglo-French Entente; and has come under the influence of French literature.

⁵ 'There is no longer a place for those whom the entire national greatness is not limited to the worship of the sabre'.

⁶ '[this] demented doctrine of the German soul, decked out as literature' (translated by Reed).

⁷ 'above the melee'.

⁸ Stock translates this term as 'civilisation's literary man' (1985, p. 176).

In an attempt to defend himself from the attacks of Herzog, Rolland and others, Thomas Mann, in his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, deflects criticisms he himself had received in the direction of others. The *Zivilisationsliterat* and Gabriele d'Annunzio are two of the figures that Mann employs to this end.⁹ Mann posits d'Annunzio as the antithesis to his own artistic persona (whether accurately or not), using the Italian as a means of consolidating his own artistic identity and his own sense of responsibility. While Mann despises politicised art, d'Annunzio allegedly practises '[politisierte] Ästhetizismus'¹⁰ (p. 549); while Mann values introspective and respective literature, d'Annunzio ('ein Rhetor-Demagog'¹¹ [p. 577]) is forever before the crowd, orating from his balcony or in the piazza;¹² and whereas Mann claims to have written his allegedly 'pro-war' articles as a detached observer¹³ who merely accepted the outbreak of war, he labels d'Annunzio a 'Kriegspanegyriker' ('war-panegyrist' [ibid.]) and 'Kriegsruf'er' ('warmonger'er' [ibid.]) for his well-documented interventionism.¹⁴ In terms of aesthetics, too, Mann finds d'Annunzio to be his antipode: he accuses the Italian of 'Schönheits-Großmäuligkeit' ('beauty-swaggering' [p. 106]) and of 'üppigen Ästhetizismus'¹⁵ (p. 537), while declaring that he himself was never concerned with beauty.¹⁶ Instead, Mann claims to have pursued ethics ('das Ethische über das Ästhetische'¹⁷ [p. 106]),

⁹ For example, Mann protests that the *Zivilisationsliterat* has named him an aesthete for remaining apolitical (1974, p. 149), and claims that actually the *Zivilisationsliterat* is more deserving of the name 'aesthete', for his politicising is merely a way of achieving effect, and is therefore actually the more concerned with aestheticism. Mann claims: 'sein Politizismus [ist] nur eine neue und sensationelle Form der bellezza' ('his politicism [is] just a new and sensational form of *bellezza*' [p. 545]).

¹⁰ 'politicised aestheticism'.

¹¹ 'a demoagogue-rhetorician'.

¹² 'Ist so ein Rhetor-Demagog denn niemals allein? Immer auf dem "Balkon"? Kennt er keine Einsamkeit, keine Selbstbezweiflung, keine Sorge und Qual um seine Seele und um sein Werk [...]?' ('But is such a rhetoric-demagogue never alone? Always on the "balcony"? Does he know no loneliness, no self-doubt, no worry and anguish over his soul and his work [...]?' [Mann, 1974, p. 577]).

¹³ Mann states: 'Ich bin einzeln, ich sehe zu' ('I am isolated, I observe' [p. 153]).

¹⁴ See Alfredo Bonadeo, *D'Annunzio and the Great War* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), pp. 1-68.

¹⁵ 'sumptuous aestheticism'.

¹⁶ 'Nie war es mir um "Schönheit" zu tun' ('For me it was never about "beauty" [p. 106]).

¹⁷ 'the ethical over the aesthetic'.

as a writer of German burgherly roots,¹⁸ and affirms the kind of literature that is described in *Tonio Kröger* thus: ‘die Literatur als Weg zum Verstehen, zum Vergeben und zur Liebe, die erlösende Macht der Sprache, der literarische Geist als die edelste Erscheinung des Menschengestes überhaupt’¹⁹ (Mann, 2004, p. 275).

In his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, Mann emphasises his German, burgherly identity, and betrays little of his (maternal) southern heritage. Indeed, the south here seems rather a realm of pernicious influence, against which Mann, as a writer, wishes to defend himself. While there is not scope here for a full examination of Mann’s perceived antithesis between north and south, a summary regarding his concerns is contained in observations written at the turn of the century regarding the uses and abuses of Nietzsche:

Ich wiederhole, daß ich mit dem Renaissance-Ästhetizismus gewisser “Nietzscheaner” innerlich nie irgend etwas zu schaffen gehabt habe. Was mich ihm aber fernhielt, das mochte, es ahnte mir früh, mein Deutschtum sein; die “Schönheit”, wie jene Dionysier sie meinten und mit steiler Gebärde verherrlichten, erschien mir von jeher als ein Ding für Romanen und Romanisten, als ein “Stück Süden” ziemlich verdächtiger, verächtlicher Art [...]’²⁰ (1974, p. 541).

Mann affirms his German, burgherly identity against what he associates with the south, and from the irresponsible, suspicious, and overly-Dionysian art practised by fanatical Nietzscheans. While the *Zivilisationsliterat* has reportedly attacked him for favouring aesthetics over morality (in remaining apolitical), Mann here distances himself from southern aestheticism and posits himself as the decorous and dutiful artist, insisting that he was never

¹⁸ In the *Betrachtungen* it is Mann’s German side which has the strongest voice, and he declares that this German, burgherly part of his nature prevented him from becoming entangled in irresponsible aesthetic concerns that he associates with the south.

¹⁹ ‘literature as the path towards understanding, towards forgiveness and towards love, the redemptive power of language, the literary spirit as the most noble manifestation of the human spirit possible’.

²⁰ ‘I repeat that I never had anything to do with the Renaissance-aestheticism of certain “Nietzscheans”. What kept me away from them, as I perceived early on, was my Germanness: “beauty”, as those Dionysians mean it, and which they glorify with bold gestures, always seemed to me to be a thing for Latins and Latinists, a “piece of the south” of a somewhat suspicious, contemptible type [...]’.

interested in beauty. As will be seen throughout this thesis, Mann saw creative value in the Dionysian, but here he renounces an over-zealous and irresponsible Dionysianism.

In later years Mann's apoliticism and anti-democratic views appeared to undergo a reversal. In October 1922 he became a self-appointed cultural representative of the new Weimar Republic (Kurzke, 2010, p. 67). As Kurzke notes, Mann's conversion to democratic republicanism was at first half-hearted ('geschieht anfangs nur mit halber Überzeugung'²¹ [ibid.]), and it was only with the rise of Adolf Hitler that Mann's politicisation became 'endgültig' ('final' [ibid.]). At the time of his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, however, Mann articulates an understanding of the role of the artist that excludes both political engagement and vacuous aestheticism. The artist should neither argue for political causes nor withdraw into a world of superficial beauty. Mann's disapproval of the decadent aestheticism practised by some artists around the turn of the century will be highlighted in *Tristan*, in the parodic figure of Detlev Spinell, and is also seen in Mann's polemicising against d'Annunzio in the *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*. While Mann may have (slightly) caricatured d'Annunzio, it is true that the Italian saw more potential for politically engaged art than Mann at this stage.

Even in d'Annunzio's earliest writings, traces of social and political engagement are evident. D'Annunzio himself claimed that his *Canto novo* (*New Song*, 1882), written when he was just nineteen, contained 'scariche di socialismo feroce'²² (d'Annunzio, cited in Becker, 1990, p. 75), a claim which has been disputed by some critics. As Becker notes, Benedetto Croce found the work's socialism to be 'negligible posturing' (p. 81). Becker argues that d'Annunzio is here presenting beauty as a substitute to capitalist and socialist politics, and practising a "politics of aestheticism" (p. 80) – echoing a chapter title from Mann's

²¹ 'occurred initially somewhat half-heartedly'.

²² 'bouts of fierce socialism'.

Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen ('Ästhetizistische Politik'²³). D'Annunzio's article 'La bestia elettiva' (generally translated as 'The Beast who Wills', 1892), the first treatment of Nietzsche in the Italian language (aside from a few very brief reviews of his books), displays a strong political slant, renouncing parliamentary democracy and arguing instead for a new aristocracy. D'Annunzio's distaste for democracy did not prevent him from briefly entering parliament in 1897 however – although his achievements as a member of parliament were negligible. One of his most famous acts was a highly theatrical one, involving the writer dramatically passing (literally walking) from the benches of the right to those of the left. D'Annunzio had, after all, declared himself (in quasi-Nietzschean terms) to be 'al di là della *destra* e della *sinistra* – [...] come al di là del bene e del male'²⁴ (d'Annunzio, cited in Alatri, 1983, p. 193).

With the outbreak of the First World War, d'Annunzio's was one of the loudest voices among the interventionists. In the many orations he gave in support of Italy's entrance into the war (which eventually took place in May 1915), he revealed his understanding of the artist as manipulator of the crowds and man of action. As Piredda says of d'Annunzio's interventionist speeches:

The argument [...] is grounded on a synthetic series of apodictic statements, in which the truth is presented as absolutely certain and evident. Far from striving to persuade by means of rational argumentation, d'Annunzio's discourse aims to impose a truth regardless of its actual validity. The language of his propaganda [...] evokes those easily recognisable tropes and myths that are deeply rooted in common opinion and imagery, even if they are scarcely representative of the reality of the new war, the first truly modern conflict fought with industrial techniques and machinery in Europe. (2011, p. 311)

²³ 'Aesthetic Politics'.

²⁴ 'beyond *right* and *left* – [...] as I am beyond good and evil'.

The principles identified by Piredda in d'Annunzio's orations stand in stark opposition to those declared by Mann in his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*. Not content with launching emotive and intoxicating arguments for Italy's entry into the war (perhaps Mann was not unjustified in calling d'Annunzio's Latinism and nationalism 'ein Wirkungs- und Begeisterungsmittel'²⁵ [Mann, 1974, 577]), d'Annunzio, who was in his fifties by the time of the First World War, felt compelled to go beyond political words and take part in military action, too. Among his legendary deeds the most famous is probably his participation in a daring leaflet-dropping mission over Vienna in August 1918, in the earliest days of long-range aviation. Romain Rolland, who had named d'Annunzio a 'purveyor of the guillotine' (Rolland, cited in Bonadeo, 1995, p. 14) for his early interventionist rhetoric, paradoxically found d'Annunzio's military actions worthy of praise, conceding that he 'had given the world proof [...] of his burning courage. He alone among the rhetoricians of the war paid with his own person; he signed his rhetoric with his own blood' (ibid.).

In strong contrast to Mann (or at least, the Mann of the *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*), then, d'Annunzio believed the artist's role should extend beyond that of the creation of works of art. D'Annunzio understood the poet as a guide for the people, and handled his crowds in much the same way as *Il fuoco*'s Stelio Effrena, inciting and exciting them towards a particular end. While it may seem contradictory of Mann to accuse d'Annunzio of both vacuous aestheticism and excessive socio-political engagement, Borelli convincingly argues that d'Annunzio 'illustrates the coexistence, rather than the opposition of [intellectual aloofness and political engagement], as [he strives] to reintegrate art and literature in modern society by evoking ideals which belong both to the life of action and to that of contemplation' (2012, p. 8). At the time of Mann's strict policy of remaining apolitical (or at least claiming to), d'Annunzio was practising the other extreme, involving himself in

²⁵ 'a means of achieving effect and rapture'.

politics and militarism as much as possible. d'Annunzio's actions suggest that he saw himself as something of a 'vate', a poet-guide for the people.

While d'Annunzio and Mann appear poles apart in their beliefs regarding the role of the artist, their understandings of the nature and workings of creativity are more closely aligned. As this thesis will argue, both writers portray creativity as a process which relies upon something that strikingly resembles Nietzsche's Dionysian.

A neglected link between d'Annunzio and Mann, which is key to this thesis, is their shared reception of Nietzsche. Both are known to have read and engaged with Nietzsche's ideas, but this thesis will offer the first detailed analysis of this connection and its importance to both writers' creative output. The comparison will centre on the two writers' reception of Nietzsche's idea of the Dionysian (first expounded in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* [*The Birth of Tragedy*, 1872]), and their portrayals of the role of this psychological drive in artistic creation. For Nietzsche, the Dionysian was a drive of crucial artistic significance: it was his eagerness to reintroduce modern audiences to the forgotten drive of the Dionysian, in order to revitalise the contemporary artistic landscape, which contributed significantly to the demolition of Nietzsche's academic reputation in 1872. While contemporary audiences were largely unmoved by Nietzsche's appeals, and reluctant to embrace his idea of the Dionysian, later readers were more enthusiastic; prominent among these readers were d'Annunzio and Mann. Evidence of both writers' engagement with the Dionysian will be seen in this thesis, and it will be argued that their shared understanding of the artistic value of the drive constitutes an important and hitherto overlooked parallel between them.

The works selected to illustrate this argument are Thomas Mann's *Tristan*, *Tonio Kröger*, and *Der Tod in Venedig*, and Gabriele d'Annunzio's *Il trionfo della morte* and *Il fuoco*.

The second chapter of this thesis will discuss the reception of Nietzsche's ideas, especially the Dionysian. It will consider the (belated) impact of Nietzsche's thought, paying particular attention to his reception in Germany and Italy, and assess d'Annunzio's and Mann's receptions of Nietzsche's ideas. This chapter will also explore the significance of the Dionysian throughout Nietzsche's thought, examining the transformation that this idea undergoes from 1872 until the end of Nietzsche's active life (1889). This second chapter will lay the foundations for the argument of this thesis, establishing that what appears as the Dionysian in d'Annunzio's and Mann's literature is a descendant of Nietzsche's Dionysian, and enabling us to compare the various manifestations of this potent psychological and creative drive.

Chapter Three will consider a particular aspect of the Dionysian; namely, its promotion of a creatively enriching experience of profound and primal union. D'Annunzio and Mann's artistic characters will be shown to fit into the trope (even cliché) of the isolated, solitary artist. Here (as in many other portrayals of creative individuals), the artist is an outsider, who stands apart from the crowd and often struggles to identify with his fellow man. When d'Annunzio's and Mann's fictional artists come under the influence of the Dionysian, however, they experience intense oneness and intimacy – both with other individuals and with nature. In this state creativity may be provoked, but, because the experience is one in which the artist's individuated identity is suspended, the very survival of the artist is also at stake: suspension of identity (and immersion into a community of some kind) can become *loss* of identity, and can hurl the artist towards psychological destruction.

Chapter Four will complement the discussion of the third chapter, arguing that the Dionysian state, for d'Annunzio and Mann, but also for Nietzsche, is reached via a form of regression. It involves a retrieval of forgotten or repressed impulses and desires, and often results in an embrace of instinct (often expressed as unbridled sexual desire). The Dionysian

thus promotes a rawer, more intuitive form of existence, free of the restraints and repressions of large scale society. In this sense, d'Annunzio's and Mann's portrayals of Dionysian creativity could arguably be situated within the cultural primitivism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁶ As will be seen, however, while the Dionysian here promotes a more 'primitive' form of existence, like the primitivists of the abovementioned period, it lacks the patronising and racist stereotypes of much primitivist discourse, which looked to contemporary cultures deemed 'less civilised' for artistic inspiration or to justify colonial activities.

In Chapter Five, by which time both the profits and perils of the Dionysian in the context of both writers' works will have been demonstrated, a means of successfully navigating this powerful drive will be discussed. It will be argued that both d'Annunzio and Mann portray sublimation – in a Freudian as well as Nietzschean sense – as a strategy for successfully and healthily engaging with the Dionysian. This strategy allows the artist to reap the creative benefits of the Dionysian without fully submitting to the drive: the artist remains in control and artistically focused. Rather than submitting fully to the inflamed sexual desire that the Dionysian can trigger, for example, the artist redirects the impulses of the Dionysian so that they are ultimately expressed in artistic production; this is how Freud understands sublimation to operate. In line with Nietzsche's (scant) statements regarding sublimation, d'Annunzio and Mann also portray their healthier artists as displaying unification of their various drives, rather than appearing fragmented and torn in different directions. Sublimation, therefore, appears to offer a useful strategy for reaping the creative benefit of the Dionysian.

²⁶ This involved Western artists looking to civilisations deemed comparatively more 'primitive' and 'less developed', or to imagined stereotypes of the 'primitive', and appropriating characteristics that they found – or believed to find – in their art.

Chapter Two: Nietzsche's Dionysian and its Reception

As stated in the previous chapter, this thesis will establish the relationship between the artist and (a version of) Nietzsche's Dionysian as a common feature of the portrayal of artistic creativity in selected works by Gabriele d'Annunzio and Thomas Mann. This chapter will illuminate the background to this relationship, exploring the artistic significance of Dionysus and the Dionysian before Nietzsche's appropriation, and the critical reception and cultural impact of Nietzsche's version of the Dionysian.

We will begin by discussing the reception of Nietzsche's legacy (especially his idea of the Dionysian), with a particular focus on Germany and Italy, before considering d'Annunzio's and Mann's personal engagement with Nietzsche and his ideas. This survey of Nietzsche's reception will also explore reasons for his belated rise to fame. Having established when and why Nietzsche's Dionysian gained purchase among artists and intellectuals across Europe, a brief overview of the prehistory of the Dionysian will be given, in order to gain a clearer idea of the figure that Nietzsche inherited, and to illuminate his own adaptations and innovations. This overview will begin by considering the ancient figure of Dionysus and his worship, before tracing the progression and transformation of the Dionysian until its appearance in the (largely German) literature of the eighteenth century. Finally, the chapter will conclude by exploring the significance of the Dionysian in Nietzsche's writings, beginning with the text that aimed and claimed to 'resurrect' him (*Die Geburt der Tragödie*) before turning to Nietzsche's notes, and finally to his later writings, where we find the Dionysian in a slightly modified form.

i) The Reception of Nietzsche and his Ideas

Die Geburt der Tragödie is one of the nineteenth century's most famous treatises on art, and one of Nietzsche's most iconic texts; yet during Nietzsche's lifetime the book was a commercial failure,¹ and turned Nietzsche, almost overnight, into a figure of ridicule and contempt in the academic world. Nietzsche's frustration at his first book's lack of success is evident from his letters and notes, and his disappointment at the book's reception was set to be repeated with his subsequent publications. During his active lifetime (after a breakdown in 1889 he remained alive for a further ten years in a vegetative state, before dying in 1900) Nietzsche was to achieve very little attention, let alone acclaim, and his many books largely fell upon deaf ears.²

In a letter of November 1871 to the classical scholar Erwin Rohde, written shortly before the publication of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Nietzsche expresses anxiety regarding its potential success: he writes, 'Ich fürchte immer, daß die Philologen es der Musik wegen, die Musiker der Philologie wegen, die Philosophen der Musik und Philologie wegen nicht lesen wollen [...]'³ (BVN-1871, 170). These reservations notwithstanding, Nietzsche had high hopes for his first book, and wrote to Wagner early in 1872, 'Meinen Philologen gnade Gott, wenn sie jetzt nichts lernen wollen'⁴ (BVN-1872, 185).

¹ An inventory of Nietzsche's books carried out in 1893 revealed that out of the 31,950 books that Nietzsche had had printed, 22,894 copies had sold. The only books to have sold more than 1,000 copies by 1893 were *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (*The Birth of Tragedy*, 1872), of which 1,462 copies had been sold, and the fourth of the *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* (*Untimely Meditations*, 1873-76), published in 1876, of which 1,500 copies had been sold (Schaberg, 1995, p. 188). The inventory was carried out after Nietzsche's belated rise to fame began around 1890 (discussed shortly), and so these figures, themselves modest, even reflect the increase in sales since around 1890. Unfortunately sales figures for *Die Geburt der Tragödie* during Nietzsche's active lifetime appear not to exist.

² As Schacht notes, 'prior to his collapse, none of [Nietzsche's books] sold more than a few hundred copies, and few of them attracted any attention whatsoever' (1996, p. xii). Schacht takes *Menschliches Allzumenschliches* (*Human All Too Human*, 1878) as a 'vivid case in point. Of the 1,000 copies in the first printing of the original version, only 120 were sold in 1878; and more than half remained unsold in 1886, when Nietzsche reacquired them and repackaged them with a new introduction as the first volume of the two-volume second edition' (ibid.).

³ 'I fear that the philologists will not read it because of the music, the musicians will not read it because of the philology, the philosophers will not read it because of the music and philology [...]'.

⁴ 'God help my philologists, if they do not wish to learn anything now'.

Unfortunately for Nietzsche, these philologists were not ready to learn anything from *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, and nor was anyone else. The text's contemporary relevance eluded many of its earliest readers, who instead judged the text purely as a philological investigation into ancient Greece. Nietzsche's philological colleagues found much to criticise. A vitriolic attack came from Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, who had known Nietzsche personally at school. He accused Nietzsche of various errors, inaccuracies and incompetence, and later said of Nietzsche that he was no philologist, but rather 'Prophet [...] für eine irreligiöse Religion und eine unphilosophische Philosophie'⁵ (Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, cited in Reich, 2013, p. 80). Even Nietzsche's former doctoral supervisor, Friedrich Ritschl, to whom Nietzsche had rather hopefully sent a signed copy, and from whom he then had to prompt a response, described the text as 'geistreiche Schwiemelei'⁶ (Ritschl, cited in Reich, p. 29) which was potentially detrimental to young scholars.

The style alone of Nietzsche's book was enough to ruffle the feathers of traditional philologists. The text flagrantly disregarded academic propriety and stylistic traditions (completely omitting, for example, scholarly citations and references), and Nietzsche failed to produce any evidence for his controversial claims. Silk and Stern describe the 'high coloration and [...] strong emotional charge' (1995, p. 89) of Nietzsche's language – unconventional characteristics for an apparently academic text – which left the book open to ridicule or dismissal.

Die Geburt der Tragödie adopted a radical approach to themes that were dominated by tradition. In suggesting that the irrational and chaotic Dionysian had been a source of inspiration to the ancient Greeks, Nietzsche challenged the long-held and deeply-ingrained

⁵ 'the prophet of an unreligious religion'.

⁶ 'ingenious nonsense'.

view of the Greeks as optimistic and untroubled, as models of reason and tranquillity.⁷ Instead, he claimed, the Hellenes acknowledged the horrors and turmoil of existence, but overcame them, even affirmed them, through their art, which arose from Dionysian origins. It was only several decades later that his unconventional suggestions began to be taken seriously.

For the rest of Nietzsche's sane life he was to lament the neglect of his book. While he claimed that his books were being read everywhere except in Germany,⁸ the reality was that readers were not paying any real attention to his books either in Germany or abroad.⁹ During the decade of his insanity (1889-1900), however, his writings began to be recognised. By the mid-1890s both Gabriele d'Annunzio and Thomas Mann had discovered Nietzsche's works, and were beginning to write about him themselves. At the turn of the century Nietzsche was popular enough for Aschheim to speak of 'Nietzscheana' (1994, p. 30) in Germany, and for Barzellotti to speak of a 'contagio nietzscheano'¹⁰ (cited in Heyer-Caput, 2008, p. 163) in Italy. But why was it that Nietzsche's thought began to gain purchase after his active life had ended? And how can Nietzsche's belated success in Germany and in Italy be explained?

Many critics¹¹ find that with the changes that took place in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and the first decades of the twentieth, Nietzsche's writings suddenly gained relevance. His works were seemingly more in tune with the socio-political and

⁷ This had been the view of the German art historian Johann Winckelmann (1717-1768), for example, who claimed that Greek art was characterised by 'edle Einfalt und stille Grösse' ('noble simplicity and quiet grandeur' [Winckelmann, cited in Uhlig, 1988, p. 36]).

⁸ In a letter to Jean Bourdeau from 1888 Nietzsche complains, 'jetzt habe ich Leser überall, in Wien, in St. Petersburg, in Stockholm, in Kopenhagen – [...] sie fehlen mir in Deutschland' ('now I have readers everywhere, St Petersburg, Stockholm, Copenhagen – [...] but not in Germany' [Nietzsche, BV-1888, 1196]).

⁹ A few isolated individuals, such as the Danish scholar Georg Brandes, were already lecturing on Nietzsche during the 1880s. Nietzsche was aware of, and corresponded with, Brandes, and possibly had him in mind when he remarked upon having being discovered everywhere except in Germany.

¹⁰ 'Nietzschean contagion'.

¹¹ See, for example, Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890-1990* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles: 1994), pp. 12-16, and Richard Hinton Thomas, *Nietzsche in German Politics and Society, 1890-1918* (University of Manchester Press: Manchester, 1986), pp. 1-6.

cultural context of the turn of the century than with the period of their initial publication. As Nietzsche himself commented, '[e]inige werden posthum geboren'¹² (EH-Bücher-1). The period of Nietzsche's insanity and that following his death were marked by intense change and upheaval across Europe: in 1900 Charles Péguy declared that the world 'had changed more in the preceding thirty years than in the entire two millennia since Christ' (cited in Payne, 1996, p. 24). These changes continued into the early twentieth century, so that once Nietzsche's thought had filtered into the mainstream, it became increasingly popular. This period of change involved industrialisation, mechanisation and urbanisation: technological advancements hurled man into the machine-age, and ushered in a 'second industrial revolution' (Payne, 1996, p. 23). Improved rail networks meant that travel was suddenly possible to many more people, for example, and at far greater speeds. Partly as a result of this, increased migration impacted upon social demographics and promoted the emergence of mass societies. In such a world of speed, technology and massification, the individual was likely to experience isolation and alienation: Hinton Thomas points out that such societies can be, and were, hostile to '*Individualität* ['individuality'] and *Persönlichkeit* ['personality']' (1986, p. 2). In Nietzsche the alienated individual finds his individuality brought once more to the fore.

As well as improvements in technology and mechanisation, scientific discoveries led, paradoxically, to a resurgence of non-rationality and mysticism: the discovery of the X-ray, for example, revealed the existence of realities beyond the individual's sensory perception (Henderson, 2007, p. 384) and in 1895 Ferdinand Brunetière spoke of the failures of science.¹³ In his view, science had failed to fulfil the demands made of it in Ernest Renan's *L'Avenir de la Science* (*The Future of Science*, 1890), which predicted that 'science was the only means man had to improve his lot' (Paul, 1968, p. 305). Interest in mysticism and

¹² 'some are born posthumously'.

¹³ As Paul notes, as Brunetière saw it, 'If science had not plunged into total bankruptcy, it had at least had its credit shaken by its considerable failures' (1968, p. 306).

spirituality was also partially triggered by science's attempted debunking of religion. This constituted part of the reaction against positivism that occurred in Europe around the turn of the century: while the nineteenth century had been characterised by liberalism, materialism and rationality, the political, social, and cultural trends of the early twentieth century tended towards non-rationality, emotionalism, subjectivism and vitalism (Payne, 1996, p. 23). Once again, Nietzsche's thought proved particularly pertinent here, providing support for opposition to rationalism, to collectivism and to materialism. Instead of encouraging blind obedience to knowledge and science, Nietzsche encourages us to obey instinct and exalt art. While Nietzsche was famously hostile to religion, he also tried to offer modern man channels for his spirituality, in the wake of the death of God.¹⁴ His Dionysian was arguably one of these channels. The combined effect of these many new trends and orientations (Luigi Capuana spoke of an age of 'isms' in his *Gli "ismi" contemporanei* [*Contemporary "isms"*, 1898]) was considerable: Sternhell even speaks of an 'intellectual crisis' (1976, p. 320) during the 1890s, which provided fertile ground for the propagation of Nietzsche's thought.

The recent unification of both Germany and Italy may also have been a factor affecting Nietzsche's eventual acclaim. While unification in the former (1871) had been a comparative success, in Italy, officially unified since 1861, the process had been incomplete and ineffective. D'Azeglio's calls for the formation of a national identity (in 1867) were not to come to fruition until decades later, and as Clarke explains, Italy in 1871 consisted of 'a number of very different regional societies, with different economies and ways of life, different cultures, different histories and different religious practices' (1984, p. 30). The dissatisfactions of the period of unification have often been cited as one of the origins of Italian fascism,¹⁵ and Salinari speaks of a 'frattura psicologica'¹⁶ (1960, p. 41) during this

¹⁴ Nietzsche declares the death of God in *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (*The Gay Science*, 1882): 'Gott ist todt' ('God is dead' [FW-108]).

¹⁵ See, for example, Marco Palla, *Mussolini and Fascism* (Brooklyn: Interlink, 2000), p. 9.

¹⁶ 'psychological fracture'.

period. After 1861 the people of the newly declared Italian nation may have been united on paper, but in practice the term ‘Italian’ had yet to gain any real significance. In such a climate of forced collectivism a philosopher who spoke to the individual would have been welcome, and perhaps this partially explains Nietzsche’s appeal to Italians when his name reached Italy during the early 1890s. The ability of Nietzsche’s thought to transcend nationality and geographical borders also meant that it was not only in Germany that his fame began to spread.

Germany’s unification appears to have been slightly smoother. As Geiss comments, ‘[in 1871], a newly unified Germany rose overnight as the strongest power on the European continent’ (1997, p. 53). Military expansion followed swiftly. While unification appears to have initially been more successful for Germany than Italy (with the former outperforming the latter as a European and industrial power), German unification too had its problems: the process had been as contrived as in Italy, and political tensions soon emerged after 1871. As Smith points out, ‘not until the “imperial implosion” following World War I would the era of nation states predominate’ (2011, p. 8).

The young Germany became Nietzsche’s patient in his cultural diagnoses. He criticised Germany’s pursuit of military might and consequent neglect of artistic and cultural glory (GD-Deutschen-4 and DS-1). He also complained of Germans’ mistrust of the spirit in favour of politics (GD-Deutschen-1) and stated that Germans drank too much beer (GD-Deutschen-1). While he may have articulated these complaints before they became more popularly felt, eventually Germans began to take his point. An anti-positivist resurgence in spirituality (for example) was not a uniquely German experience, but Germans could find particular relevance in what they were told by a *German* philosopher – especially in a time of growing nationalism. Despite his talk of ‘gute Europäer’¹⁷ (Nietzsche, FW-357), Nietzsche

¹⁷ ‘good Europeans’.

held a special appeal to Germans because of their (eventually) perceived proximity to his thinking. As Aschheim notes, ‘Nietzsche was born and died in Germany, and articulated a peculiarly German predicament’ (1994, p. 309).

A further appeal that Nietzsche’s works had in Europe at the turn of the twentieth century was his opposition to decadence. As Payne explains, ‘worry over decadence became generalised during the second half of the century, apparently intensified by mass urbanisation and the growth in crime’ (1996, p. 29). Texts like Max Nordau’s *Entartung* (*Degeneration*, 1892) voiced these fears, exposing the contemptible ‘degenerate’ (Nordau, 1968, p. 17) as the cause of Western civilisation’s ills. According to Nordau, under the particular conditions obtaining during the latter half of the nineteenth century, anti-social and perverse drives had thrived, and become concentrated in this ‘degenerate’, a corrupted and corrupting figure, who, Nordau claimed, wreaked havoc on art and culture. Nietzsche’s calls to overcome decadence chimed with some of these fears, and offered strategies (whether usable or not) for resisting degeneration. One of these strategies was the *Übermensch*, Nietzsche’s superior, self-creating individual, which would often be (mis)interpreted as ‘a standard evolutionary narrative’ (Johnson, 2010, p. 55). For those at the turn of the century who saw decay and regression as society’s main trends, the *Übermensch* offered an attractive alternative. It was rendered even more relevant by the emergence of eugenics, and by pseudo-scientific studies on race and breeding; these became popular at the start of the twentieth-century thanks to the works of figures such as the criminologist Cesare Lombroso,¹⁸ and trends like Social Darwinism,¹⁹ which was well established by the turn of the century.

The concept of a ‘superhuman’ is certainly not Nietzsche’s invention. The term *Übermensch* had already been employed by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (in his *Faust I*

¹⁸ Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) was an Italian criminologist who argued that criminality was an inherited trait, and that it could be recognised by certain physical characteristics (or ‘stigmata’). In his *L’uomo di genio* (*The Man of Genius*, 1889) he also posited artistic genius as a form of hereditary insanity.

¹⁹ The term Social Darwinism indicates the application of Darwin’s theory of natural selection to sociology.

[1808]), Johann Gottfried von Herder (in his *Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität* [*Letter for the Advancement of Humanity*, 1794] and *Kritische Wälder* [*Critical Forests*, 1769]), Jean Paul (in his *Dr. Katzenbergers Reise* [*Dr Katzenberger's Journey to the Spa*, 1809]) and Friedrich Theodor von Vischer (*Ästhetik oder Wissenschaft des Schönen* [*Aesthetics of the Science of Beauty*, 1846]). Kaufmann notes that the idea of a superman had appeared as early as the second-century A.D., in the writings of Lucian, whom Nietzsche had studied (1974, p. 307); he also points out that Nietzsche's first use of the term was to refer to Byron's Manfred, in an essay written as a schoolboy at Pforta (p. 308).

For Enrico Caffi, the Nietzschean *Übermensch* is nothing other than 'la storia del Machiavelli presentata sotto un altro aspetto e per fini diversi'²⁰ (cited in Michelini, 1978, p. 201). Gramsci points to French *feuilleton* novels, popular among intellectuals until around the 1870s, and finds the Nietzschean *Übermensch* anticipated in the protagonist of Alexandre Dumas' *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* (*The Count of Monte Cristo*, 1844) and his character Athos in *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (*The Three Musketeers*, 1844) (1996, p. 81). He also suggests that racist tendencies of the period, 'che hanno culminato nel Gobineau e quindi nel Chamberlain e nel pangermanismo'²¹ (ibid.), contributed to the formation of Nietzsche's figure. Curiously, Gramsci does not mention d'Annunzio in this discussion.

Before 1889 interest in Nietzsche's works in Germany had largely been limited to isolated individuals, as well as a few small groups such as the Dehmel circle (Hinton Thomas, 1983, p. 2). Hinton Thomas has named 1890 'the year of transformation'²² (ibid.), after which Nietzsche and his works rose to fame. Journals such as *Die Gesellschaft* and the *Freie Bühne* began to take 'new and lively interest' (ibid.) in Nietzsche, aiding in the propagation of his ideas. Books also appeared, and a 'cult' surrounding the figure of

²⁰ 'the story of Machiavelli presented under another guise and for different purposes'.

²¹ 'which culminated in Gobineau and therefore in Chamberlain and in Pan-Germanism'.

²² This is corroborated by Ruehl, who notes that after 1890 Nietzsche's 'popularity began to soar' (2004, p. 194).

Nietzsche soon emerged in Germany. This cult began to pervade various areas of German arts and culture, and Nietzsche's impact could be seen from the field of architecture to that of music. Richard Strauss' tone poem *Also sprach Zarathustra* (*Thus spake Zarathustra*) premiered in 1896, for example, and Mahler's *Third Symphony* (originally entitled *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* [*The Gay Science*]) in 1897.

Nietzsche's increasing fame in Germany was aided, at least in part, by the efforts of his sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche. Having appointed herself as the custodian of her brother and his works, she founded the Nietzsche-Archiv in 1894. She even held soirees during which guests were occasionally allowed to glimpse her incapacitated brother. The extent to which Elisabeth influenced the dissemination of Nietzsche's works has been greatly debated: some commentators, such as Aschheim, suggest that Elisabeth and the archive played 'an important role in the popularisation and monumentalisation of Nietzsche' (1992, p. 46) but others find that Nietzsche's ascension to cult status may well have taken place anyway. Diethe, for example, states that it is 'probable that Nietzsche's Nachlaß [manuscript remains] would have seen print even if Elizabeth had not lifted a finger' (2003, p. 159). While the exact extent to which Nietzsche's sister aided his rise to fame can never be determined, it may be that she played a greater role in the creation of a cult surrounding the personality of her brother, than in the propagation of his thought; she was also largely responsible for the appropriation of Nietzsche's thought by German nationalists and, later, National Socialists, although this is disputed by some scholars.²³

In Italy, Nietzsche's name first reached audiences with the publication of an article written by Gabriele d'Annunzio, which appeared in *Il mattino* in September 1892, and was

²³ See, for example, Robert C. Holub, 'The Elisabeth Legend: The Cleansing of Nietzsche and the Sully of His Sister', in *Nietzsche, Godfather of Fascism? On the Uses and Abuses of a Philosophy* ed. by Jacob Golomb and Robert S. Wistrich (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 215–34.

entitled ‘La bestia elettiva’²⁴ (‘The Beast who Wills’). Thanks to this article, d’Annunzio is generally acknowledged as the conduit through which Italians first came to know Nietzsche’s thought. In fact, an earlier mention of Nietzsche can be found in an edition of *La rivista europea* from March 1872, which contains a brief (anonymous) review of Nietzsche’s recently published *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. The review focuses on the book’s treatment of ancient Greece while appearing to miss (as most initial readers did) its significance for contemporary Germany. It deems Nietzsche’s book ‘degno di fermar l’attenzione degli studiosi’²⁵ (‘Notizie teatrali’ [‘Theatrical News’], 1872, p. 402) for its novel views and applications, but notes that there is ‘forse [...] più metafisica che storia’²⁶ (ibid.). Despite the reviewer’s generally favourable judgement on Nietzsche’s book, it would be another two decades before Nietzsche was accorded any kind of lengthy consideration in an Italian publication. As Fazio points out, d’Annunzio may not have been the first to write about Nietzsche in Italian, but it was through him that Italy was properly introduced to Nietzsche (1988, p. 26).

D’Annunzio’s 1892 article contained many arguments that could be described as ‘Nietzschean’. It attacked the idea of democracy, for example, which in d’Annunzio’s (and Nietzsche’s) opinion effected an undesirable levelling of individuals, and instead advocated a return to aristocracy (or rather, an ‘aristocrazia nuova’²⁷ [d’Annunzio, cited in Valenti, 1994, p. 17]). A year later d’Annunzio published a series of three articles entitled ‘Il caso Wagner’²⁸ (‘The Case of Wagner’, whose title is a direct translation of Nietzsche’s *Der Fall Wagner* [1888]) in *La Tribuna*, which discuss both Wagner, and Nietzsche’s critique of him. D’Annunzio (like other isolated intellectuals) had come to know Nietzsche initially through

²⁴ This article appears in *Su Nietzsche*, ed. by Davide Valenti (Catania: De Martinis & C Editori, 1994), pp. 7-19.

²⁵ ‘worthy of halting the attention of scholars’.

²⁶ ‘possibly [...] more metaphysics than history’.

²⁷ ‘new aristocracy’.

²⁸ These three articles appear in *Su Nietzsche*, ed. by Davide Valenti (Catania: De Martinis & C Editori, 1994), pp. 21-46.

French translations of his works (the first translations available), as he could not read German. *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 1886) was the first of Nietzsche's texts to be translated into Italian, in 1899. Between 1899 and 1901, d'Annunzio 'read widely in Nietzsche' (Witt, 2007, p. 87), as his complete works had become available in French. These volumes, stored in the archives of the Vittoriale (the complex built by d'Annunzio in the hills overlooking Lake Garda, where he spent his last years), are covered in annotations, revealing the aspects of Nietzsche's thought that most interested d'Annunzio.²⁹ Alongside articles, d'Annunzio also propagated Nietzsche's ideas in literary form, especially in the novels that will be discussed in this study.

The initial reception of Nietzsche's writings was, perhaps understandably, somewhat superficial. In Germany, Hinton Thomas explains, the most quoted of Nietzsche's works during the 1890s was *Also sprach Zarathustra* (*Thus spake Zarathustra*, 1883-85) – and citations were largely limited to the earlier and simpler parts of the text (1983, p. 3). In Italy the propagation of Nietzsche's ideas was, at least initially, largely limited to articles in magazines and journals. These discussions were generally cursory, and failed to explore the wider implications of Nietzsche's thought. Michelini notes that, in Italy, the *Übermensch* was received as if it were 'il succo della filosofia di Nietzsche'³⁰ (1978, p. 198); a sign, perhaps, that audiences were drawn to the most dynamic and (seemingly) straightforward of Nietzsche's ideas, which were not always the most coherent, significant, or enduring ones. The result of the superficial and propagandistic treatment to which Nietzsche's works were initially subjected in Italy (for example, by a series of articles in the journal *Marzocco*, between 1899 and 1904) resulted only in the propagation of a 'caricatura' ('caricature' [p.

²⁹ In particular underlinings and markings are to be found where Nietzsche offers statements regarding art and the artist, such as the section entitled 'Zur Psychologie des Künstlers' ('Towards a Psychology of the Artist' [GD-Streifzüge-8]) in *Götzen-Dämmerung* (*Twilight of the Idols*, 1889) and Nietzsche's declaration (in the same book) that art is the great stimulus to life (GD-Streifzüge-24). In a book called *Le idee fondamentali di Federico Nietzsche* (*The Fundamental Ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche*), written by Francesco Orestano and published in 1903, as well as underlining sections dealing with Nietzsche's views regarding art d'Annunzio has also heavily marked sections citing Nietzsche's pleas for us to live daringly and to embrace danger (such as FW-283).

³⁰ 'the core of Nietzsche's philosophy'.

198]) during the first years of his fame (which began in high-society salons before reaching ‘[il] mondo accademico ufficiale della cultura’³¹ [p. 18]) rather than provoking serious discussion of Nietzsche’s thinking.

D’Annunzio’s impact on the propagation of Nietzsche’s thought in Italy was substantial: Witt describes d’Annunzio as ‘the major advocate of Nietzscheanism in Italy’ (2007, p. 30), and Michelini finds that ‘la grande propaganda che d’Annunzio fece della morale del Superuomo, obbligò quasi gli ambienti filosofici ad accorgersi di Nietzsche’³² (1978, p. 221). It is telling, however, that the philosophers mentioned by Michelini neglect to reference d’Annunzio in their discussions of Nietzsche; it seems that while d’Annunzio may have flagged up Nietzsche’s name, and drawn attention to certain aspects of his thinking (in particular, the *superuomo*), he was (and largely still is) not really considered to have engaged with Nietzsche philosophically. Salinari notes that d’Annunzio ‘lascia cadere la parte più strettamente filosofica dell’opera nicciana’³³ (1960, p. 80), commenting that he knew nothing of Hegel (p. 75). It is important to remember, however, that d’Annunzio’s treatment of Nietzsche is an artistic one: d’Annunzio adapted Nietzsche’s ideas into something that he found personally useful for his own literature, arguably engaging with Nietzsche not as a philosopher, but as a writer.

Nietzsche’s arrival on Italy’s cultural landscape can be seen in the very first years of the twentieth century. In a 1902 edition of *La rassegna internazionale*, Remy de Gourmont contrasts ‘[il] superuomo di Nietzsche’³⁴ (1902, p. 271) with Tolstoy’s ‘super cristiano’ (‘super-Christian’ [ibid.]), suggesting that readers are familiar enough with Nietzsche to be interested in the study, and in a 1903 edition of the same journal Jacobsen is able to speak of ‘individualismo’ (‘individualism’ [1903, p. 343]) in literature as a sign of Nietzsche’s

³¹ ‘[the] official academic world of culture’.

³² ‘the great propaganda that d’Annunzio made of the moral of the *superuomo* almost obliged the philosophical world to take notice of Nietzsche’.

³³ ‘drops the most strictly philosophical part of Nietzsche’s works’.

³⁴ ‘Nietzsche’s *superuomo*’.

influence. Heyer-Caput also cites Grazia Deledda as an early reader of Nietzsche, finding evidence of Deledda's engagement with Nietzsche in her novel *Cenere* (*Ashes*, 1903), for example (2008, p. 10).

Until around 1900 Italian philosophers remained aloof from the Nietzsche 'vogue' and refrained from discussing his ideas. Eventually, however, it became difficult for philosophers to ignore Nietzsche's growing fame, and they began to consider his thought. Michelini gives a survey of the first Italian philosophers to engage with Nietzsche, listing Giacomo Barzellotti, Ettore Zoccoli and Francesco Orestano among them. Zoccoli's, in 1898, was the first comprehensive study on Nietzsche to be published in Italy, and was thereafter seen as something of a reference point – treated, as Michelini comments, as if it were the only source on Nietzsche's philosophy (1978, p. 179). His study (entitled *Federico Nietzsche*) was critical, accusing Nietzsche of dilettantism and claiming that his solitary stance was made necessary by his inability to understand the depths of the German soul ('dal non aver voluto, o potuto penetrare nell'intima significazione dell'anima tedesca'³⁵ [Zoccoli, 1898, p. 356]). Orestano, on the other hand, in his *Le idee fondamentali di Federico Nietzsche* (*The Fundamental Ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche*, 1903), a copy of which d'Annunzio owned and annotated, presented Nietzsche more enthusiastically. However, Orestano offered an 'idiosyncratic and distorted categorisation of Nietzsche's works' (Diethe, 2014, p. xiv), and failed to provide a comprehensive and objective explanation of Nietzsche's ideas. Neither Zoccoli nor Orestano mention d'Annunzio, which suggests that d'Annunzio's engagement with Nietzsche was not considered relevant in the field of philosophy.

Croce, one of the protagonists of the reaction against positivism in Italy, was another of the earlier thinkers to discuss Nietzsche. Initially he found little in Nietzsche's works which with he agreed; in 1903 for example, he accused Nietzsche of lacking a philosophical

³⁵ 'from not wanting - or being unable - to penetrate the deep meaning of the German soul'.

system, which, Croce says, renders him uninteresting³⁶. *Die Geburt der Tragödie* found favour with Croce, however, and in 1907 he wrote an essay for an Italian edition of the book.³⁷ One of the very first Italian philosophers to engage with Nietzsche, and one who is frequently overlooked, is Angelo Conti, who was a close friend of d'Annunzio. In his *La beata riva* (*The Blessed Shore*, 1900), which takes the form of a dialogue between the characters Ariele (Conti's alter ego) and Gabriele (generally understood to represent d'Annunzio), Nietzsche is mentioned several times, and always in complimentary terms. Conti's text reveals a fairly superficial understanding of Nietzsche, however: references to Nietzsche's works are limited to *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, and (Conti's) Gabriele speaks of his fraternal identification with Nietzsche.³⁸ While Conti's text was lauded by d'Annunzio, it appears to have had little impact elsewhere, and is rarely discussed except in relation to Conti's more famous friend.

Among the first German philosophers to engage with Nietzsche were Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) and Georg Simmel (1858-1918). Dilthey referred to Nietzsche for the first time in 1898 (as Behler notes [1991, p. 19]), in his *Die Jugendgeschichte Hegels* (*The Story of Hegel's Youth*) and presented a study of him in his 1907 *Das Wesen der Philosophie* (*The Essence of Philosophy*). Simmel, who was lecturing on Nietzsche by 1902, wrote a book entitled *Schopenhauer und Nietzsche* (*Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*) in 1907. While no significant interaction is evident between the contemporaries Nietzsche and Dilthey (Hodges, 2010, p. 107), Cooper explains that Simmel felt an affinity with Nietzsche (2008, p. 620). Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger and several members of the Frankfurt School (such as Ernst

³⁶ Croce writes, '[u]na costruzione filosofica, sia pure erronea, manca così al Nietzsche come al Tolstoj: il che li rende filosoficamente ben poco interessanti' ('a philosophical construction, even an erroneous one, is lacking in Nietzsche just as in Tolstoj; this renders [Nietzsche] of little interest philosophically' [1903, p. 74]).

³⁷ In the essay, Croce calls the book 'genialissimo' ('exceedingly genius' [Croce, 1907, p. 311]), and a truly poetic philosophy; he predicts that the book will be 'generalmente riconosciuto' ('generally recognised' [p. 312]), and find many readers in Italy (p. 314).

³⁸ Gabriele says, 'ciò che mi ha colpito in Federico Nietzsche è stato il far la conoscenza d'un'anima tragica, affine alla mia, fraterna alla mia anima' ('what struck me in Friedrich Nietzsche was becoming acquainted with a tragic soul, akin to my own, fraternal to my own soul' [Conti, 1900, p. 131]).

Bloch and Theodor Adorno) make up some of the more prominent German philosophers and thinkers who engaged with Nietzsche later on, from the 1920s onwards. Nietzsche's place in Western philosophy was finally being secured – even if European philosophers were slightly slower than artists and writers in taking his legacy seriously.³⁹

While Mann was not as instrumental in the recognition of Nietzsche's thought in Germany as d'Annunzio had been in Italy (he wrote no journalistic articles championing Nietzsche's thought while the philosopher was still unknown, for example), he was, like d'Annunzio, an early reader of Nietzsche. A notebook from 1908-1909 claims that Mann read Nietzsche for the first time aged nineteen (Mann turned nineteen in June 1894).⁴⁰ Lehnert notes that the articles Mann wrote for his school newspaper, *Frühlingssturm*,⁴¹ during the early 1890s demonstrate Nietzsche's impact on Mann, finding 'an affinity with, one could even say a strong influence of, Nietzsche's thinking' (in Lehnert and Wessell, 2004, p. 30). In particular, a trace of Nietzsche seems evident in an essay entitled 'Heinrich Heine, der "Gute"' ('Heinrich Heine, the "Good Man"', 1893). Here Mann declares his philosophical position, 'von dem ich die Wörter "gut" und "schlecht" als soziale Aushängeschilder ohne jede philosophische Bedeutung und als Begriffe betrachte, deren theoretischer Wert nicht größer ist als derjenige der Begriffe "oben" und "unten."'”⁴² (Mann, 2002b, p. 21) By 1901 Mann was attending Nietzsche evenings, indicating both Mann's interest and the hold that Nietzsche's thought had established in cultural circles by this time.

³⁹ Hugo von Hofmannsthal was writing to Schnitzler about Nietzsche in 1891, for example; Rainer Maria Rilke was showing clear signs of engaging with Nietzsche during the 1890s (Hillebrand, 2000, p. 78); and, as Frida notes, Frank Wedekind was dealing with Nietzschean themes in his *Der Kammersänger* (*The Chamber Singer*, 1897) and *Der Marquis von Keith* (*The Marquis of Keith*, 1900) (1972, p. 722).

⁴⁰ Mann writes: '[n]ichts von brennenderem Interesse, als die Kritik der Modernität: das fühlte ich schon mit neunzehn, als ich zum erste Male Nietzsche's Wagner-Kritik las' ('Nothing is of more burning interest than the critique of modernity: I felt that already at nineteen, when I read Nietzsche's Wagner-critique for the first time' [1991, p. 181]).

⁴¹ Winston notes that the title of this magazine, which translates as 'Spring Storm', may be a reference to Wedekind's *Frühlingserwachen* (*Spring's Awakening*, 1906) (1981, p. 44).

⁴² 'from which I view the words "good" and "bad" as social pretences without any philosophical meaning, and as terms whose theoretical value is no greater than those terms "above" and "underneath".'

Both Mann and d'Annunzio were (as will be seen throughout this thesis) deeply affected by their encounter with Nietzsche and his thought;⁴³ but while d'Annunzio's views on Nietzsche must largely be determined from his fictional writings (as well as the two magazine articles mentioned earlier), Mann's numerous essays, lectures, letters and notebooks clarify his reception of Nietzsche. Naturally, Mann's own accounts of Nietzsche's impact on him and his works must be critically evaluated, but they can still prove useful. Mann declared that one of his deepest affinities with Nietzsche was 'als Prosaisten und Psychologen auf allen Stufen seines Lebens'⁴⁴ (1974, p. 541). It was the Nietzsche who offered psychological critiques of decadence that most appealed to Mann; indeed, Nietzsche's treatment of decadence is a major area of common interest between Mann and d'Annunzio, and an element of ambiguity arguably characterises the attitudes of all three towards decadence. Nietzsche portrays decadence variously as part of the natural processes of decay and renewal that actually stimulate health and life,⁴⁵ and, conversely, as irreversible decline that is to be fought in the name of health or life.⁴⁶ Mann and d'Annunzio treat decadence in a similarly enigmatic way, and while we will find, in their fiction, decadence portrayed as a deathly and pernicious phenomenon, they are also both clearly drawn to decadent subjects and relish their portrayal.

While Mann frequently spoke and wrote of the significant impact Nietzsche had had upon his own literature, d'Annunzio remained more vague, even attempting to minimise the extent to which Nietzsche had affected him. In a memorial poem written after Nietzsche's

⁴³ Mann's discovery of Nietzsche had been a personal one, and in his 1947 lecture, *Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung* (*Nietzsche's Philosophy in the Light of our Experience*) Mann speaks of a 'Verwandtschaft' ('kinship') that was 'früh empfunden' ('experienced early' [2009, p. 186]).

⁴⁴ 'as a prose writer and psychologist in all stages of his life'.

⁴⁵ In a note Nietzsche states: 'Die *décadence* selbst ist nichts, was zu bekämpfen wäre: sie ist absolut notwendig und jeder Zeit und jedem Volk eigen' ('Decadence itself is nothing to be fought: it is absolutely necessary and unique to every time and every people' [NF-1888, 15 (31)]).

⁴⁶ In his *Der Fall Wagner* in particular, he uses the term 'decadent' in a highly negative sense.

death (*Per la morte di un distruttore*⁴⁷ [*Upon the Death of a Destroyer*, 1903]), for example, d'Annunzio suggests that his encounter with Nietzsche's ideas was an experience of recognition, not discovery, and that a fraternal affinity existed between him and the philosopher.⁴⁸ Elsewhere d'Annunzio declares that he was 'Nietzschean' before even reading any of the philosopher's works,⁴⁹ suggesting that he had been so drawn to Nietzsche's works because they echoed his own thoughts back to him. Carravetta notes that this statement has largely gone unchallenged, and that 'it is now an accepted truism even among unsympathetic critics that D'Annunzio was "Nietzschean" *ante litteram*' (1991, p. 79). In fact, d'Annunzio rarely admits to having come under the influence of other writers and thinkers, and his claims must be taken with a pinch of salt. It is true, however, that some of d'Annunzio's works written before his encounter with Nietzsche (such as *Il piacere*) demonstrate an engagement with themes that he would later read about in Nietzsche (such as the confrontation between the individual and the masses, the conflict between decadence and vitality, and the need to create oneself and one's life as a work of art). It is perhaps because of a pre-existing affinity of some kind that d'Annunzio was able to add new material to his *Il trionfo della morte* when he first encountered Nietzsche: while d'Annunzio's article 'La bestia elettiva' was published in 1892, Hughes-Hallett informs us that d'Annunzio had begun preliminary work on *Il trionfo della morte* as early as 1889 (2013, p. 193).

Mann is more open than d'Annunzio regarding his literary relationships. In particular, in his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* and his lecture of 1947, *Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung* (*Nietzsche's Philosophy in the Light of our Experience*), he

⁴⁷ This can be found in the second book of d'Annunzio's *Laudi del cielo del mare, della terra e degli eroi* (*In Praise of the sky, of the sea, of the earth and of the heroes*: I-III, 1903; IV, 1912; and V, 1918), which is entitled *Elettra* (*Electra*).

⁴⁸ D'Annunzio writes: 'riconobbi i suoi pensieri / fraterni come il navigatore / ansio riconosce i verzieri / d'Italia da lungi all'odore / che gli recano i vènti' ('I recognised his thoughts / as fraternal, like the anxious navigator / who recognises the gardens / of Italy from afar by their scent / which the winds carry to him' [d'Annunzio, 1920, p. 136]).

⁴⁹ Piga informs us that d'Annunzio affirms, 'in una lettera al Morello dell'ottobre 1895, di essere stato niciano ancor prima di conoscere Nietzsche' (1979, p. 120).

explains the profound impact that Nietzsche had upon him and his literature. Mann states explicitly, for example, that by the time he wrote *Tonio Kröger*, which Winston tells us Mann began in 1901 (1981, p. 140), he had come under the influence of Nietzsche.⁵⁰ Mann's high regard for Nietzsche is demonstrated in his veneration of Nietzsche, Wagner, and Schopenhauer as a 'Dreigestirn ewig verbundener Geister'⁵¹ (1974, p. 72), a trinity of kindred spirits whom Mann esteemed (though not uncritically).

In this thesis, it is d'Annunzio's and Mann's shared engagement with Nietzsche's treatment of art that forms the essential point of comparison between the two writers. Their fictional portrayals of creativity demonstrate a deep involvement with Nietzsche's thoughts regarding art and the artist, as will be seen throughout this thesis. One of Nietzsche's most fundamental assertions regarding art is its dependence upon the relationship of the psychological and creative impulses symbolised by Apollo and Dionysus, a notion which is often reflected in the works of d'Annunzio and Mann. The impetus to creativity that Nietzsche assigns to his Dionysian is evident in all of the texts under study, and, in most, provides the pivotal axiom around which the artist's experience revolves. The crucial significance that Nietzsche attaches to art and the creative process is also reflected by d'Annunzio and Mann, whose artists are compelled towards creativity. The fictional artists considered are artists by necessity rather than choice, whose very survival (or not, as the case may be) is often bound up with their experience of the Dionysian.

Witt finds that there are two main areas of interest for d'Annunzio in Nietzsche's legacy, both of which touch upon art: firstly, the sexualisation of artistic creation in general, and tragedy in particular; and secondly, support for an aesthetic, as opposed to a moral,

⁵⁰ '[...] während in "Buddenbrooks" nur der Schopenhauer-Wagner'sche Einfluß, der ethisch-pessimistisch und der episch-musikalische, sich hatte geltend machen können, in "Tonio Kröger" das Nietzsche'sche Bildungselement zum Durchbruch kam' ('[...] while in "Buddenbrooks" only the Schopenhauer-Wagnerian influence, the ethical-pessimistic and the epic-musical, could have asserted themselves, in "Tonio Kröger" the effect of a Nietzschean education broke through' [1974, p. 91]).

⁵¹ 'triumvirate of eternally bound spirits'.

significance of tragedy (2007, p. 87). Witt indicates that ‘like other *fin-de-siècle* aesthetes, d’Annunzio misreads Nietzsche’s celebrated statement that the world can be justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon⁵² by interpreting it to mean that art must replace religion as the foundation for the rebirth of tragedy’ (p. 76). D’Annunzio might therefore be placed alongside names such as Walter Pater, Charles Baudelaire and Gustave Moreau, for subscribing to the principle of *art for art’s sake*.⁵³ Yet while d’Annunzio certainly does venerate art and beauty as a devoted aesthete at certain stages of his writing, at other periods in his life he can only be described as a man of action, who promotes art driven by politics, for example, and not empty aestheticism. Mann does not share d’Annunzio’s (or the aesthetes’) interpretation of Nietzsche’s famed statement (in which the world is justified as only as an aesthetic phenomenon), and is possibly even more suspicious than Nietzsche of the worship of beauty. He is certainly uncomfortable with the notion of art divorced entirely from morality, but, similarly, is equally disdainful of overly engaged art, art for politics’ sake.

In his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* Mann attacks both pure aestheticism and what he calls the *Zivilisationsliterat*. Mann states, ‘daß ich mit diesem unzweifelhaft auf Nietzsches “Lebens-Romantik” zurückgehenden Ästhetizismus, welcher zur Zeit meiner Anfänge in Blüte fand, niemals [...] das Geringste zu schaffen gehabt habe’⁵⁴ (1974, p. 539). He does note however, that this does not mean that it did not occupy his thoughts. He also distances himself from the ‘ästhetizistischen Renaissance-Nietzscheanismus’⁵⁵ (ibid.) that he observed around him, and that seemed to him ‘eine knabenhaft mißverständliche Nachfolge

⁵² In *Die Geburt der Tragödie* Nietzsche states that ‘nur als ästhetisches Phänomen ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig gerechtfertigt’ (‘only as an aesthetic phenomenon are existence and the world eternally justified’ [GT-5]) and later repeats that ‘nur als ein ästhetisches Phänomen [erscheint] das Dasein und die Welt gerechtfertigt’ (‘only as an aesthetic phenomenon do existence and the world seem justified’ [GT-24]).

⁵³ Théophile Gautier had made famous the slogan ‘l’art pour l’art’ both in his novels and in his editorship of the review *L’Artiste*. See Aaron Schaffer, ‘Théophile Gautier and “L’Art Pour L’Art”’, *The Sewanee Review*, 36 (1928), pp. 405-417.

⁵⁴ ‘that I have never had anything to do with this aestheticism that undoubtedly harks back to Nietzsche’s “life”-romanticism that was in full bloom when I started writing’. He does note however, that this does not mean that it did not occupy his thoughts.

⁵⁵ ‘aesthetic, renaissance-Nietzscheanism’.

Nietzsches'⁵⁶ (ibid.). Mann reveals his disdain for pure aestheticism, entirely divorced from social responsibility (and, equally abhorrent, for aestheticism that is overtly political and turns to warmongering – such as that of Gabriele d'Annunzio⁵⁷), which claims kinship with Nietzsche. Mann particularly detested readings of Nietzsche that he considered superficial. His brother, Heinrich, comes under attack for this: in a letter to Richard Schaukal from 1903, Mann mentions (but does not name) one of his brother's novels and complains, '[m]it welcher Oberflächlichkeit ist überhaupt in dem ganzen Buch *Nietzsche* verstanden!'⁵⁸ (2003, p. 61). Mann even declares that '[s]elbst mit dem d'Annunzio fühlte ich mich noch verwandter'⁵⁹ (ibid.), which is, of course, no great compliment to either writer.

Nietzsche's treatment of art is imbued with both psychology and mythology. The impulses symbolised by the ancient Greek deities of Apollo and Dionysus (discussed below) act upon their initiates' psychology, and Nietzsche's later description of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* highlights the text's psychological innovations.⁶⁰ The fruitful combination of mythology and psychology was lauded by Thomas Mann, for whom the formula 'Mythos plus Psychologie'⁶¹ (cited in Dierks, 1991, p. 9) became a maxim. His adherence to this formula is clear, especially in *Der Tod in Venedig*'s Aschenbach, whose turbulent experience of the Dionysian hastens his death. The formula could also be applied to d'Annunzio, especially given that Mann intends us to understand 'myth' as encompassing 'legend, history, and the literary traditions of the most recent past' (von Gronicka, 1956, p. 191). In *Il fuoco*,

⁵⁶ 'a puerilely mistaken emulation of Nietzsche'.

⁵⁷ Mann writes, 'Aber woher nehme ich das Wort, um ein Maß von Verständnislosigkeit, Staunen, Abscheu, Verachtung zu bezeichnen, wie ich es angesichts des lateinischen Dichter-Politikers und Kriegsrufers vom Typ des Gabriele d'Annunzio empfinde?' ('But where do I find a word to portray the measure of incomprehension, astonishment, revulsion, contempt, that I feel towards the Latin poet-politician and warmonger Gabriele d'Annunzio?' [1977, p. 577]) For a discussion of Thomas Mann's view on the engagement of the writer with society and politics, see, for example, Horst Daemrich, 'Friedrich Schiller and Thomas Mann: Parallels in Aesthetics', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 24, (1965), pp. 227-249.

⁵⁸ 'with what superficiality is Nietzsche understood in the book!'

⁵⁹ 'I even felt myself closer to d'Annunzio'.

⁶⁰ 'ein Buch vielleicht für Künstler [...], voller psychologischer Neuerungen und Artisten-Heimlichkeiten' ('a book for artists, maybe [...], full of psychological innovations and artist's secrets' [GT-Selbstkritik-2]).

⁶¹ 'myth plus psychology'.

for example, mythological symbolism (especially Dionysus) is used to illuminate the psychology of the artist and his muse.

Inseparably bound up with Nietzsche's discussion of art is his critique of Richard Wagner. The relationship between Wagner and Nietzsche, which was so cordial in 1872, had famously soured by the late 1870s. Nietzsche's *Der Fall Wagner*, published in 1888, attacks Wagner as a personification of the detrimental side of decadence, namely, decadence as an illness that goes untreated, and instead of strengthening the body, overwhelms it with decay (for example, § 5). For anyone who engages with Nietzsche's views on art, a confrontation with Wagner is necessary, and in the works of d'Annunzio and Mann this confrontation plays a prominent role.

Mann's ranking of Nietzsche alongside Wagner and Schopenhauer in a 'Dreigestirn ewig verbundener Geister'⁶² has already been noted. In fact Mann declared that 'der Nietzsche, der mir eigentlich galt und [...] am tiefsten auf mich wirken mußte, war der Wagnern und Schopenhauern noch ganz Nahe oder immer nahe Gebliebene'⁶³ (1974, p. 541). It was not only in Nietzsche but also in Wagner that Mann found the combination of myth and psychology. Mann's admiration for Wagner was not unqualified, however: Reed points out that Mann 'read Nietzsche's writings on Wagner at the age of nineteen, and the suspicion which inevitably resulted – of Wagner's methods and motives, of his effects on German culture and later politics – remained with Mann permanently' (Reed, 1974, p. 77). In a letter to Hermann Hesse, in April 1910, Mann confesses something like this:

Nietzsche spricht einmal von Wagners "wechselnder Optik": bald in Hinsicht auf die größten Bedürfnisse, bald in Hinsicht auf die raffiniertesten. Dies ist der Einfluß, den ich meine, und

⁶² 'triumvirate of eternally bound spirits'.

⁶³ 'the Nietzsche who really mattered to me and [...] affected me most deeply, was the one who was still very close, and remained so, to Wagner and Schopenhauer'.

ich weiß nicht, ob ich je den Willen finden werden, mich seiner völlig zu entschlagen⁶⁴
(2002a, p. 449).

As will be seen in subsequent chapters, Mann (like Nietzsche) often employs Wagner's music as a symbol for the dangers of art, and particularly of that art that strays into the dangerous ground of decadence, where death and beauty are worshipped side-by-side. Yet while Mann found reason to approach Wagner's music cautiously, he also attended performances of *Tristan und Isolde* (*Tristan and Isolde*, premiered 1865) several times during his lifetime.

D'Annunzio arguably adopts a more critical stance regarding Nietzsche's Wagner-critique, which he discusses at length in his 'Il caso Wagner'. He defends Wagner against some of Nietzsche's charges, insisting, for example, that Wagner, as all artists must, expressed the spirit and customs of his era.⁶⁵ In *Il fuoco*, while the dramas of Wagner are lauded as 'il fiore supremo del genio d'una stirpe'⁶⁶ (d'Annunzio, 1989, p. 286), the protagonist, Stelio Effrena, recognises that they are distinctly northern in character, and would be less powerful in the Mediterranean, outside their home in Bayreuth. In *Il trionfo della morte*, d'Annunzio's position on the conflict between Nietzsche and Wagner will be seen to be played out as a psychological struggle within the protagonist, Giorgio Aurispa: while he longs to affirm life as Nietzsche instructs, he is instead seduced by Wagner's worship of beauty and death. Like Mann, d'Annunzio took great pleasure in hearing Wagner's music performed throughout his life, sometimes obsessively.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ 'Nietzsche speaks at one point of Wagner's "alternating perspective": sometimes in regard of the crudest needs, sometimes in regard of the most refined ones. This is the influence that I hold, and I do not know if I shall ever find the will to free myself fully of it.'

⁶⁵ 'L'opera d'arte è determinata dalle condizioni generali dello spirito e dei costumi presenti nell'epoca. Ora, lo sviluppo straordinario della musica nel nostro tempo è promosso da certe speciali condizioni dello spirito pubblico' ('The work of art is determined by the general conditions of the spirit and of the customs of the epoch. Now, the extraordinary development of the music of our time is promoted by certain special conditions of the public spirit' [d'Annunzio, in Valenti, 1994, p. 58])

⁶⁶ 'the supreme flower of the genius of a race'.

⁶⁷ As d'Annunzio was not a musician, however, he relied on others to play the music for him, and, as Hughes-Hallett reports, repeatedly prevailed upon the composer Niccolò van Westerhout to play the whole of *Tristan und Isolde* (2013, p. 23).

In the conflict between Nietzsche and Wagner, d'Annunzio sees Nietzsche (along with his Zarathustra and Dionysus) as a philosopher of life-affirmation, healthy will and strength. These characteristics are instilled into d'Annunzio's *superuomo*, his own version of the *Übermensch*. By contrast, this was an idea that repelled Mann. In his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* Mann relates that he saw Nietzsche as a kind of 'Meister' ('master' [1974, p. 79]), but as a psychologist of decadence, not as the prophet of a vague *Übermensch* (ibid.). D'Annunzio's *superuomo* develops over several novels, demonstrating his departure from the world of languid decadence to one inhabited by virile men of action. While Andrea Sperelli of *Il piacere* could be described as the archetypal decadent, later protagonists (like Stelio Effrena of *Il fuoco*) demonstrate strength of will, a resilience towards suffering that allows them to affirm life, and a virility that distances them from the effeminate dandy. These later protagonists are d'Annunzio's *superuomini*. Unlike Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, however, they display nationalistic drives, and aim to use their superhuman strength for the artistic (and political) glorification of Italy.

While Nietzsche sees a possibility only for male *Übermenschen* (woman bears the responsibility only of giving birth to the *Übermensch*⁶⁸), commentators have identified a female version of the *superuomo* – the 'superfemmina' – in d'Annunzio's works. Although d'Annunzio's most well-known *superuomini* are, indeed, men, and although his initial forays into the trope of the superhuman were conducted through male protagonists (*Le vergini delle rocce*'s Claudio Cantelmo and *Il fuoco*'s Stelio Effrena, for example), females resembling the *superuomo* can certainly be found, especially in d'Annunzio's theatrical works. Woodhouse finds d'Annunzio's Phaedra (from his play, *Fedra* [*Phaedra*, 1909]) to be a 'superwoman' (2001, p. 242); Witt comments upon the 'superfemmina' (2001, p. 67) of *La nave* (*The Ship*, first performed in 1909), the bloodthirsty, vengeful Basiliola; and Laffi and Nardi speak of 'la

⁶⁸ In *Also sprach Zarathustra* Zarathustra instructs woman: 'Eure Hoffnung heisse: "möge ich den Übermenschen gebären!"' ('Let your hope be: "may I give birth to the *Übermensch*!"' [Za-I-Weiblein]).

sostituzione del Superuomo con la Superfemmina' (1974, p. 29), which they find is initiated in *La Gioconda* (*The Gioconda*, premiered in 1905) and completed in *La gloria* (*The Glory*, performed once, in 1899) (ibid.). Hughes-Hallett does not use the word 'superfemmina' (or 'superwoman') to refer to *La nave*'s Basiliola, but provides a description of her characterisation and behaviour that emphasises the figure's 'superhuman' aspects:

Basiliola [...] is an avenging demon. Her father and brothers have all been blinded for their treachery [...]. Now she hopes to destroy their rivals, another pair of brothers whom she seduces one after another with a lascivious ballet-cum-striptease in which she unsheathes her body like the lethal weapon it is (2013, p. 297).

Witt also notes that while Basiliola is the antagonist in this play, and that ultimately it is her rival, Marco, who triumphs, Marco 'lacks depth and interest' (2001, p. 69), and Basiliola is 'far more interesting' (ibid.). While d'Annunzio's *superuomo* is always a creative individual, however, the *superfemmina* does not share his artistic talent or aspirations. Indeed, destruction seems more to characterise the activity of the d'Annunzian *superfemmina*, as is certainly the case with *La nave*'s Basiliola. The *superuomo* is always sympathetically portrayed as a triumphant figure who campaigns for national glory, but the *superfemmine* noted here are generally antagonistic to the male characters with whom they share the stage, and pursue a personal (often retributive) agenda. The trope of the hostile woman, who impedes (or threatens to impede) the ambitions of the creative male will be seen in the texts under discussion in this thesis, although the *superfemmina* has not yet emerged, and during the period under consideration d'Annunzio's attentions are fixed firmly on the *superuomo*. Furthermore, the *superuomo* is far more prominent in d'Annunzio's works than the (slightly later) *superfemmina*, featuring in a greater number of works.

Explanations for d'Annunzio's emphasis on the *superuomo* at the turn of the century must surely take into account the socio-political situation of the time. Salinari, for example,

finds that the ‘antigiolittismo’ (‘anti-Giolittism’ [1960, p. 61]) of the turn of the century may have created the need for a heroic, macho figure. As Salinari points out, ‘Giolitti non è un superuomo, si trova meglio fra le carte di un ministero che alla testa di eserciti vittoriosi’⁶⁹ (1960, p. 61). Dissatisfaction with Giolitti’s government fostered a feeling that something was missing from the new Italy – ‘ed era appunto la gloria delle armi’⁷⁰ (p. 44). D’Annunzio’s *superuomo* aimed to provide both a militaristic, nationalistic hero, or role model, behind whom Italians could rally, and a masculine figure of might and power. The *superuomo* may also have been a reaction to the decadent trend for emasculated males: writers like Swinburne and Pater, two of the protagonists of British decadence, for example, had attempted to ‘reimagine masculinity at the margins of conventional middle-class notions of manliness’ – which they did through use of ‘androgynous beauty and [...] homoeroticism’ (Morgan, 1996, p. 140). Thomas Mann arguably parodies this male persona, for example, in the figure of Detlev Spinell in *Tristan*. After several, somewhat effeminate, decadent ‘heroes’ (like Andrea Sperelli and Giorgio Aurispa), d’Annunzio appears to have distanced himself from themes of degeneration, inertia, and pure aestheticism, in order to promote action, machismo and dominance; his own needs appear to have matched those he perceived in his countrymen, leading to the birth of the D’Annunzian *superuomo* in *Il fuoco*.

D’Annunzio’s *superuomo* appears to have been well received by ordinary readers; Rhodes explains how *Il fuoco* (whose protagonist is d’Annunzio’s first fully-fledged *superuomo*) propelled d’Annunzio to Europe-wide fame, and that, ‘[f]inancially, too, it was his greatest success, translated into six languages’ (Rhodes, 1959, p. 101). Critics, however, reacted – and still react – less favourably towards the *superuomo*. Ladenarda, for example, called for d’Annunzio’s arrest,⁷¹ accusing him of having stolen and mutilated the idea of the

⁶⁹ ‘Giolitti is no *superuomo*, he is more at home amongst the papers of a ministry than at the head of victorious armies’.

⁷⁰ ‘and this was glory in arms’.

⁷¹ ‘Carabinieri, arrestate il d’Annunzio!’ (‘Police, arrest d’Annunzio!’ [1914, p. 79]).

superuomo from Nietzsche. He names d'Annunzio 'un vanesio, un poseur, un istrione, un ciarlatano'⁷² (1914, p. 76) and his *superuomo* an 'abborrimento assoluto'⁷³ (p. 75). The notion of a *superuomo* also appears to have gained relatively little purchase in Italian literature and art. Vittorini (1929) explains how, at the beginning of the twentieth century (as, in fact, happens with each generation, he writes), young Italian writers (like Luigi Pirandello, Giovanni Papini and Giuseppe Prezzolini) in search of new currents broke with those who had dominated the literary landscape in recent years (like Carducci, Verga and d'Annunzio); such was the magnitude of these established figures, however, that the new generation of writers were practically obliged to respond to them. Thus we find groups such as the Futurists and Crepuscular poets who dealt with similar matters to d'Annunzio, but produced very different results.

Marinetti and his futurists were, by their own admission, familiar with Nietzsche, and many critics have deemed Marinetti's *Mafarka* (*Mafarka le Futuriste* [*Mafarka the Futurist*, 1910]) to be a *superuomo* with strong affinities to Nietzsche's *Übermensch*.⁷⁴ The futurist Primo Conti praised Nietzsche for his 'capacità di rinnovarsi, di liberarci finalmente da ciò che ci aggroviglia, di mettere in dubbio tutto ciò che era stato acquisito sino ad allora'⁷⁵ (cited in Lambiase, 1978, p. 95); yet in their indiscriminate revolt against the stuffy and antiquated world of academia, and in their violent rejection of all that had preceded them, the Futurists found that, ultimately, even Nietzsche had to be overthrown. Berghaus notes that Marinetti fell foul of the usual common misinterpretations of Nietzsche's thought (2006, p. 24), and that, alongside the *Übermensch*, Marinetti was attracted to Nietzsche's Will to Power. These were the same two ideas that were most frequently taken up by those engaging with

⁷² 'a fop, a *poseur*, a histrionic, a charlatan'.

⁷³ 'absolute abhorrence'.

⁷⁴ Blum finds *Mafarka* to '[incorporate] both the unfettered sovereignty/vitality of an exotic individual and the empowering forces of progress' (2002, p. 147).

⁷⁵ 'capacity for self-renewal, for freeing us from that within which we are entangled, for questioning all that has been learned until now'.

Nietzsche's thought (ibid.). The Futurist *superuomo* was characterised by overt masculinity, which, perhaps like that of d'Annunzio, provided a virile foil to the effeminate males of the *fin-de-siècle* – Blum speaks of Marinetti's *superuomo* as a response to 'the embattled masculine self' (2002, p. 76), against which d'Annunzio's *superuomo* is also arguably erected. The threat to this masculine self is linked to the *fin-de-siècle* concerns explored earlier: 'anxieties about looming threats, such as the massification of society, racial "degeneration" and, most notably, the dissolution of sexual identity' (Blum, 2014, p. 89). Strength, masculinity and dynamism would characterise the Futurists' reaction to such threats.

The Futurists also declared themselves opposed to d'Annunzio's legacy, although Marinetti had initially admired d'Annunzio. Marinetti violently defended d'Annunzio's *La città morta* (*The Dead City*, 1898) against disapproving critics in 1901, and one of the Futurist *soirées* was held in honour of d'Annunzio (Hughes-Hallett, 2013, p. 308). D'Annunzio's and Marinetti's common use of the *superuomo* also ties them together to a certain extent – the fame of d'Annunzio's *superuomo* meant that the Futurists could not have been unaware of it – as does their embrace of nationalism and pursuit of Italian glory. Marinetti eventually abandoned his earlier praise for d'Annunzio, however, finding him too *passé*, and characterised him thus in a diary entry: 'è rimasto l'esteta. Maniaco di bel gesto, prigioniero delle belle frasi e degli uomini mediocri che lo incensano e favoriscano le sue manie'⁷⁶ (Marinetti, 1987, p. 439). Similarly, in their 1914 futurist manifesto, Corra and Settimelli demand that d'Annunzio (and others) be put on trial for fraud (cited in Poggi, Rainey and Wittman, 2009, p. 185). D'Annunzio certainly had an impact upon the Italian Futurists; but he ultimately provoked hostility and reaction, rather than emulation, and the

⁷⁶ '[h]e has remained an aesthete, a maniac of elegant gestures, a prisoner to beautiful phrases and to men of mediocre status who flatter him and foster his mania'.

Futurists did their best to distance themselves from d'Annunzio's legacy while still responding to similar anxieties, sometimes with similar techniques.

The Crepuscular poets also responded to d'Annunzio, and Ghidetti notes that their works were characterised by 'l'effetto di antidannunzianesimo'⁷⁷ (1977, p. 212). Their response to the *fin-de-siècle* concerns that motivated d'Annunzio (and the Futurists) led in the opposite direction, and instead of exalting the epic and heroic they praised the everyday, the melancholy, 'la nuda prosaicità della vita borghese'⁷⁸ (p. 213). Resisting the machoism and daring of the *superuomo*, they erected figures of impotence and despondency, like Gozzano's Totò Merùmeni (which appears in *I colloqui* [*The Discussions*, 1911]). Italo Svevo produces a similar figure to oppose the *superuomo*, one of sheer ineptitude (*l'inetto*, 'the inept one'), exemplified by the protagonist of *La coscienza di Zeno* (*Zeno's Conscience*, 1923).⁷⁹ The Crepusculars' interests also lay in illness and decay as opposed to strength and virile health. But, as with the Futurists, many critics find an enduring element of d'Annunzianism in the Crepuscular's poetics: Ambrosini claimed that Gozzano never ceased to be d'Annunzian ('non cessa egli di essere dannunziano'⁸⁰ [1926, p. 296]), and Podavini finds Palazzeschi (who is also counted among the Futurist poets) to have been influenced by d'Annunzio's poetics (2012, p. 45).

Another of the most prominent strands of d'Annunzio's Nietzsche reception was the Dionysian. While the idea of the *superuomo* was to be taken up by the Futurists (and resisted by the Crepuscular poets), the Dionysian appears to have been largely neglected after d'Annunzio. Indeed, it is difficult to find the name 'Dionysus' in Italian literature in the decades following d'Annunzio. The term 'Dionysian' is used sparsely (and ornamentally) by Maria Savi Lopez, Alfredo Panzini and Giuseppe Vanicola, and more frequently by Guido da

⁷⁷ 'the "anti-d'Annunzian-effect"'.

⁷⁸ 'the naked prosaicality of bourgeois life'.

⁷⁹ As Baldi notes, Svevo's earlier protagonists actually recall some of d'Annunzio's earlier characters, such as failed *superuomo* Giorgio Aurispa (1996, p. 125).

⁸⁰ 'he never ceases to be d'Annunzian'.

Verona and Renzo Novatore. Da Verona was a follower of Nietzsche and imitated d'Annunzio; Magri even speaks of a 'dipendenza' ('dependence' [2005, p. 46]) on d'Annunzio. Da Verona's *La vita comincia domani* (*Life Begins Tomorrow*, 1913) is his most 'Nietzschean' text, according to Magri, and shows adhesion to the idea of the *Übermensch* (Magri, p. 63). For da Verona the Dionysian had a similar meaning as for d'Annunzio, linked with intoxication, pleasure, delirium and excesses.

In Germany, Mann's success and prestige was at least equal to that of d'Annunzio. As Richard Winston notes, his first book *Buddenbrooks*⁸¹ (1901) had sold 30,000 copies by 1904 (Winston and Winston, 1975, p. xvii) and in 1929 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, principally for that first novel. His *Der Tod in Venedig* was reviewed more than forty times during the first two years after its publication (Shookman, 2003, p. 12).

In German literature, the idea of the Dionysian does not appear to have had much resonance after Mann. Pütz tries to account for the apparent lack of 'impact' ('Wirkung') of Mann's writing, noting that 'Von Thomas Manns Wirkung sprechen, heißt also in erster Linie an diejenigen denken, die ihm nicht folgten, sondern sich von ihm entfernten'⁸² (1977, p. 456). He cites figures like Arno Schmidt and Jürgen Becker, who, Pütz explains, in contrast to Mann, 'hielten sich [...] weniger streng an die traditionellen Gattungsbestimmungen der Epik'⁸³ (p. 457). This echoes Vittorini's findings that d'Annunzio (like Carducci and Verga) became, for young Italian writers, a phenomenon against which to react, rather than to imitate. While the Dionysian can be found in the works of Mann's German contemporaries (such as Hesse and Rilke), the idea appears to have gradually disappeared from artistic life in Germany.

⁸¹ According to Richards, *Buddenbrooks* was the best-selling book in Germany during the period 1915-1940 by a considerable margin; Richards reports that it sold 1,305,000 copies during this period (1968, p. 55).

⁸² 'to speak of Thomas Mann's impact means, first and foremost, thinking about those who did not follow him, but distanced themselves from him'.

⁸³ 'stuck less strictly to the traditional category-designations of the epic'.

Both Mann and d'Annunzio engage critically and creatively with Nietzsche, and just as Witt notes that d'Annunzio did not interpret Nietzsche 'slavishly' (2007, p. 99), the same can be said of Mann. In the case of both, Nietzsche's ideas appear to have chimed with their own thoughts. Neither writer merely reproduces Nietzsche's ideas in his literature, and both are discriminate in what they chose to engage with.

Nietzsche's Dionysian, which so interested both d'Annunzio and Mann, and which both writers treated with an element of ambiguity, will shortly be considered. Firstly, however, the pre-Nietzschean Dionysian will briefly be discussed in order to establish the cultural connotations of this figure, and to illuminate the origins of his artistic significance.

ii) Dionysus in Antiquity

Nietzsche's selection of Dionysus as one of the 'protagonists' of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* is not arbitrary; the deity who appears in his book is laden with millennia of associations – as well as displaying some traits and characteristics that are Nietzsche's own additions. Nietzsche's discussion of the figure in 1872 may give the impression that the ancient Dionysus was a monolithic phenomenon, inhabiting one particular region at a specific time, possessing a fixed set of characteristics and connotations. In reality, substantial variations existed depending on geographical and temporal location. Figures of antiquity are notoriously difficult to pin down (Silk and Stern, 1995, p. 167), and often defy definition (Henrichs, 1984, p. 209); this is especially true of ancient deities. Multiple manifestations of Dionysus existed, and it is therefore impossible to give a definitive picture of this figure or of the worship of him in the ancient world. Nevertheless, many scholars have attempted to cast light on Dionysus and his worship, and their findings will now be discussed.

Dionysus is commonly referred to as a ‘foreign’ god,⁸⁴ who found his way into mainland Greece at some point in antiquity and became assimilated into Greek religion. The birthplace of Dionysus varies depending on the version of the myth: notable suggestions for his origin include Crete (Kerényi, 1976, p. 113), India (Schlesier, 2011, p. 469), Thrace and Phrygia (Silk and Stern, 1995, p. 171).

Dionysus is commonly understood as a god of wine who was associated with drunkenness and excess, and portrayals from the Renaissance onwards often depict him with grapes and vine leaves. In fact, Dionysus was *not* a god of wine, but, as Otto clarifies, simply a deity of certain plants and vegetation, ‘unter denen der Weinen ohne jeden Vergleich das wichtigste ist’⁸⁵ (1933, p. 49). Wine certainly featured in the worship of Dionysus, but as a means of reaching the desired state of intoxication, rather than as an end in itself.⁸⁶ This enthusiasm, or ecstasy, allowed the ancient Greek to experience liberation from the quotidian world, and revealed life’s concealed depths and primordial undercurrents –‘[der] rasende, alles überflutete Lebensstrom, der aus den mütterlichen Tiefen empordringt’⁸⁷ (Otto, p. 89). This was no debilitating and numbing drunkenness, but ‘höchste Gesundheit’⁸⁸ (p. 132), an experience of vitality and exuberance. In this state social and civic boundaries collapsed,⁸⁹ and borders were transgressed. Initiates expressed themselves through dance and music: Rohde describes ‘frantic, whirling, headlong eddies and dance-circles’ (2000, p. 257), which we find echoed in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.

⁸⁴ Thomas Mann’s Aschenbach dreams of the worship of ‘*der fremde Gott!*’ (‘the foreign god’ [Mann, 2004, p. 583]).

⁸⁵ ‘among which wine was without comparison the most important’.

⁸⁶ As Otto explains, ‘[n]euerdings hält man dafür, daß der Wein zwar schon in alten Zeiten zum Dionysoskulte gehört habe, aber nur als Mittel, den Enthusiasmus zu erregen’ (‘more recently it is held that wine may well have belonged to the Dionysus-cult in ancient times, but only as a means of reaching intoxication’ [1933, p. 135]).

⁸⁷ ‘this manifestation of truth, greeted by cries of victory, is the raging, overflowing current of life, which breaks forth from the maternal depths’.

⁸⁸ ‘supreme health’.

⁸⁹ Kerényi points out that ‘no one, not even slaves, was prevented from drinking wine’ (1976, p. 303).

Through his connections with wine, Dionysus was seen to be linked to artistic creativity: McKinlay (1953) investigates the notion of ‘Bacchus as inspirer of literary art’ by examining classical writers who spoke of Dionysus (or Bacchus) and his intoxication either as aid or hindrance to creative production. Archilocus, for example, ‘credits wine for his skill in dithyrambic poetry’ (p. 101) and ‘Horace owns that Bacchus may apply the gentle goad to a stupid mind’ (p. 103). On the other side stand the ‘sceptical’ (p. 104) Euripides, as well as Aristophanes, who satirises the idea of drunkenness as a stimulant to inspiration (p. 104). The relationship between Dionysus, drunkenness and creativity was, therefore, already well-established (if not unanimously upheld) in antiquity, and would be taken up centuries later by German Romantic poets, among others.

An aspect of the Greek Dionysus which Nietzsche largely ignored was the prominence of women. Otto calls the Dionysian world ‘vor allem eine weibliche Welt’⁹⁰ (1933, p. 132), and notes that ‘Frauen erwecken und erziehen den Dionysos, Frauen begleiten ihn, [...] Frauen warten auf ihn und sind die ersten, die sein Wahnsinn überfällt’⁹¹ (ibid.). According to one legend Dionysus was nursed as a child and brought up by a community of women, and was later worshipped by the maenads (his female followers). In Euripides’ *The Bacchae* (first performed around 405 BC), Pentheus comments upon Dionysus’ ‘sexual attractiveness, long hair, and looks that radiate the grace or charm (*charis*) of Aphrodite’ (Segal, 1982, p. 173), emphasising Dionysus’ femininity. Many classical sculptures corroborate this characterisation, and in the ancient Dionysus we find a blurring of gender boundaries.

Blurred boundaries are a theme common to Dionysus, for he also unites life and death in his associations with the world of the living and with the Underworld. According to mythology Dionysus journeyed to the Underworld to retrieve Semele and restore her to

⁹⁰ ‘above all a feminine world’.

⁹¹ ‘Women awaken and rear him, women accompany him, [...] women wait upon him and are the first to fall under his madness’.

Mount Olympus. The story of his death and resurrection also symbolises his belonging to the realms of both life and death, and, according to some versions of his legend, he was the son of Persephone, who was the bride of Hades and the queen of the Underworld. Otto describes Dionysus as ‘ein leidender und sterbender Gott’⁹² (1933, p. 96), and according to McGinty, Dionysus bears ‘many similarities to Hades, Lord of the underworld’ (1978, p. 173). The deathly connotations of Dionysus are certainly present in Nietzsche’s version, but are particularly emphasised by Mann, as will be seen.

Linked to this blurring of boundaries, the Greeks’ Dionysus was also characterised by duality. Accounts attribute him with contrasting natures, and the story of his birth is often used as an illustration of this. As the son of an earthly, mortal mother (Semele – sometimes Persephone) and a heavenly, divine father (Zeus), his conception already presages a character of twofold personality; Otto calls him ‘der rätselhafte Gott, der Geist der Doppelwesenheit und des Widerspruchs’⁹³ (1933, p. 70). As a deity of duality Dionysus unites life and death, male and female, calmness and wildness (illustrated particularly in *The Bacchae*). Nietzsche portrays this duality too: a note from 1870 describes how the dismembered Dionysus (Zagreus) has ‘die Doppelnatur eines grausamen, verwilderten Dämons und eines milden Herrschers’⁹⁴ (NF-1870, 7 [12]). In *Die Geburt der Tragödie* Nietzsche is at pains to demonstrate how the Dionysian triggers both agony and ecstasy, for example, in the collapse of the Apollonian principle of individuation, which triggers both fear (at exposure to the primordial foundations of existence) and joy (at being released from an individuated existence). Nietzsche’s later, philosophising Dionysus is a figure that unites apparently opposing impulses such as life and death, creation and destruction, and the highest affirmation of life achieved through the deepest pessimism.

⁹² ‘a suffering and dying god’.

⁹³ ‘the mysterious god, the spirit of double-being and of contradiction’.

⁹⁴ ‘the dual nature of a cruel, savage demon and of a mild ruler’.

Nietzsche's Dionysus certainly could not be called completely historically accurate; but the danger of assuming that accuracy is even possible when dealing with such enigmatic and protean sources as ancient deities has, it is hoped, been made clear. It is also important to bear in mind that Nietzsche's Dionysus is employed to serve a specific function (which will shortly be analysed), one that requires the adaptation and modification of the historical figure that Nietzsche inherits. Furthermore, Nietzsche does not inherit Dionysus directly from the Greeks, but instead receives a figure that has passed through the hands of various writers, historians, and artists, and has thus undergone a lengthy process of metamorphosis and adaptation, gaining and losing various connotations. The cultural connotations of the Dionysus that Nietzsche inherited will now be discussed.

iii) The Originality of Nietzsche's Dionysus

Nietzsche was not the first modern writer to appropriate and redeploy the ancient figure of Dionysus (even if he sometimes made this claim), and a pre-history of the Dionysian, or something resembling it, can be traced, leading up to the time when Nietzsche conceived and wrote his first book.

With the advent of Christianity in Europe during the fourth century AD, the figure of Dionysus initially managed to hold out as the 'last stronghold of pagan beliefs' (Henrichs, 1984, p. 212). Even as the eighth century AD approached, Dionysian worship was still prominent enough to be outlawed in Constantinople (p. 213). Such measures appear to have succeeded in suppressing the Dionysian religion: Henrichs explains that for centuries we find practically no mention or depiction of the deity, who once adorned mosaics, plates and amphorae (ibid.).

During the Renaissance, pagan deities returned as the subjects of fine art. We find Dionysus (or Bacchus, as the Romans named him) in the art of Tintoretto, Titian, Carracci

and Caravaggio, for example. But, as Bull explains, a significant shift took place in the characterisation of Dionysus during the Renaissance: no longer a symbol of drunkenness that brought with it the darkest destruction and savagery (such as mothers dismembering their sons), he was instead reduced to a figure of tipsy joviality and light-hearted merriment (2005, p. 228). Michelangelo's Dionysus raising a cup, for example, is a far cry from the raging force of annihilation in *The Bacchae*. Bull also notes the absence of the maenads in Renaissance representations of Dionysus, where they would have offended rational and religious tastes with their 'destructive frenzy' (p. 226). These women will also largely be absent in Nietzsche's Dionysian. In Renaissance literature, Bacchus appears in works by Boccaccio (for example, his *Commedia delle Ninfe fiorentine* [*Comedy of Florentine Nymphs*, 1341-1342]), Sacchetti (such as his *Rime* [*Rhymes*] of the fourteenth-century) and Lorenzo de' Medici's *Canzone di Bacco* (*Song of Bacchus*, 1497). As in fine art, these manifestations of Dionysus largely eschew violence and destruction for revelry and bawdiness, although Poliziano's *Orfeo* (*Orpheus*, 1478) does contain echoes of the darker Dionysus.

From the latter part of the seventeenth century until the second half of the eighteenth, Dionysus' darker side was emphasised, largely by (pre-)Romantic writers, and he appeared predominantly as a deathly figure (Henrichs, 1984, p. 213). Many aspects of Nietzsche's Dionysus are anticipated in the flowering of German literature at the turn of the nineteenth century. A key contribution by German writers at this time was a shift in the understanding of the Dionysian, relocating it from an external space to the inner space of man's self (p. 218). Goethe (in his *Faust*) and Heinse (in his *Ardinghello und die glückseligen Inseln* [*Ardinghell and the Blessed Islands*, 1787]) both depict the Dionysian phenomenon of 'rauschhaften Selbstübersteigerung'⁹⁵ (Baeumer, 1967, p. 255), but without naming Dionysus. It was also

⁹⁵ 'intoxicated self-striving'.

during this period that the Dionysian began to be perceived again as a source of inspiration – in particular by Novalis and Hölderlin⁹⁶ (Nietzsche’s favourite poet when he was a student). In the philosophy of the Romantic period, too, Dionysus returned (for example, in the works of Schelling and Hegel). In his own, composite Dionysus, Nietzsche collates the Dionysian connotations that best serve his purpose; as Baeumer points out, ‘Bei Nietzsche vereinen sich mythologische, philosophische und dichterische Entwicklungsphasen des Dionysischen’⁹⁷ (1967, p. 257).

Precedents for Nietzsche’s famous antithesis of Apollo and Dionysus can also be found. Winckelmann (1717-1768) placed the two deities in opposition, with Apollo as ‘his ideal of masculine beauty [...] whom he contrasted with the more effeminate Dionysus’ (Henrichs, 1984, p. 215). As Henrichs notes, however, Winckelmann’s antithesis was a highly forced one, requiring him to ignore anything that contradicted his ‘absolute standard’ (ibid.). Baeumer names Friedrich Schelling as ‘der Schöpfer des Begriffspaars apollinisch-dionysisch’⁹⁸ (1964, p. 20), explaining Schelling’s understanding of the two phenomena as ‘Kräfte des dichterischen Genius’⁹⁹ (p. 21). The two deities appeared once again in antithesis in Friedrich Creuzer’s *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker* (*Symbolism and Mythology of the Ancient Peoples*, 1810), where their tension ‘formed a key dualism in Greek culture’ (Williamson, 2004, p. 133). Henceforth, the pairing of Apollo and Dionysus was a frequent device. Another of Nietzsche’s antitheses, that of ‘Dionysos gegen den Gekreuzigten’¹⁰⁰ (EH-Schicksal-9) also has precedents: Hölderlin, for example, emphasised the similarities between

⁹⁶ See, for example, Max Baeumer, ‘Dionysos und das Dionysische bei Hölderlin’, *Hölderlin Jahrbuch*, 18 (1973-74), pp. 97-119. Hölderlin’s most famous references to Dionysus occur in an early hymn entitled ‘Dem Genius der Kühnheit’ (‘To the Genius of Boldness’, 1795), and the poem ‘Brod und Wein’ (‘Bread and Wine’, 1801), in which Christ and Dionysus are assimilated. Hölderlin also used the wisdom of Silenus (see Nietzsche, GT-3) as the epigraph to the second volume of his novel *Hyperion* (1797-99).

⁹⁷ ‘With Nietzsche, the mythological, philosophical and poetic developmental phases of Dionysus are united’. He also finds that these phases ‘eigentlich nie voneinander getrennt verliefen’ (‘actually never strayed apart’ [ibid.]).

⁹⁸ ‘the creator of the conceptual pair Apollonian-Dionysian’.

⁹⁹ ‘powers of poetic genius’.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Dionysus versus the crucified one’.

Christ and Dionysus (for example, both were resurrected after death), but, as Baeumer notes, ‘Mit der Zerstörung der romantischen Lebensauffassung werden Dionysisches und Christliches scharf getrennt. Schließt Heine das Dionysische in seine Antitheses “hellenisch-nazarenisch” ein, so vollendet Nietzsche den Bruch und stellt Dionysos gegen den Gekreuzigten’¹⁰¹ (1964, p. 145).

Two of the most significant works often cited as heavy influences for Nietzsche’s *Die Geburt der Tragödie* are Schiller’s *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* (*On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*, 1795) and Schopenhauer’s *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (*The World as Will and Representation*, 1819/1844). Silk and Stern, for example, posit these two texts as ‘formative influences’ on Nietzsche’s first book (1995, p. 210). At first glance, the dualism of Nietzsche’s Apollo and Dionysus recalls Schiller’s *naive* (‘naïve’) and *sentimentalisch* (‘sentimental’) or Schopenhauer’s *Vorstellung* (‘representation’) and *Wille* (‘will’); in both cases, however, major discrepancies emerge, and neither Schiller’s nor Schopenhauer’s pairing can be overlaid onto Nietzsche’s unproblematically.

Nietzsche’s Apollo can be compared to Schopenhauer’s notion of *Vorstellung* (representation) – in other words, the phenomenal world we sense and experience – and Nietzsche’s Dionysus to Schopenhauer’s *der Wille*, the will, the noumenal reality that lies beneath these phenomenal appearances. Support for these likenesses is provided by Nietzsche’s citation of Schopenhauer in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, where he employs the term ‘Wille, das Wort im Schopenhauerischen Sinne genommen’¹⁰² (GT-6), for example. In the preface to the 1886 edition of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, however, Nietzsche expresses his regret at having clung to Schopenhauerian (and Kantian) terminology and formulations to

¹⁰¹ ‘With the destruction of the romantic outlook on life Dionysus and Christ were abruptly separated. As Heine had placed the Dionysian in his “Hellenic-Nazarene” antithesis, so Nietzsche completed the break and placed Dionysus in opposition to the Crucified One’.

¹⁰² ‘will, taken in the Schopenhauerian sense’.

communicate his own ideas, which he worries may have been misunderstood or lost.¹⁰³ While this retrospective attempt to emphasise the innovations of his own work is not sufficient on its own to combat the argument for Schopenhauer's influence, other commentators have pointed out further difficulties in matching *Wille* and *Vorstellung* neatly with Dionysus and Apollo. Daniels, for example, points out that Schopenhauer's pair are 'metaphysical categories' (2013, p. 60), whereas Nietzsche's pair are 'drives' (p. 60). Dionysus causes his initiates to experience something resembling Schopenhauer's *Wille*, but Nietzsche appears to find ecstasy as well as suffering in the experience – unlike Schopenhauer, for whom the will's manifestations entail only suffering.¹⁰⁴

Nietzsche and Schopenhauer also differ in their responses to a crucial issue, namely, the question of how life is to be borne or justified, once its ultimate meaningless and ceaseless suffering have been exposed. Schopenhauer finds that detached aesthetic contemplation can offer redemption only of a temporary and palliative kind, and that withdrawal from the world is one's only real option; Nietzsche, by contrast, puts his trust in art as a surer salvation, one that can convince us to face and even embrace existence in all its joy and torment. Furthermore, Nietzsche makes his opposition to the conceptualisation inherent in Schopenhauer's categories very clear, as emphasises his preference for an intuitive way of understanding.¹⁰⁵ (GT-1). Nietzsche's use of Schopenhauerian language in

¹⁰³ 'Wie sehr bedauere ich es jetzt, [...] dass ich mühselig mit Schopenhauerischen und Kantischen Formeln fremde und neue Werthschätzungen auszudrücken suchte, welche dem Geiste Kantens und Schopenhauers, ebenso wie ihrem Geschmacke, von Grund aus entgegen giengen!' ('How deeply I now regret, [...] that I laboriously tried to express strange and new estimations, which were fundamentally at odds with the spirit and tastes of Kant and Schopenhauer, with Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulae!' [Nietzsche, Versuch-6]).

¹⁰⁴ 'Jene große Heftigkeit des Wollens ist nun schon an und für sich und unmittelbar eine stete Quelle des Leidens. Erstlich, weil alles Wollen, als solches, aus dem Mangel, also dem Leiden, entspringt. [...] Zweitens, weil, durch den kausalen Zusammenhang der Dinge, die meisten Begehungen unerfüllt bleiben müssen und der Wille viel öfter durchkreuzt, als befriedigt wird, folglich auch dieserhalb heftiges und vieles Wollen stets heftiges und vieles Leiden mit sich bringt.' ('That great intensity of the will is in and of itself directly a constant source of suffering. First, because all willing, as such, springs from a lack, ergo a suffering. [...] Second, because through the causal relationship of things, most desires must stay unfulfilled, and the will is more often frustrated than satisfied, consequently much intense willing always brings much intense suffering.' [Schopenhauer, 1844, p. 410]).

¹⁰⁵ Of Apollo and Dionysus Nietzsche comments: '[d]iese Namen entlehnen wir von den Griechen, welche die tief sinnigen Geheimlehren ihrer Kunstanschauung zwar nicht in Begriffen, aber in den eindringlich deutlichen

Die Geburt der Tragödie admittedly invites the reader to interpret Nietzsche's Dionysus and Apollo in a Schopenhauerian sense, and to expect them to behave in the same way as Schopenhauer's *Wille* and *Vorstellung*; but, as Janaway notes, Nietzsche already viewed Schopenhauer as a 'philosophical opponent' (1998, p. 19) in 1868,¹⁰⁶ and it appears that when he wrote his first book, Nietzsche was simply yet to develop his own philosophical language sufficiently to be able to break free of the trammels of Schopenhauerian terminology.

At first glance, Schiller's pairing of the 'naïve' and the 'sentimental' appears to be a closer match for Nietzsche's antitheses of Apollo and Dionysus, as they symbolise alternative modes of creativity, or psychological types. In *Die Geburt der Tragödie* Nietzsche describes his Apollonian in terms of Schiller's 'naïve' ('Die homerische "Naïvetät" ist nur als der vollkommene Sieg der apollinischen Illusion zu begreifen'¹⁰⁷ [GT-3]), but as Martin notes, he is less enthusiastic about Schiller's 'sentimental' (1996, p. 32). This, Nietzsche suggests, is an inadequate antithesis to Apollo, and to the naïve; instead he sees Dionysus as the only sufficient complement.¹⁰⁸ Martin also points out another incompatibility between Schiller's and Nietzsche's pairings: while Schiller envisages the possibility of both 'naïve' and 'sentimental' being fused in one artist, Nietzsche's Apollo and Dionysus 'do not operate as a perfect, synthetic sublation [...], even when they unite in tragedy' (1996, p. 33). As with Schopenhauer's *Wille* and *Vorstellung*, Schiller's pair is an imperfect match for Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian, but may well have helped to shape or guide Nietzsche's formulations.

Gestalten ihrer Götterwelt dem Einsichtigen vernehmbar machen' ('We borrow these names from the Greeks, who made the profound secret-teachings of their artistic-intuition perceptible, not through concepts, but in the penetratingly lucid figures of their world of gods' [GT-1]).

¹⁰⁶ Janaway points us to a short essay written by Nietzsche in 1868, entitled 'Zu Schopenhauer' ('On Schopenhauer'), in which Nietzsche explains his philosophical position as distinct from that of Schopenhauer.

¹⁰⁷ 'The Homeric "naïveté" can only be grasped as the perfect victory of the Apollonian illusion'.

¹⁰⁸ 'Dagegen verstehe ich als den vollen Gegensatz des "Naïven" und des Apollinischen das "Dionysische"' ('Instead I understand the "Dionysian" as the full complement to the "naïve" and to the Apollonian' [Nietzsche, NF-1870, 7 (126)]).

Around the turn of the century, in the immediate aftermath of Nietzsche's thought, Dionysus became a frequent subject for painters like the neoclassical aesthete Lawrence Alma-Tadema, the traditionalist William-Adolphe Bouguereau and the Symbolist Gustav Klimt. The neo-Pagan trend of the late nineteenth century 'supported the ideal of a Pagan revival as an antidote to the ills of industrialisation and the perceived restrictive nature of conservative Christian morality' (Waldron, 2010, p. 656). Louis finds that a trend for Paganism had become well established in Victorian England by the 1860s (2005, p. 338), and that within a decade or two, writers and artists throughout Europe had rejected 'the Olympian gods of light and of conscious wisdom' (p. 341) for 'the chthonic deities and the gods of the Mysteries' (ibid.) – such as Dionysus. Nietzsche is probably the most famous precursor of this shift. His revival of paganism (and anti-Christianity) may also have partly inspired the members of the eccentric Munich Cosmic Circle (the 'Kosmiker'): this group, whose members included novelist Fanny Gräfin zu Reventlow, the mystic Alfred Schuler and poet Karl Wolfskehl, 'recreated the Dionysian revelries and other ancient fertility rites, and guests appeared in drag as Aphrodite and the Great Mother' (Allen, 2005, p. 36).

As part of the neo-Pagan trend, Louis explains, 'depictions of Dionysiac revels proliferated rapidly' (2005, p. 351), presenting a 'headier version of Greece than Wordsworth or Creuzer ever dreamed' (ibid.). While this may be true, it is not necessarily the case that these 'headier' representations (or at least, those of the last years of the nineteenth century) aimed to expose the danger and darkness of the ancient Dionysian. Thus we find Alma-Tadema and Bouguereau, for example, depicting maenads as languid, pale-limbed women draped in white cloth, engaging in only the tamest of revelry. The only slight suggestion of savagery and danger comes from the luxurious tiger and leopard skins worn by Alma-Tadema's women. These unthreatening maenads fit more with the trope (identified by Dijkstra) of the 'collapsing woman' (1986, p. 70), which allows the male viewer to 'enter into

a voyeuristic, passive erotic titillation within a soothing, undemanding context conducive to a state of restful detumescence' (p. 78), than with Euripides' depiction of savage and frenzied worship, for example.

In literature, interest in both Paganism and Nietzsche meant that the early years of the twentieth century produced many works dealing with a version of Dionysus. Schmidt (2012) gives an overview of the works produced during this period which displayed an impact of Nietzsche's Dionysian. These include: Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* (1903) (which embraces the maenads that Nietzsche, at least initially, found so unpalatable), Schnitzler's *Der einsame Weg* (*The Lonely Way*, 1903) (which is 'von einer dionysische Todesmotivik durchzogen, zu der "apollinische" Gegenmotive den Kontrapunkt bilden'¹⁰⁹ [Schmidt, 2012, p. 79]) and Benn's *Ithaka* (*Ithaca*, 1916) (which celebrated the 'irrationalistischen Kult des Dionysischen'¹¹⁰ [p. 79]).

Of all the texts that fuelled interest in Paganism, Nietzsche's treatment of Dionysus is probably the deepest and most sustained. Unlike the writers and artists of the Renaissance (and arguably the neo-Paganists of the turn of the century) Nietzsche reminds us of the side of Dionysus that promotes annihilation and violence – although only up to a certain point, for Nietzsche (or at least the Nietzsche of 1872) is sure to criticise the more barbarous and promiscuous brands of ancient Dionysian worship. Like the German Romantics, he finds Dionysus to be a force for creativity and inspiration; and, engaging with, but going beyond, Schopenhauer's pessimism, he employs the Dionysian as a psychological drive through which life could be affirmed. Having considered prior versions of Dionysus that may have affected Nietzsche's own appropriation, it becomes clear that Nietzsche's claims to originality are not entirely accurate. Some critics caution, however, that his claims are not intended to be taken completely seriously, and may be 'intentional rhetorical exaggerations'

¹⁰⁹ 'streaked through with a Dionysian death-motif, to which the "Apollonian" motif forms the counterpoint'.

¹¹⁰ 'irrationalistic cult of the Dionysian'.

(Baeumer, 1976, p. 166). Either way, as Baeumer points out, Nietzsche's reworking of the Dionysian was so effective that 'sein Name [wird] für immer mit dem Phänomen des Lebensrausches verbunden sein'¹¹¹ (Baeumer, 1977, p. 153). The result of Nietzsche's repackaging of the Dionysian is that it has largely eclipsed previous manifestations of Dionysus and the Dionysian in German literature. Elements of Nietzsche's Dionysian doubtless owe something to German Romanticism (for example), but Silk and Stern are correct in naming Nietzsche's Apollo and Dionysus 'two new composites' (1995, p. 167). One innovation that is undoubtedly Nietzsche's is the application of Dionysus to contemporary Germany, as a tool for contemporary cultural renewal. A rebranding of the Dionysian for modernity had not been previously attempted, and was one of the most important (and, initially, overlooked) elements of Nietzsche's Dionysian.

iv) Dionysus in Nietzsche's Notes Prior to 1872

Nietzsche's notes of 1869-71, just before the completion of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, reveal a persistent engagement with Dionysus, and show the development of the idea as it was to appear in 1872. The earliest mentions of Dionysus describe the magical transformations he effects in the individual, and the intoxicated frenzy that he triggers, abolishing individuality. The Dionysian man is 'verzaubert' ('enchanted' [NF-1869, 3 (12)]) and 'kommt [...] zum dionysischen Rausche'¹¹² (ibid.). Early on in Nietzsche's notes, this *Rausch* is linked to the collapse of individuation, and is mirrored in the Zagreus myth ('Zagreus als Individuation'¹¹³ [NF-1870, 7 (55)]), which tells how Dionysus was torn limb from limb by the Titans, before being reborn whole again. Just as his body was divided, so the individual is divided from the primordial oneness, and the rebirth of Dionysus is a symbol of hope: 'Die Freude ist möglich

¹¹¹ 'his name will always be associated with the phenomenon of intoxication with life'.

¹¹² 'achieves [...] Dionysian intoxication'.

¹¹³ 'Zagreus as individuation'.

in Hoffnung auf diese Wiederherstellung’¹¹⁴ (NF-1870, 7 [61]). Art is posited as such a hope, foreshadowing the importance with which art will be treated in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* as a kind of coping and enhancing mechanism for dealing with reality. We can also find mention of the art of Dionysus, ‘die nicht “Schein des Scheins”, sondern “Schein des Seins” ist, Widerspiegelung des ewigen Ur-Einen’¹¹⁵ (NF-1870, 7 [126]). The same note posits this as the ‘Gegensatz’ (‘opposite’ or ‘antithesis’ [ibid.]) of the Apollonian.

From the same year there are notes which discuss the relationship of Dionysus and Apollo, whose importance to the creation of true art is already evident: it is ‘das Nebeneinander’¹¹⁶ (NF-1870, 7 [12]) of these two that is ‘die Zeit der Kunstwerke’¹¹⁷ (ibid.). The generation of tragedy by these two impulses is also outlined: ‘Das, was wir “tragisch” nennen, ist gerade jene apollinische Verdeutlichung des Dionysischen’¹¹⁸ (NF-1870, 7 [128]). The complex co-operation of these impulses and their temporary reconciliation in the creation of tragedy returns several times in Nietzsche’s notes, and he explores the idea that the core of Greek tragedy consists in the Dionysian chorus being aided by the Apollonian in the visualisation of its own condition (NF-1870, 7 [139]).

Alongside notes referring to the Greek context of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, there is mention of the equally important German context of the book. Sounding a hopeful note, Nietzsche posits that German culture has a Dionysian affinity: ‘die germanische Begabung, die zuerst in Luther, dann wieder in der deutschen Musik ans Licht kam, hat uns wieder mit dem Dionysischen vertraut gemacht’¹¹⁹ (NF-1871, 10 [1]). That German culture is not devoid of Dionysian elements will prove crucial in the completed *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. The ideas hinted at in these notes demonstrate a nascent idea of Dionysus; these aspects of

¹¹⁴ ‘Joy is possible because of the hope of this restoration.’

¹¹⁵ ‘which is not “an image of illusion” but “an image of existence”, the reflection of the eternal primordial oneness’.

¹¹⁶ ‘the coexistence’.

¹¹⁷ ‘the time of the artwork’.

¹¹⁸ ‘That which we call “tragic” is that very Apollonian clarification of the Dionysian’.

¹¹⁹ ‘[t]he Germanic genius, which appeared first in Luther and then again in German music, has made us familiar with the Dionysian’.

Dionysus will appear more fully formed and elaborated in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, to which we can now turn.

v) **Dionysus in *Die Geburt der Tragödie***

Nietzsche first describes Apollo and Dionysus in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* as ‘Kunstgottheiten’ (‘artistic deities’ [GT-1]), whose duality ensures ‘die Fortentwicklung der Kunst’¹²⁰ (ibid.). Each deity governs a particular art form: in the case of Apollo (‘der Gott aller bildnerischen Kräfte’¹²¹ [ibid.]), sculpture and Doric architecture, and in the case of Dionysus, music. Here we see a reflection of Schopenhauer’s division of plastic and musical arts: ‘[d]enn die Musik ist, [...] darin von allen andern Künsten verschieden, daß sie nicht Abbild der Erscheinung, [...], sondern unmittelbar Abbild des Willens selbst ist [...]’¹²² (Schopenhauer, 1844, p. 297) Nietzsche cites this almost verbatim in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.¹²³

The two drives exist predominantly in open conflict, provoking each other to ‘immer neuen kräftigeren Geburten’¹²⁴ (Nietzsche, GT-1). If Apollo dominates, the resulting artwork will be Apollonian, and if Dionysus dominates, a Dionysian form of art will result. When the drives balance each other perfectly, the moment of their harmonious coupling occurs: in this moment we witness the birth of true art, ‘das ebenso dionysische als apollinische Kunstwerk der attischen Tragödie’¹²⁵ (ibid.).

¹²⁰ ‘the further procreation of art’.

¹²¹ ‘the god of all plastic arts’.

¹²² ‘for music is [...], unlike all other arts, not a copy of the phenomenon [...], but a direct copy of the will itself [...]’.

¹²³ Nietzsche writes: ‘Denn die Musik ist, wie gesagt, darin von allen anderen Künsten verschieden, dass sie nicht *Abbild* der Erscheinung, oder richtiger, der adäquaten Objectität *des Willens*, sondern unmittelbar *Abbild des Willens* selbst ist und also zu allem Physischen der Welt das Metaphysische, zu aller Erscheinung das Ding an sich darstellt’ (‘For music is, as said, to be separated from all other art forms, in that it is not an *image* of appearance, or more correctly, not the appropriate objectivity *of the will*, but an immediate *image of the will* itself, and thus represents the metaphysical as compared to all physical things in the world, and the thing in itself compared to all appearances’ [GT-16])

¹²⁴ ‘ever more powerful births’.

¹²⁵ ‘the artwork that is as much Dionysian as it is Apollonian, Attic tragedy’.

The effects of Apollo and Dionysus are also felt on a psychological level. To describe these psychological effects, Nietzsche uses the world of dreams and the experience of intoxication as analogies. The world of dreams, filled with illusions which the dreamer immediately comprehends, is analogous to the Apollonian experience. The individual under the spell of Apollo encounters a world of phenomena, and comforting images; identity is also experienced as individual, and one perceives oneself as a being distinct from other beings. This is the *principium individuationis* (principle of individuation), an idea that can be found in Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*. Nietzsche also likens Apollo's beneficial dreams to Schopenhauer's veil of Maya, in which the individual, tossed about upon the vast and terrible seas of his existence, can place his trust. The illusory Apollonian world offers calmness and untroubled contentment ('schöner Schein'¹²⁶ [ibid.], a term borrowed from Schiller) – and, in the aftermath of the chaos of the Dionysian, healing and consolation.

Under the influence of the Dionysian the individual reaches a state resembling intoxication, triggered by narcotics or the approach of spring.¹²⁷ Dionysus sweeps aside Apollo's comforting illusions, and reveals the primordial undercurrent of existence. The principle of individuation collapses, and man, now oblivious to his status as an individual, experiences unity with the primordial oneness: 'der Weg zu den Müttern des Sein's, zu dem innersten Kern der Dinge [liegt] offen'¹²⁸ (GT-16). The loss of individuation is perceived both as terror (for we are faced with an awe-inspiring and primitive essence) and ecstasy (as individuation is often cited as a – or even *the* – cause of human agony): the moment of Beethoven's *An die Freude* (*Ode to Joy*) where the millions sink terribly into the dust gives an approximation, Nietzsche writes (GT-1), of this experience. The agony of individuation,

¹²⁶ 'beautiful illusion'.

¹²⁷ This intoxication is reached, Nietzsche writes, 'entweder durch den Einfluss des narkotischen Getränkes, von dem alle ursprünglichen Menschen und Völker in Hymnen sprechen, oder bei dem gewaltigen, die ganze Natur lustvoll durchdringenden Nahen des Frühlings' ('either through the influence of narcotic drink, of which all primitive men and peoples speak in hymn, or through the powerful coming of spring, which sensually pervades through all of nature' [GT-1]).

¹²⁸ 'the way to the mothers of all being, to the innermost core of things, lies open'.

alleviated by the sense of oneness that intoxication triggers, is symbolised by the myth of Zagreus, as mentioned above. Nietzsche reveals ‘den Zustand der Individuation als den Quell und Urgrund alles Leidens’¹²⁹ (GT-10). The return to a unified existence is equated with the reassembly of Dionysus: it is implied that this is the true and restorative state of existence.

The individual who is intoxicated in this manner feels like a god and becomes a *work of art* (GT-3). Man is a prized material, ‘der edelste Thon, der kostbarste Marmor’¹³⁰ (GT-1). The drunkenness that Dionysus triggers reinvigorates and promotes art: the initiate ‘is intoxicated not with chaos but with life, with energy’ (Schutte, 1984, p. 14). This energy fuels artistic creativity, and thus Nietzsche can proclaim: ‘[d]as Dionysische, mit seiner selbst am Schmerz percipierten Urlust, ist der gemeinsame Geburtsschooss der Musik und des tragischen Mythus’¹³¹ (GT-24). Radical claims like this, unsupported by any real evidence, were one of the reasons that Nietzsche’s book could not be taken seriously by his academic peers in 1872.

According to Nietzsche, the revelatory power of the Dionysian is reflected in music. As mentioned, in Schopenhauerian terms, music gives a direct copy of the will itself, unmediated by any phenomenal representation. In *Die Geburt der Tragödie* Nietzsche appears to adopt this idea: whereas the plastic (Apollonian) artist contemplates representational images, ‘[d]er dionysische Musiker ist ohne jedes Bild völlig nur selbst Urschmerz und Urwiederklang desselben’¹³² (GT-5). For Nietzsche, music symbolises ‘eine Sphäre [...], die über alle Erscheinung und vor aller Erscheinung ist’¹³³ (GT-6). While music is predominantly Dionysus’ domain, Nietzsche also describes an Apollonian form of music, which is rhythmic, calm and likened to Doric architecture. Apollonian music, though, is ‘too-phenomenal’ (Liébert 2004, p. 87) to convey its listener to the same state as Dionysian music;

¹²⁹ ‘the status of individuation as the source and origin of all suffering’.

¹³⁰ ‘the noblest clay, the most precious marble’.

¹³¹ ‘The Dionysian, with its pain felt even in joy, is the common womb of music and of tragic myth’.

¹³² ‘The Dionysian musician himself is, without any image, completely and only original-pain and original reverberation of the same’.

¹³³ ‘a sphere that is predominantly and above all appearance’.

it does not possess the same power of revelation, and does not trigger intoxication and ecstasy.

Music's unifying effect is evident, as Higgins notes, in 'the fact that all our bodies respond to auditory sensation in essentially the same way' (1986, p. 666), namely, in dance. Enraptured by Dionysian music, the listener is moved to express himself in dance – as are his fellow-revellers, creating a feeling of community: '[s]ingend und tanzend äussert sich der Mensch als Mitglied einer höheren Gemeinsamkeit: er hat das Gehen und das Sprechen verlernt'¹³⁴ (GT-1). The importance of dance in this context echoes the dance of Dionysus' ancient worshippers, the maenads, whom, Rohde recounts, 'were seized with a violent desire to dance' (2000, p. 286).

While Nietzsche was happy to appropriate the dance of Dionysian worship, he seems to have been unable to accept the violent or sexual aspects of the rituals performed by Dionysus' worshippers, the maenads (at least, in 1872). Nietzsche mentions the maenads twice in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, ignoring their practice of *sparagmos*, the ritualistic tearing-apart, limb from limb, of a live animal, whose flesh would then be devoured raw. Henrichs notes that the (sparse) mentions of the maenads in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* are merely 'ornamental' (1984, p. 229), and avoid addressing anything too unpalatable. Despite his eagerness to contest the serenity of the ancient Greeks, the brutality and debauchery of the maenads seem a step too far, and Nietzsche relegates such practices to the domain of '[die] dionysischen Barbaren'¹³⁵ (GT-2), as distinct from 'die dionysischen Griechen'¹³⁶ (ibid.). Only in the Greek case was the collapse of individuation 'ein künstlerisches Phänomen'¹³⁷ (ibid.).

¹³⁴ 'singing and dancing, man expresses himself as a member of a higher community: he has forgotten how to walk and talk'.

¹³⁵ 'the Dionysian barbarians'. The Greek word '*barbaroi*' signified those who were not Greek, and gained its pejorative connotations after the Persian wars.

¹³⁶ 'the Dionysian Greeks'.

¹³⁷ 'an artistic phenomenon'.

A related aspect of Dionysian worship that Nietzsche sidesteps is the prominence of women (indicated earlier). Critics point out that Nietzsche, as a philologist, would certainly have been aware of the importance of women to Dionysus, and that his largely defeminised version is therefore a conscious choice.¹³⁸ Parting company with Nietzsche, d'Annunzio reaffirms the importance of the female in the Dionysian, and in his novels it is often female characters who undergo the most profound experience of the Dionysian. While Nietzsche will attempt to embrace the more violent and sexual aspects of the Dionysian in his later writings and notes (as will be discussed later in this chapter), it remains a largely defeminised creation, and at no point does he speak of the maenads at length.

So far it has been established that the Apollonian and Dionysian drives govern apparently opposing art forms and psychological states; but the exact nature of their relationship must be clarified. Apollo and Dionysus necessitate each other's existence, for if either is present in isolation, unchecked by the other, dangers arise. The perils of the Dionysian are perhaps the more extreme: while an excess of the Apollonian will merely restrict the individual to a superficial and individuated existence of reality, a dominance of the Dionysian can result in annihilation. The rapturous state of Dionysian intoxication triggers 'völliger Selbstvergessenheit'¹³⁹ (GT-1) which brings the danger of utter destruction. Nietzsche describes a gulf ('Kluft') that separates the Dionysian state from the everyday world (GT-7) – the Dionysian individual risks falling into this gulf. In Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* Nietzsche finds this danger exemplified, and he cites Wagner's lyrics by way of illustration: '[i]n des Wonnemeeres wogendem Schwall, in der Duft – Wellen tönendem Schall, in des Weltathems wehendem All ertrinken – versinken unbewusst – höchste Lust!'¹⁴⁰ (GT-22) The Dionysian individual, like Hamlet, has been granted (or cursed with) a glimpse

¹³⁸ See, for example, Adrian del Caro, 'Nietzschean Self Transformation', in *Nietzsche, Philosophy and the Arts* ed. by Salim Kemal, Ivan Gaskell and Dan Conway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 70-91.

¹³⁹ 'utter self-forgetfulness'.

¹⁴⁰ 'In the blissful ocean's heaving swell, in the ringing sound of waves of fragrance, in the world-breath's wafting all, to drown, to sink unknowingly, highest desire!'

of the true nature of existence, and must recognise the individuation of everyday reality – a fundamental notion upon which we structure and order our existence – as false and meaningless. He has been exposed to, and burdened with, the wisdom of Silenus: ‘[d]as Allerbeste ist für dich gänzlich unerreichbar: nicht geboren zu sein, nicht zu sein, nichts zu sein. Das Zweitbeste aber ist für dich – bald zu sterben’¹⁴¹ (Nietzsche, GT-3). Such insight is the enemy of action, and instead breeds inertia and resignation – like Schopenhauer’s recommended withdrawal from the world. But Nietzsche opposes this resignation,¹⁴² to which (he claims) the ancient Greek did not succumb either. Instead, the Greek created *art*, which redeemed him: ‘[i]hn rettet die Kunst, und durch die Kunst rettet ihn sich – das Leben’¹⁴³ (GT-7).

Nietzsche’s view of the redemptory power of art therefore differs fundamentally from that of Schopenhauer’s in the sense that it sees art as a permanent means of affirming existence, rather than a temporary means of forgetting suffering. Nietzsche finds that Dionysian art offers a ‘metaphysischer Trost’¹⁴⁴ (ibid.) that allows the suffering to be channelled into an affirmative art of Dionysian origin. The individual who has seen the true nature of things struggles to cope with his discovery that the structured and individuated everyday world is an illusion. Dionysian art helps him to accept this, confirming that he has discovered the true nature of things, and that this is not something from which he must flee. Nietzsche describes these effects of the Dionysian:

[w]ir sind wirklich in kurzen Augenblicken das Urwesen selbst und fühlen dessen unbändige Daseinsgier und Daseinslust; der Kampf, die Qual, die Vernichtung der Erscheinungen dünkt uns jetzt wie nothwendig, bei dem Uebermaass von unzähligen, sich in's Leben drängenden

¹⁴¹ ‘The best thing for you is completely beyond reach: never to have been born, not to be, to be nothing. The next best thing for you, however, would be to die soon’.

¹⁴² ‘Oh wie anders redete Dionysos zu mir!’ (‘Oh how differently Dionysus spoke to me!’ [GT-Selbstkritik-6]).

¹⁴³ ‘Art saves him, and through art, life saves him’.

¹⁴⁴ ‘metaphysical comfort’.

und stossenden Daseinsformen, bei der überschwänglichen Fruchtbarkeit des Weltwillens¹⁴⁵ (GT-17).

As Nehamas explains, tragedy reveals that the structured and ordered world that man perceives, and believes to be natural, is actually his own creation, superimposed over nature (1985, p. 43). Art is a conscious illusion that offers us comfort, and once we recognise it as such, we can face existence despite the knowledge we have gained. Here we approach Nietzsche's famous (and ambiguous) declaration that 'nur als ästhetisches Phänomen ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig gerechtfertigt'¹⁴⁶ (GT-5).

In the context of tragedy, the Apollonian harnesses the potentially dangerous Dionysian, neutralising its negative effects while simultaneously inciting the Dionysian to its highest potential. In this, the greatest work of art possible, Apollonian images and Dionysian music triumph together in equilibrium, enabling the spectator to escape the mundane and quotidian – but safely. Dionysian music reveals the primordial undercurrents of life, and encourages the breakdown of individuation through the chorus, in which many ecstatic voices become one. If one were exposed to this aspect of the drama without Apollonian phenomena, one would risk annihilation; but Apollo succeeds in restraining the destructive force of the Dionysian in a world of images (the actors on the stage), creating a safe distance between drama and spectator. Apollo veils the Dionysian in beauty, which both renders it attractive and objectifies it.

In this account of the birth of tragedy, Apollo and Dionysus must both be present, and complement each other perfectly: if either impulse dominates, the tragic moment will be lost. This is precisely what happened, Nietzsche claims, with the advent of Socrates (or what he

¹⁴⁵ 'For a few moments we are truly the primordial being itself, and feel its unbridled hunger for, and joy of, existence; struggle, anguish, the destruction of phenomena, these appear to us now as necessary, at the excess of existence forms, surging and thrusting into life, at the exuberant fertility of the world-will'.

¹⁴⁶ 'only as an aesthetic phenomenon is existence and the world eternally justified'. For a discussion of the ambiguity of this statement, see Daniel Came, 'The Aesthetic Justification of Existence', in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. by Keith Ansell-Pearson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 41-57.

stood for), who introduced theoretical culture to the West, and banished Dionysus from the stage, bringing about the death of tragedy. Nietzsche explains that Socrates, not Apollo, is the true opponent of Dionysus (GT-12). In his *Versuch einer Selbstkritik (An Attempt at Self-Criticism, 1886)* Nietzsche characterises Socratism as a decadent influence, which brought about the death of instinct (GT-Selbstkritik-1). It is precisely this (Dionysian) instinct that Nietzsche implores us to rediscover in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.

In 1872 it is the music dramas of Richard Wagner that offer the greatest hope to Nietzsche when he surveys the stagnant and languishing artistic landscape, as the ‘Vorwort an Richard Wagner’ (‘Foreword to Richard Wagner’) makes clear. Wagner’s music offers access to forgotten Dionysian energies, Nietzsche writes, and should reassure Germans that the Dionysian foundation of their culture can still be re-awoken:

Aus dem dionysischen Grunde des deutschen Geistes ist eine Macht emporgestiegen, die mit den Urbedingungen der sokratischen Cultur nichts gemein hat und aus ihnen weder zu erklären noch zu entschuldigen ist, vielmehr von dieser Cultur als das Schrecklich Unerklärliche, als das Uebermächtig-Feindselige empfunden wird, die deutsche Musik, wie wir sie vornehmlich in ihrem mächtigen Sonnenlaufe von Bach zu Beethoven, von Beethoven zu Wagner zu verstehen haben.¹⁴⁷ (GT-19)

Thus Nietzsche attempts to present the Dionysian as an impulse with which Germans have an affinity, and which must simply be retrieved; he even claims that it was the Dionysian that fuelled the ecstatic rituals of the German Middle Ages (including the festivals of St John and St Vitus). Goethe, Schiller and Winckelmann are among those who have struggled to keep a Greek spirit alive in contemporary Germany, Nietzsche claims, but even they could not grasp the essence of the Greeks (GT-20) and could not resurrect Dionysus. It is the magic of

¹⁴⁷ ‘Out of the Dionysian foundation of the German soul a power has arisen, that has nothing in common with the original conditions of Socratic culture, and cannot be explained or excused by these conditions; is, instead, experienced by this culture as the terribly inexplicable, as the overwhelmingly hostile – German music, as we understand it primarily in its powerful orbit from Bach to Beethoven, from Beethoven to Wagner.’

Dionysus that will transform the gloomy wilderness of German culture¹⁴⁸ and lead to ‘die Wiedergeburt der Tragödie’¹⁴⁹ (ibid.). Nietzsche urges his readers to abandon their faith in Socratism and instead to take up the Dionysian thyrsus; once this has been achieved, the art of contemporary Germany will be fit to stand ‘vor dem untrüglichen Richter Dionysus’¹⁵⁰ (GT-19).

When we attempt to account for the apparently greater élan with which Dionysus is depicted in 1872, we should keep in mind the text’s purpose. Here Nietzsche hopes to reacquaint us with a neglected drive (the Dionysian), presenting it as a source of forgotten creativity, and encourage us to re-embrace it. He must therefore present this impulse to us in the most favourable light, and ‘sell’ Dionysus to his readers, in order to effect the changes he recommends. Nietzsche repeatedly emphasises the dangers, or limits, of either the Dionysian or Apollonian in isolation, and does not advocate the Dionysian above and beyond its counterpart; it is merely that modern man has become estranged from the former, leading to the impoverishment of art.

In Nietzsche’s first book the Dionysian is presented as a drive that abolishes individuation, triggers intoxication and promotes creativity. But Dionysus is not only to be found in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, and Nietzsche continues to write about him until his breakdown in 1888: the name ‘Dionysos’ may even have been one of the last words Nietzsche ever wrote (in his *Wahnsinnsbriefe*, or ‘madness-letters’). It is to Nietzsche’s later Dionysian that attention will now be turned, in order to understand the transformation that this idea undergoes, and its continued creative significance.

¹⁴⁸ ‘wie verändert sich plötzlich jene eben so düster geschilderte Wildniss unserer ermüdeten Cultur, wenn sie der dionysische Zauber berührt!’ (‘how that dismally depicted wilderness of our tired culture suddenly transforms itself, when it is touched by the magic of Dionysus!’ [GT-20]).

¹⁴⁹ ‘the rebirth of tragedy’.

¹⁵⁰ ‘before the infallible judge Dionysus’.

vi) The Dionysian after 1872

After Nietzsche's attempted Dionysian revival of 1872, which exalts Dionysus on virtually every page, Nietzsche appears to lose interest in the Dionysian. Between 1872 and 1888, the name 'Dionysus' and the term 'Dionysian' appear only a handful of times, until 1888's *Ecce homo* and *Götzen-Dämmerung (Twilight of the Idols)* welcome the Dionysian back again. Nietzsche's notes, however, demonstrate a continued occupation with the idea. Examination of these notes, and of references to the Dionysian in published works, reveal that the figure undergoes something of a transformation over the period 1872-1888. While it retains the creative connotations of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, its relevance and significance are expanded: where once the Dionysian promoted the creation of literal works of art, the Dionysian in Nietzsche's later writings promotes the creation of the *self as a work of art*.¹⁵¹ Many of the strategies that Nietzsche impels us to employ, in order to affirm existence in the highest way, are linked to Dionysus, and in the later years of Nietzsche's active life the figure of Dionysus acts as an emblem of his entire *Weltanschauung*.

From around 1881 the Dionysian is described as an impulse towards self-transformation. In a note from this year Nietzsche defines the essence of the Dionysian as 'Versuche von ungeflügelten Thieren, sich Flügel einzubilden und sich über die Erde zu heben'¹⁵² (NF-1881, 15 [60]) There is no mention of art, or Greeks here, for Dionysus has outgrown the aesthetic context of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. If Nietzsche's attempt to resurrect Dionysus in contemporary Germany was too subtle in 1872, from 1881 he emphasises the contemporary relevance of the idea by largely disposing of its classical context. Dionysus becomes a figure inspiring elevation, advancement and growth, of which

¹⁵¹ The notion of creating one's self as a work of art was taken up by many subsequent thinkers, such as Foucault and Rorty. See Graham Longford, "'Sensitive Killers, Cruel Aesthetes, and Pitiless Poets": Foucault, Rorty, and the Ethics of Self-Fashioning', *Polity*, 33 (2001), pp. 569-592 and Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, 'The Aesthetic and Ascetic Dimensions of an Ethics of Self-Fashioning: Nietzsche and Foucault', *Parrhesia*, 2 (2007), pp. 44-65.

¹⁵² 'attempts of wingless animals to imagine themselves a pair of wings and raise themselves over the earth'.

modern man (and not just artists) can avail himself. Similarly a note from 1885 defines the Dionysian world as ‘ein Werden, das kein Sattwerden, keinen Überdruß, keine Müdigkeit kennt’¹⁵³ (NF-1885, 38 [12]). Nietzsche speaks of the notion of ‘becoming’ almost obsessively, urging individuals to an ongoing and exuberant process of self-driven development and advancement that has no fixed end. This process is a form of creativity, which still gains impetus from the Dionysian, and the resulting work of art is the self. Obvious parallels with Heraclitus’ philosophy exist, and Nietzsche himself points out (in *Ecce homo*) that the Heraclitean affirmation of destruction is ‘das Entscheidende in einer dionysischen Philosophie’¹⁵⁴ (EH-GT-3).

As with the Dionysian of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, the creativity of this later Dionysian is also balanced by destruction. In *Götzen-Dämmerung* Nietzsche writes:

Das Ja sagen zum Leben selbst noch in seinen fremdesten und härtesten Problemen; der Wille zum Leben, im Opfer seiner höchsten Typen der eignen Unerschöpflichkeit frohwerdend — das nannte ich dionysisch, das errieth ich als die Brücke zur Psychologie des tragischen Dichters. Nicht um von Schrecken und Mitleiden loszukommen, nicht um sich von einem gefährlichen Affekt durch dessen vehemente Entladung zu reinigen [...]: sondern um, über Schrecken und Mitleid hinaus, die ewige Lust des Werdens selbst zu sein, — jene Lust, die auch noch die Lust am Vernichten in sich schliesst...¹⁵⁵ (GD-Alten-5)

¹⁵³ ‘a becoming that knows no satiety, no tedium, no weariness’.

¹⁵⁴ ‘the most crucial aspect of a Dionysian philosophy’.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Saying yes to life even in its strangest and hardest problems; the will to life, rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility in the sacrifice of its highest types – this is what I called Dionysian, this is what I divined as a bridge towards the psychology of the tragic poet. Not in order to escape terror and pity, not in order to cleanse one’s self of a dangerous feeling through its vehement discharge [...]: but rather in order to overcome horror and pity, to be the eternal joy of becoming itself, – all joy, which also includes joy in destruction’. Nietzsche continues: ‘Und damit berühre ich wieder die Stelle, von der ich einstmals ausgieng — die “Geburt der Tragödie” war meine erste Umwerthung aller Werthe: damit stelle ich mich wieder auf den Boden zurück, aus dem mein Wollen, mein Können wächst — ich, der letzte Jünger des Philosophen Dionysos, — ich, der Lehrer der ewigen Wiederkunft’ (‘And here I touch again upon the position from which I proceeded once upon a time – the “Birth of Tragedy” was my first transvaluation of all values: thus I stand once again upon the ground out of which my desire and ability grew – I, the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus, – I, the teacher of the eternal recurrence’ [ibid.]).

This Dionysian philosophy embraces a cyclical view of existence that accepts – indeed prescribes – destruction as well as creativity.

The later Dionysian symbolises an alternative to pessimism. Eschewing the traditional pessimistic attitude (like that of Schopenhauer), which saw resignation as the only option for those who had acknowledged the suffering inherent in man's existence, Nietzsche presents another choice. The Dionysian offers strategies by which crippling pessimism can be transfigured into jubilant affirmation. In Attic tragedy, Dionysus reveals the horrors of existence, which Apollo's veil of beauty makes tolerable. In Nietzsche's later writings, Dionysus still forces his initiates to confront the dismaying and unpleasant truths about their existence, but now also offers ways (once Apollo's task) to affirm and embrace these truths. This is, Nietzsche writes, 'meine neue Fassung des Pessimismus'¹⁵⁶ (NF-1887, 10 [3]), which voluntarily searches out 'der furchtbaren und fragwürdigen Seiten des Daseins'¹⁵⁷ (ibid.), and uses strength and acceptance to bear them.

The strategies that the later Dionysian offers for coping with (and even thriving on) the burden of pessimistic knowledge are among Nietzsche's most radical ideas. While these strategies are not solely the property of Dionysus, they are often linked to the figure. Two of these are the notions of *amor fati* and the eternal recurrence of the same (which Pupino finds echoed in d'Annunzio [2002, pp. 116-121]). The former appears for the first time in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (§ 276) and prescribes an accepting love of one's fate; the latter is a thought experiment, borrowed in part from Indian philosophy, which denotes time as cyclical rather than linear or teleological, and first appears in the same work (§ 285). This experiment requires one to confront the question of whether one could bear to re-live the same life infinitely. This is one of the highest acts of affirmation, and is therefore also the 'grösste

¹⁵⁶ 'my new formulation of pessimism'.

¹⁵⁷ 'the frightening and questionable sides of existence'.

Schweregewicht'¹⁵⁸ (Nietzsche, FW-341). A note from 1888 explicitly links *amor fati* to the Dionysian, and explains that the highest philosophical state attainable is reached through a Dionysian approach to existence: '[h]öchster Zustand, den ein Philosoph erreichen kann: dionysisch zum Dasein stehn —: meine Formel dafür ist amor fati...'¹⁵⁹ (NF-1888, 16 [32]) With these strategies the individual can – and must – seek out those revelations that resemble the dismaying judgement of Silenus. Only after these potentially devastating revelations have been embraced can the highest levels of life-affirmation be reached: '[e]s wird ein höchster Zustand der Daseins-Bejahung concipirt, in dem sogar der Schmerz, jede Art von Schmerz als Mittel der Steigerung ewig einbegriffen ist'¹⁶⁰ (NF-1888, 14 [24]). This condition is 'der tragisch-dionysische Zustand'¹⁶¹ (ibid.).

A Dionysian affirmation of existence, then, can only be reached through agony, suffering and pessimism. It may also require the aspiring individual to embrace destruction and violence, for the Dionysian individual must first free himself of the burdensome moralities and values that have, allegedly, enslaved man for centuries. Nietzsche admits that this undertaking is not an easy one: 'Für eine dionysische Aufgabe gehört die Härte des Hammers, die Lust selbst am Vernichten in entscheidender Weise zu den Vorbedingungen'¹⁶² (EH-Za-8). The hammer shares a similar symbolic function to the Dionysian itself, capable of annihilation and devastation as well as creation, reconstruction and refinement. After all, a hammer may be used as a weapon or tool of destruction in the hands of the warrior or the iconoclast, but is also used to create beauty and bring new artefacts into being in the hands of the sculptor or carpenter.

¹⁵⁸ 'heaviest burden'.

¹⁵⁹ 'The highest condition, that the philosopher can reach: to be Dionysian in one's existence —: my formula for this is *amor fati*...'

¹⁶⁰ 'a highest condition of existence-affirmation will be conceptualised, in which even pain, every type of pain, will be eternally valued as a means of heightening'.

¹⁶¹ 'the tragic-Dionysian condition'.

¹⁶² 'For a Dionysian task the hardness of a hammer, and joy even in destruction, belong decisively to the preconditions'.

If the Dionysian and the hammer can be used in the process of self-creation, what is their function as tools of destruction – what exactly are they used to dismantle? Nietzsche's later Dionysian shuns traditional moralities and teleological conceptions of the world, replacing them with Nietzsche's own notions of eternal becoming. The Dionysian also provides Nietzsche with a means of opposing Christianity – because of its condemnation of sexuality, for example, for in the Greeks' (Dionysian) mysteries of sexuality, Nietzsche claims, we find 'der tiefste Instinkt des Lebens'¹⁶³ (GD-Altan-4). The hammer operates similarly: this tool becomes, for Nietzsche, a means of philosophising (the subtitle of *Götzen-Dämmerung* is 'Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophirt'¹⁶⁴), and a way of questioning all that man has blindly obeyed for centuries. With the hammer, one can finally sound out false, hollow, idols and topple them from their pedestals. The hammer is not to be employed recklessly, but with measure and precision, where necessary, like the tuning fork used to perfect the sounds of the piano. Among the false idols that Nietzsche wishes to expose with his Dionysian hammer, Christianity looms largest.

Christianity is one of Nietzsche's most famous and enduring targets. He characterises the religion as a system born of weakness that negates life. In contrast to the Dionysian attitude towards suffering explained above, Christianity teaches its adherents to endure suffering passively in the knowledge that this world is only a preparation for the afterlife. For the Christian, suffering is borne not for the sake of this life, but for the sake of the one that follows it. Nietzsche finds Christianity to be a hinderance to any affirmation of existence and life: 'es [das Christenthum] ist im tiefsten Sinne nihilistisch, während im dionysischen Symbol die äusserste Grenze der Bejahung erreicht ist'¹⁶⁵ (EH-GT-1). Nietzsche also abhors Christianity's power to impose its values and moralities upon man, rather than allowing the

¹⁶³ 'the deepest instinct to life'.

¹⁶⁴ 'How one philosophises with the hammer'.

¹⁶⁵ 'it [Christianity] is in the deepest sense nihilistic, while in the Dionysian symbol the extreme frontier of affirmation is reached'.

individual to create his own.¹⁶⁶ Dionysus allows Nietzsche to expose (what he perceives to be) the faults of Christianity, and also offers an alternative to Christ, perhaps in the same way that early Christianity permitted the continuation of certain, harmless, elements of paganism for ease of transition. The opposition of Christ and Dionysus ('Dionysos gegen den Gekreuzigten'¹⁶⁷ [EH-Schicksal-9]) cements the status of the Dionysian as a system of thought in Nietzsche's view. Freed from the shackles of Christianity, the Dionysian individual can create himself according to his own values, and in his own image.

Nietzsche is vague about how he envisages the self-created individual (after all, it is to be determined by our own striving), but many of the traits of the *Übermensch* appear to resemble the individual who follows Dionysus' philosophy. The *Übermensch* (announced by Zarathustra) is a symbol of individual self-becoming, attainable through a process of going-under and going-beyond. It is analogous to a work of art, as Ansell-Pearson notes: 'the vision of the *Übermensch* has the status of an artist's creation; it is the product of the imagination of the poet' (1992, p. 321). The *Übermensch* will disregard outdated or limiting values and boundaries, and create himself and his own existence according to his own desires and values. Gooding-Williams finds this to be a possibility 'grounded in passionate, Dionysian, chaos' (2001, p. 69), and, indeed, the necessity for painful experiences and tribulations before the attainment of the *Übermensch* does resemble the suffering inherent in the Dionysian experience. Two notes in particular support the connection between Dionysus and the *Übermensch*: one from 1882, describing how the *Übermensch* resembles the Dionysian

¹⁶⁶ 'Das Christenthum setzt voraus, dass der Mensch nicht wisse, nicht wissen könne, was für ihn gut, was böse ist: er glaubt an Gott, der allein es weiss. Die christliche Moral ist ein Befehl [...].'¹⁶⁷ ('Christianity postulates that man does not know, cannot know, what is good for him, and what is bad for him: he believes in god, that alone does he know. Christian morality is an order [...]' [GD-Streifzüge-5]).

¹⁶⁷ 'Dionysus versus the crucified one'.

dancer in his exuberance;¹⁶⁸ and another from 1885, linking Dionysus to ‘[d]ie übermenschliche Auffassung der Welt’¹⁶⁹ (NF-1885, 35 [73]).

What is certain about the later Dionysian is that while it retains certain crucial elements of the Dionysian of 1872 (such as an impetus towards creativity, and an affirmative attitude towards suffering and burdensome knowledge), its significance and relevance is amplified. The Dionysian is no longer limited to the aesthetic sphere, and becomes a worldview for the individual, rather than society as a whole. The creative impetus Dionysus offers goes beyond the creation of literal works of art, and encompasses the affirmative task of self-creation. Through ‘die Philosophie des Dionysos’¹⁷⁰ (NF-1885, 34 [176]) Nietzsche shows us an alternative to the outmoded values to which he takes his iconoclastic hammer, an alternative that is strange and incredible.¹⁷¹ Dionysus becomes, as Pfeffer notes, ‘the symbol of modern man who has lost all traditional values and beliefs and faces nihilism and despair’ (1972, p. 36). Nietzsche’s Dionysian *Weltanschauung* offers a philosophy that will allow this modern man to continue to survive, and even thrive in his own self-creation.

This chapter has traced Dionysus’ passage from antiquity into the hands of Nietzsche. As discussion of d’Annunzio’s and Mann’s reception of Nietzsche has established, their understanding of the Dionysian was doubtless informed – to some extent – by Nietzsche. As will be seen throughout this thesis, their versions of the Dionysian mirror many aspects of the version presented by Nietzsche. The Dionysian that we find in the literature of d’Annunzio and Mann echoes the artistic and creative significance of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, and, in the case of d’Annunzio, the impetus towards self-creation of Nietzsche’s Dionysian is reflected. The next chapter will consider a particular aspect of the Dionysian that is common

¹⁶⁸ ‘Der Übermensch hat aus Überfülle des Lebens jene Erscheinungen der Opiumraucher und den Wahnsinn und den dionysischen Tanz’ (‘The Übermensch, out of his abundance of life, has the appearance of the opium-smoker, and madness and Dionysian dance’ [NF-1882, 4 (75)]).

¹⁶⁹ ‘the superhuman conception of the world’.

¹⁷⁰ ‘the philosophy of Dionysus’.

¹⁷¹ ‘es handelt sich dabei um mancherlei Heimliches, Neues, Fremdes, Wunderliches, Unheimliches.’ (‘it deals with much that is hidden, new, strange, miraculous, unsettling.’ [JG-295]).

to d'Annunzio and Mann, as well as appearing in Nietzsche's Dionysian and in the worship of the ancient Dionysus; namely, the liminality of the Dionysian experience. For Nietzsche, as for the ancients, the Dionysian triggered the transgression of boundaries, placing the enraptured and intoxicated individual outside conventional social spaces. D'Annunzio and Mann continue these associations, and portray their Dionysian artists as marginal and isolated figures who are not easily integrated into society. The influence of the Dionysian, however, often causes these artists to experience profound communion, echoing both the ancient and Nietzschean Dionysian. The next chapter will explore the issue of liminality and communion, and will argue that these experiences form a crucial part of the process of Dionysian creativity for both d'Annunzio and Mann.

Chapter Three: The Dionysian Artist and Liminality

The previous chapter traced the transition of the Dionysian from an ancient Greek deity to a psychological and artistic drive in the works of Nietzsche, and explored the reception of this idea. It was seen that Gabriele d'Annunzio and Thomas Mann, both early and enthusiastic (but not uncritical) readers of Nietzsche, were intrigued by Nietzsche's Dionysian, and portrayed a version of it in their own literature. For them, as for Nietzsche, the Dionysian was a drive with great artistic significance. As this thesis shows, d'Annunzio and Mann both see creative inspiration in the impulses of the Dionysian, but also detect hints of danger. They do not advocate a total embrace of the Dionysian and the utter abandonment of instincts that hold it in check. For d'Annunzio and Mann, the Dionysian proves especially useful for the artist because of a certain aspect of creativity: namely, that the artist is an isolated individual who stands apart from his fellow man. Loneliness and alienation are often the lot of the artist, but the Dionysian, in its promotion of union, offers a means of combating this, to creative effect. This aspect of the Dionysian will be explored in this chapter.

We will begin by discussing d'Annunzio's and Mann's portrayals of the artist as an outsider. As will be seen, this is not an entirely original notion, and the long-standing stereotype of artists as isolated individuals will be discussed. It will be argued that the artists portrayed by d'Annunzio and Mann are not merely outsiders, but 'liminal'. In other words, they sit between definitions and classifications, and display a somewhat ambiguous identity. Van Gennep's and Turner's theories regarding liminality will be used to illuminate the outsider-status of D'Annunzio's and Mann's artists. These theories will shed light on the reasons for the artist's necessary isolation, and enable a better understanding of the space occupied by such artists.

The Dionysian, in its suspension of individuation and promotion of oneness, allows the artist to experience a form of communion and intimacy that is largely unknown to him or her. D'Annunzio and Mann both portray this experience as one that can bring creative benefits, but which can also threaten both creativity and the artist's life: for if the suspension of identity that precedes immersion into a community goes too far, the artist's individuated identity may be lost in an abyss of self-forgetfulness. Again, Turner's theories will be used to illuminate this experience, for he discusses a state of intimacy and community ('*communitas*') into which participants enter during rites of passage, and which strikingly resembles the effects of the Dionysian. Turner's theories will be used to explain both the benefits and the perils of Dionysian community (as a foil to the artist's liminal isolation), and will allow for a better understanding of the experiences of d'Annunzio's and Mann's artists.

i) Theories of Liminality

The term 'liminal' was coined by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (Smith, 2012, p. 159), who explored 'liminality' in his studies of the rites of passage of tribal communities (*Les rites de passage* [*The Rites of Passage*, 1909]). He identifies three stages in rites of passage: 'I propose to call the rites of separation from a previous world, *preliminal rites*, those executed during the transitional stage *liminal (or threshold) rites*, and the ceremonies of incorporation into the new world *post-liminal rites*' (van Gennep, 1960, p. 21). During the first stage, an individual is separated from his community; during the middle stage the individual possesses an 'ambiguous' (Turner, 1977, p. 94) identity; and during the third stage the individual returns to the original community. Van Gennep states that this model can be applied to ceremonies which 'accompany, facilitate, or affect the transition from one stage of life to another, or from one social position to another' (1960, p. 187). Victor Turner, who expands upon van Gennep's work, and applies it to a broader context, explains that during the middle

stage identified by van Gennep, the ‘characteristics of the ritual subject [...] are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state’ (1977, p. 94). The liminal stage of van Gennep’s rites of passage, then, is a transitional state in which identity is temporarily suspended.

Liminality in van Gennep’s work is restricted to the context of tribal rituals; Turner’s development of van Gennep’s work applies the idea of liminality to a much broader anthropological context. Tribal communities (especially the Ndembu of Zambia) remain a focus of Turner’s attention,¹ but he also considers human societies (including large-scale communities) in general. With ritual processes in mind, Turner juxtaposes two forms of society: the first, which constitutes the everyday realm of conventional society, is structured and hierarchical, a ‘system of politico-legal-economic positions’ (Turner, 1991, p. 96); the second, with little or no structure, is a ‘relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals’ (ibid.). The latter form of society, inhabited during the liminal stage of a rite of passage, is referred to as ‘*communitas*’ by Turner, and, operates in a ‘dialectical process’ (ibid.) with the former: ‘each individual’s life experience contains alternating exposure to structure and *communitas*, and to states and transitions’ (ibid.).

Discussing human societies generally, Turner identifies what he called ‘liminal *personae* (“threshold people”)’ (ibid.), defined as those ‘elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space’ (ibid.). These individuals, for whom liminality is a permanent condition, not just a temporary ritualistic stage, are ‘betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial’ (ibid.). In this group of liminal individuals, who embrace participation in *communitas*,² Turner places ‘what came to be known as the “beat

¹ Turner notes that rites of passage ‘tend to reach their maximal expression in small-scale, relatively stable and cyclical societies, where change is bound up with biological and meteorological rhythms and recurrences’ (1964, p. 46).

² As Csapo notes, ‘[t]he principal object of liminal ritual is to create “*communitas*”’ (1997, p. 254).

generation”, who were succeeded by the “hippies” (p. 112), for example. These groups rejected the norms and structures of conventional society, which often disapproved of them because of their nonconformity. Liminal individuals are often regarded as ‘dangerous, inauspicious, or polluting’ (p. 108), and are frequently referred to in terms of myth, magic and religion. As Turner explains, ‘one often finds in human cultures that structural contradictions, asymmetries, and anomalies are overlaid by layers of myth, ritual, and symbol’ (p. 47). He gives the birth of twins in tribal societies as an example: in some tribal societies they may be elevated to a privileged status, while in others, Turner explains, they are killed as dangerous anomalies.

In this chapter, many echoes of these notions and theories will be found, and d’Annunzio’s and Mann’s artists will be seen to display many characteristics of Turner’s ‘liminal personae’. Before discussing this, however, consideration will be given to the history of the Dionysian, in order to establish how and when connotations of liminality surrounding the deity sprang up.

ii) Dionysus and Liminality

The liminality that will be seen as a characteristic of Nietzsche’s Dionysian, and then of d’Annunzio’s and Mann’s versions of the Dionysian, is grounded in ancient accounts of the deity and his religion. This was seen in part in the previous chapter, in the duality that characterised the ancient (and the Nietzschean) Dionysus. As the offspring of a mortal and a deity, for example, he constituted a figure who stood between (or astride) the realm of mortals and that of the gods; additionally, he stands apart from the Olympian gods, as one of the chthonic deities. Dionysus was also associated with both life and death, and, legend tells, was able to pass into the Underworld and return unscathed to the world of the living. Soule writes that Dionysus’ liminality can be seen ‘not only in his changeability, but in his

association with youth. The earlier images show him bearded, but later he was usually portrayed as a beardless youth in soft, feminine shape' (Soule, 2000, p. 27). As well as uniting youth and age, Dionysus similarly defied gendered definition; in the previous chapter, it was noted that various depictions emphasised qualities traditionally attached to both genders.

The liminal nature of the Dionysian is emphasised by Camille Paglia, who explains how Western art embraced Apollonian structures and drives in an attempt to renounce all that was associated with the dark and dangerous Dionysian. She names Dionysus 'the Liberator' and 'a vandal' (Paglia, 2001, p. 97), depicting him as a force that balks at structures and boundaries, and rejoices in transgression and deviancy. This is echoed by Oppel's statement regarding the essence of Dionysus: 'he overflows the limits, exceeds and obliterates boundaries' (2005, p. 73). Paglia's Dionysian promotes the suspension of individual identity, enabling one 'for a short time to *stop being [oneself]*' (2001, p. 97), and she notes the literal meaning of the Greek term *ecstasis* – 'standing outside of' (ibid.). For Paglia, Dionysus is also associated with the realm of liquids, a further challenge to defined structure: '[t]he Dionysian is nature's chthonian fluidity. Apollo, on the other hand, gives form and shape, marking off one being from another' (Paglia, p. 30). Paglia names 'milk, blood, [and] sap' (ibid.) as examples of Dionysian liquids, and calls the Dionysian 'a miasmatic swamp whose prototype is the still pond of the womb' (p. 12). As with Nietzsche's Apollo and Dionysus, the former here signifies structure and individuality, while the latter signifies wildness, disruption, and plurality – all linked to liminality. It is the Apollonian that creates the boundaries and delineations which the Dionysian transgresses, and the liminal space is the Dionysian primordial world beneath or between Apollonian structures.

Liminality also featured in ancient Dionysian worship, which conveyed initiates to a liminal state. The intoxication inherent in Dionysian worship aided in the abandonment of

inhibitions and restraints, and suspended worshippers' identity. This was a ritual for the whole community, regardless of social station, for, as Kerényi notes, 'no one, not even slaves, was prevented from drinking wine' (1976, p. 303). Dionysian intoxication transported worshippers to a state resembling the middle stage of van Gennep's rites of passage: enraptured individuals were separated from the rest of the community by their delirium, and withdrew to a space outside the *polis*. Kuritz explains the three stages of the Dionysian ritual: 'first, an orgiastic exodus to the countryside; second, a sacrificial tearing apart and eating of a victim; and third, a joyous return to the city' (1988, p. 19). In *The Bacchae*, Euripides opposes Dionysian worship to civic duty and responsibility, symbolised by the king Pentheus, who tries to outlaw Dionysian worship for the good of civilisation; notoriously, Pentheus ends up being dismembered by maenads who are too delirious to distinguish between their king and a wild animal. As Wood explains, Dionysus encouraged 'the women of Thebes to abandon their civic duties, to move outside the walls of the city, and to engage in self-indulgent, wanton, and destructive behaviour' (2008, p. 10).

Yet *communitas*, for Turner, is not merely the destructive antipode to civilisation that it is in the Dionysian delirium of *The Bacchae*. Turner notes that, like liminal individuals, the state of *communitas* is regarded as something magical and sacred, even mystical, for its transgression of structural norms 'is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency' (1991, p. 128). Such occurrences are often expressed in terms of ritual and even myth. Furthermore, he claims that the products of liminality are 'art and religion' (*ibid.*) as opposed to the 'legal and political structures'³ (*ibid.*) that are the fruits of structural existence. He describes the 'anti-structure' that is the effect of *communitas* and liminality thus:

liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc, from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses, enacting a multiplicity of

³ Turner also notes: 'Liminality, marginality, and structural inferiority are conditions in which are frequently generated myths, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art' (1991, p. 128).

social roles, and being acutely conscious of membership in some corporate group such as a family, lineage, clan, tribe, nation, etc, or of affiliation with some pervasive social category such as a class, caste, sex or age-division (Turner, 1982, p. 44).

He suggests that liminality is ‘more creative [...] than the structural norm’ (p. 47) – but adds the caveat that it is also ‘more destructive’ (ibid.). Echoing Euripides’ portrayal of deadly Dionysian unity, Turner notes that liminality:

may be for many the acme of insecurity, the breakthrough of chaos into cosmos, of disorder into order [...]. Liminality may be the scene of disease, despair, death, suicide, the breakdown without compensatory replacement of normative, well-defined social ties and bonds (p. 46).

In terms of the Dionysian, this is the uncontrollable and noxious side of the drive, which will be seen to play havoc in d’Annunzio’s and, especially, Mann’s portrayals of the Dionysian experience.

In several respects, then, Turner’s notion of *communitas* echoes the ancient worship of Dionysus, and in fact Turner does make reference to ‘the ecstatic *communitas* of Dionysos’ (Turner, 1991, p 160). Intoxicated individuals were temporarily ‘undifferentiated’ and enjoyed a feeling of community that transcended that of everyday existence. He emphasises (here in the context of hippy communities) the ‘spontaneity, immediacy, and “existence”’ (p. 113) of *communitas*, where consideration for the past (an aspect of structured existence) is eclipsed by concern only for the present moment. In order to illuminate the idea of *communitas* further, Turner cites Martin Buber, who uses the term ‘community’ where Turner uses ‘*communitas*’:

Community is the being no longer side by side [...] but *with* one another of a multitude of persons. And this multitude, though it moves towards one goal, yet experiences everywhere a turning to, a dynamic facing of, the others, a flowing from *I* to *Thou* (Buber, in Turner, p. 127).

The bond experienced between two individual participants in *communitas* is such that, by extension, they feel the whole of humanity to be united by the intensity of their connection. Turner's descriptions of *communitas* recall the communion of intoxication, in which a deeper level of identification is experienced. This is one of the key aspects of Nietzsche's Dionysian, which, as was seen in the previous chapter, demolishes the Apollonian *principium individuationis* and reveals a more profound bond between initiates, and between initiates and nature, granting them a feeling of unity with the 'Ur-Einen' ('primordial oneness' [GT-1]). Nietzsche describes this phenomenon thus:

Unter dem Zauber des Dionysischen schliesst sich nicht nur der Bund zwischen Mensch und Mensch wieder zusammen: auch die entfremdete, feindliche oder unterjochte Natur feiert wieder ihr Versöhnungsfest mit ihrem verlorenen Sohne, dem Menschen⁴ (GT-1).

Nietzsche's description of the Dionysian state of deindividuation, where the subject enters a realm of intense communion – a 'höheren Gemeinsamkeit'⁵ (ibid.) – resembles Turner's *communitas*. Echoing Kerényi's description of the universality of Dionysian worship, Nietzsche notes that in this state, the slave is now a free man,⁶ and the individual forsakes social structures and inhibitions that are now revealed as arbitrary.

For Nietzsche, though, Dionysian intoxication is a temporary experience, and would be untenable as a permanent condition; under the influence of the Dionysian we are united with 'das Urwesen selbst'⁷ – but, as Nietzsche specifies, only briefly.⁸ Hence the necessity of the Apollonian (in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*) as a means of taming the Dionysian. As seen in the previous chapter, if the Dionysian were experienced without the safeguards of the

⁴ 'Under the magic of the Dionysian, not only is the bond between man and man consolidated once again: nature, estranged, hostile, or subjugated, also celebrates her festival of reconciliation with her lost son, man'.

⁵ 'higher community'.

⁶ 'Jetzt ist der Sklave freier Mann' ('Now the slave is a free man' [GT-1]).

⁷ 'the primordial being itself'.

⁸ 'Wir sind wirklich in kurzen Augenblicken das Urwesen selbst' ('For a few moments we are truly the primordial being itself' [GT-17]).

Apollonian, the individual would be lost in ‘völliger Selbstvergessenheit’⁹ (GT-1). The raw, elemental power of the Dionysian requires the Apollonian in order to channel and tame it.¹⁰ Nietzsche writes that the Apollonian reminds us of our individuated existence,¹¹ and casts a veil of beauty¹² over the horrors which the Dionysian exposes. The Apollonian also causes our experience of immediacy (a feature of Nietzsche’s Dionysian and Turner’s *communitas*) to cease: ‘[w]ir hatten unter den eigenthümlichen Kunstwirkungen der musikalischen Tragödie eine apollinische Täuschung hervorzuheben, durch die wir vor dem unmittelbaren Einssein mit der dionysischen Musik gerettet werden sollen [...]’¹³ (GT-24). After an intense experience of the Dionysian world of primordial unity, then, individuality must be re-established, and the initiate is returned to a world of illusions, representation, and concepts, in order to survive. This is the end of the Dionysian ‘ritual’, and the individual returns to a civic existence. In antiquity, as Stephen Levine notes, Dionysian festivals took place at particular times, but ‘When the festival has concluded, [...] daily life must begin again, although it is hoped that it will be marked by a sense of increased vitality and meaning’ (2005, p. 44). While Nietzsche’s notion of Apollo’s delivering the Dionysian individual safely back to structured society is not an aspect of historical Dionysian worship, the temporary nature of a Dionysian experience seems to be.

Return to civilisation after a Dionysian experience echoes the final stage of van Gennep’s rites of passage, and the re-incorporation of which Turner speaks. After ‘reaggregation’ (Turner, 1991, p. 94), the subject is ‘in a relatively stable state once more’ (p. 95) and is no longer ‘betwixt and between’ (ibid.). Both van Gennep and Turner speak of the

⁹ ‘utter self-forgetfulness’.

¹⁰ this can be seen in Strong’s analogy, in which we view ‘Dionysus as a light source and Apollo as a lens, which serves to colour and focus’ (1988, p. 142). While the analogy perhaps fails to convey the genuinely hazardous nature of the Dionysian source, it does emphasise the need for an Apollonian control.

¹¹ ‘So entreisst uns das Apollinische der dionysischen Allgemeinheit und entzückt uns für die Individuen’ (‘So the Apollonian wrests us from Dionysian community and delights us with individuals’ [GT-21]).

¹² ‘einen Schönheitsschleier’ (‘a veil of beauty’ [GT-25]).

¹³ ‘Under the unique artistic effects of musical tragedy, we emphasised an Apollonian deception, through which we are to be saved from immediate oneness with Dionysian music’.

liminal stage as a period of transition, implying that the re-incorporated individual rejoins society in an altered state: van Gennep talks about ‘rites of incorporation at marriages’ (1960, p. 11) for example, where subjects embark upon a new life as a couple, and no longer as unattached individuals.

Nietzsche also employs Dionysus as a symbol for change and becoming, which must be embraced if mankind is to overcome decadence. In *Die Geburt der Tragödie* Dionysus promotes change by triggering intoxication, but in later writings (and notes), where Dionysus becomes an emblem of Nietzsche’s entire *Weltanschauung*, the Dionysian becomes an impulse for more permanent transformation, as discussed in the previous chapter. In a note from 1885, for example, Nietzsche speaks of ‘eine Art Charakter von Proteus-Dionysos’¹⁴ (NF-1885, 25 [68]), linking the two classical figures. Proteus, as a son of Poseidon, was associated with the ever-changing seas, and is noted for having possessed ‘the faculty of changing himself into whatever forms he chose’ (Robbins, 1849, p. 84). In placing the two names side by side, Nietzsche signals Dionysus’ own capacity for undergoing and triggering transformation. Nietzsche defines his (later) Dionysian as ‘ein Werden’¹⁵ (NF-1885, 38 [12]) that knows no cessation, for the Dionysian becomes the embodiment of a philosophy that fights decadence with a life-affirming striving.

Substantial affinities exist, then, between van Gennep’s and Turner’s notions of liminality and *communitas*, and the ancient and Nietzschean versions of the Dionysian. In all cases, the participant enters a state of ambiguousness in which their previous identity is suspended, and which leaves them able to undergo some kind of transition. Everyday social structures temporarily collapse, and the participant may discover creative energies in this liberation. Before turning our attention to d’Annunzio’s and Mann’s creative characters, a further incidence of liminality will be noted: namely that of the period (1894-1912), during which

¹⁴ ‘a type of Proteus-Dionysus character’.

¹⁵ ‘a becoming’.

d'Annunzio and Mann published the texts under examination in this study. The next section will discuss this period, and argue that the period can be viewed as a 'liminal' one. This will allow for additional contextualised understanding of the themes and tropes of d'Annunzio's and Mann's literature, and for a deeper understanding of their isolated artists.

iii) The *fin-de-siècle*: a Liminal Period?

The period during which Gabriele d'Annunzio and Thomas Mann were writing, and in particular the period spanned by their texts under consideration here (1894-1912), was one characterised by intense change and transition. As indicated in the previous chapter, the final years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century saw dramatic transformations in the fields of culture, politics, economics, technology and demographics, and the period dubbed the *fin-de-siècle* could be seen as something of a liminal period, bridging the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Precisely what period is intended by the term '*fin-de-siècle*' varies considerably: Ledger and McCracken, in their *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle* (1994), address the period stretching from the 1880s to 1914; whereas Showalter (1995), comparing the end of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth, considers the term to cover primarily the 1890s (and 1990s). Here the former of these two definitions will be used, encompassing the date of publication of all of the literary texts under consideration.

One of the most prominent cultural trends of the final decades of the nineteenth century, 'decadence',¹⁶ was also arguably liminal in nature. Weir argues that decadence should be seen as a 'dynamics of transition' (1995, p. 15) from Romanticism to modernism, for decadence and aestheticism have been considered 'as the preamble to twentieth-century transgressions of social and sexual boundaries' (p. xv). He finds that decadence 'is situated

¹⁶ The aftermath and repercussions of decadence were still being felt when Mann published his *Der Tod in Venedig* in 1912 (and, indeed, cultural decadence remained a concern for Mann for at least another decade).

somewhere between romantic bohemia and avant-garde belle époque' (ibid.), defying categorisation in either the former or the latter. An understanding of decadence as a transition is shared by several other critics; Williams, for example, deems the *fin-de-siècle* 'a working-out, rather, of unfinished lines; a tentative redirection' (1963, p. 165). Pykett similarly finds the period to constitute 'a space between two literary and historical periods [...]; it occupied a borderland between two fields of study' (1996, p. 3). Stephan notes that the period displays many contradictions and paradoxes: '[d]ecadent thinkers accepted Rousseau's idea that nature is good and civilisation bad, yet they enthusiastically preferred the artificial: such perverse enjoyment of what is thought to be evil characterizes decadence' (1974, p. 19). For Robbins decadence is a 'slippery' and 'liminal cultural phenomenon, taking place *between* the binaries of life and art, natural and artificial, male and female, masculine and feminine, conventional and unconventional' (1996, p. 5).

In the themes and tropes of the decadent era, a penchant for transgression, violation, and 'between-ness' is evident. Texts like Baudelaire's *Une charogne* (*A Carcass* [from *Les Fleurs du Mal*, *The Flowers of Evil*] 1857), an important precursor of decadent literature, challenged conventions and categories of taste, and propagated the notion of 'the Beauty of the Horrid'; perverse tropes such as incest (which emerged during the Romantic period, and recurs periodically in d'Annunzio's fiction) became commonplace; the boundaries between life and art were blurred (most famously in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*); and writers displayed an unhealthy obsession with pathology and physical decay, muddying the distinctions between life and death. The 'personae' of the decadent period, who are among the subjects of Paglia's *Sexual Personae* (1990), are also liminal, and include figures such as the dandy, the New Woman, the femme fatale, and the ephebe – all of whom challenge traditional gender identities. Kaye states that the final decades of the nineteenth century 'witnessed a complex and sometimes contradictory constellation of differing movements and

comprehensions of sexuality' (2007, p. 54), and cites falling birth rates, the trend for sexual theory (for example, the writings of Havelock Ellis or Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia sexualis* [1886]), the emergence of birth control, and suffrage movements as contributing factors to the 'sheer conceptual chaos' (p. 53) that critics tends to diagnose. Echoes of some of these 'sexual personae', to use Paglia's phrase, will be seen among d'Annunzio's and Mann's characters.

Another common trope of decadence, reflecting the liminality of the period and of the cultural trend, was the isolated individual, unable (or unwilling) to integrate fully into society. Huysman's *Des Esseintes* (from *À Rebours* [*Against Nature*, 1884]) is probably the most notorious of these. His rejection of norms, structures, and conventions leads him to highly deviant behaviour: he becomes nocturnal, for example, and feeds himself via enema (the 'ultimate deviation from the norm' [Paglia, 2001, p. 431]). *Des Esseintes* resembles the liminal individuals of which Turner speaks, but taken *ad absurdum*: for while Turner's individuals may form a group that positions itself outside social structures, *Des Esseintes* is an entirely isolated figure who eschews participation in any kind of community. Even when his health is threatened by his eccentric behaviour and lifestyle, causing him to return to society, he does so in scepticism and resignation, likening himself to a 'Christian who doubts' (Huysmans, 1959, p. 220).

This brief survey of the *fin-de-siècle* has suggested that the period can be viewed as a liminal one, characterised by the rejection of fixed boundaries and cultural norms. Many of the protagonists of its most iconic literature were outsiders and behaved in ways that opposed mainstream culture and values. The (fictional and real) outsiders of the *fin-de-siècle*, who are often artists of some kind, can arguably be regarded as a continuation of the Romantic figure of the tortured, isolated (creative) genius, who conducts an uneasy relationship with mainstream society. Before turning to the artistic outsiders of d'Annunzio and Mann, the

cultural trope of the isolated artist will be discussed, allowing for a better understanding of the figures portrayed in the texts under consideration.

iv) The Artist as Outsider

The outsider – and the creative outsider in particular – is a frequent motif in the literature of d’Annunzio and Mann, but certainly not an original one, and the notion of the artist as an isolated individual is encountered so frequently that it has become something of a cliché.¹⁷ D’Annunzio’s and Mann’s portrayals of the isolated artist (almost exclusively writers) can arguably be situated within this cliché, but these characters’ experiences of the Dionysian provide a striking foil to their solitude. Here the motif of the artist as outsider (both in real life and in literature) will be briefly discussed, in order to shed light on the origins of the idea taken up by D’Annunzio and Mann.

Countless artists¹⁸ of the recent centuries have gained a reputation as outsiders (whether correctly or not). Rader, looking to English literature, cites Shelley, Swinburne, Byron, Wilde, Blake, Pater, the pre-Raphaelites, Hardy and Houseman as examples of figures who ‘all exhibit some symptoms of cultural estrangement’ (1958, p. 308). Looking further afield we may also place Homer (Kohl, 2007, p. 383), Hölderlin, Sartre, Camus, Tolstoy, Van Gogh, and Pasolini – to name but a few examples – in the same list of artistic figures considered to be outsiders in some way. Rader considers explanations for the persona of the isolated artist: he notes that ‘there seems to be a profound maladjustment between the creative life and the existing social order’ (1958, p. 306) and alludes to Paul Klee’s belief that

¹⁷ Pope challenges the notion of the Romantic artist as outsider, and distinguishes between the *real* and the *stereotypical* ‘romantic’ artist. He states that the view of the Romantic artist as ‘[living] in a garret, [starving] for his art, [...] both a great genius and greatly misunderstood’ (2005, p. 236) is pure cliché, and not true to the reality of the situation. For the purposes of this thesis, however, it is of little importance whether the motif of the outsider artist is historically accurate or not: if merely a stereotype, it was one that existed at the turn of the century, and therefore one which would have been known to d’Annunzio and Mann, whose artists are similarly isolated.

¹⁸ The term ‘artist’ is used here broadly: among the figures considered here are writers, painters, poets, and even thinkers who adopted a highly literary style (such as Sartre).

‘artists suffer from social disunity – they are cut off from the larger spiritual whole’ (ibid.). In a discussion that is echoed by Battersby in her *Gender and Genius* (1989), Rader also considers when the first ‘outsider’ artists emerged: both note that in medieval Europe the artist had been little more than a craftsman, whose trade was regarded in much the same way as that of any other worker. During this period art was generally imitative, not expressive, and the artist’s character was considered to be of little importance, as it was thought not to have any real influence upon the resulting product. Both Rader (1958, p. 307) and Battersby (1989, p. 26) note that the Renaissance can be seen as something of a turning point in this respect: with the advent of private patronage artists were no longer governed by the church (Battersby, p. 26), for example, and began to exercise more control over their art. Rader finds that the change in status of the artist ‘can be detected in Cellini’s *Autobiography* and Vasari’s description of fellow-artists in sixteenth-century Italy’ (1958, p. 307). It was not until much later, however, that the artist fully gained a persona, for Renaissance art was still ‘mimetic’ (1989, Battersby, p. 26). For Battersby, it is only once the term ‘genius’ (as we understand it today¹⁹) enters currency – which she finds took place sometime during the seventeenth century – that we can talk of the individualistic artist. It is with Romanticism, however, that the truly individual artist emerges: Rader notes that ‘the individualistic nature of Western civilisation became firmly established [...] during the Romantic period of the nineteenth century’ (1958, p. 307), and Battersby concurs that ‘for Romantics, art grows out of individuality’ (1989, p. 44).

During the Romantic period, subjectivity was valued in a way that was alien to the attitudes of the Renaissance, for example. This allowed artists to produce more expressive works, and to exert their individuality; self-consciousness was key. As Shanahan explains,

¹⁹ She explains how the modern term ‘genius’ came about through the fusion of the Latin *genius* and *ingenius* (or the Greek *genio* and *ingegno*), where the former refers to ‘the divine forces associated with, and protective of, male fertility’ (p. 26) and the latter is ‘associated with good judgement and knowledge, but also talent, and dexterity and facility essential to the great artist working in mimetic traditions’ (ibid.).

Romanticism can be seen as ‘the first convergence of individualistic attitudes into a social, literary, and philosophical movement that places an emphasis on the solitary individual as nothing less than the centre of the universe’ (1992, p. 90). With this shift the persona of the artist became almost as interesting as the works that he or (occasionally) she produced, and the stage was set for the advent of the highly individualistic – even isolated – artist. Shanahan explains how Romantic individualism could lead to alienation, ‘by way of the search for authenticity’ (p. 99): the individual’s search for authentic and original expression could result in a distancing from mainstream culture and social norms, and potentially in isolation. Society and individualism appear to be in conflict, for, as Trilling informs us, ‘civilisation is [...] so inauthentic that personal integrity can be wrested from it only by the inversion of all its avowed principles’ (1974, p. 109). The pursuit of authenticity thus appears to render alienation inevitable and maybe even necessary.

Irrationality was also valued by many proponents of Romanticism, partly in objection to the Enlightenment’s elevation of reason and rationality. In German Romanticism, for example, Ferber notes the reaction of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788) to ‘what they perceived as Kant’s unrelenting and abstract rationalism’ (2005, p. 407): they ‘glorified emotional irrationality and the priority of poetic instincts over any judgement and rational argument’ (ibid.). Linked to this, madness was a frequent subject of Romantic art and literature, echoing the classical notion of *furor poeticus*.²⁰ Hence the preoccupation with madness evident in Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan*²¹ (1797), for example, or Goya’s *The Madhouse* (1812-19). Among artists themselves, an element of madness also seemed to be desirable: Esterhammer claims that ‘Blake exploited rumours about his madness’ (2010, p. 288), for example, and reminds us of Byron’s

²⁰ See E. N. Tigerstedt, ‘Furor Poeticus: Poetic Inspiration in Greek Literature before Democritus and Plato’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 31 (1970), pp. 163-178. As Tigerstedt notes, in Plato, for example, we find ‘poetic inspiration [described] as a kind of possession’ (1970, p. 164).

²¹ See Charles I. Patterson, Jr., ‘The Daemonic in Kubla Khan: Toward Interpretation’, *PMLA*, 89 (1974), pp. 1033-1042.

reputation for being ‘mad, bad and dangerous to know’ (ibid.). Similarly, while Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837) cannot be placed comfortably within Romanticism, he does reflect the period’s occupation with irrationality and madness when he describes his years spent studying as ‘sette anni di studio matto e disperatissimo’²² (cited in Citati, 2010, p. 33). But as Battersby points out, in the Romantics’ view, ‘To be a genius, a person has to be *like* a madman, but not a madman’ (1989, p. 106), and the ‘madness’ glorified by the Romantics was often of a mild and ‘romanticised’ variety.

The notion of the genius formed during the Romantic period has been an enduring one. Subsequently the artistic loner has been portrayed or enacted by Joyce (especially in his *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 1916), Kafka, Pirandello (notably in *Il fu Mattia Pascal* [*The Late Mattia Pascal*, 1904]) and Hesse (especially in *Der Steppenwolf* [*Steppenwolf*, 1927]), among many others.²³ In many cases, the same traits and experiences that segregated the Romantic outsider also endure, and Marcuse’s statement about Goethe’s Werther could apply equally to many of the post-Romantic outsider artists (even if Saul is correct in noting that the psychology of *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* [*The Sorrows of Young Werther*, 1774] was ‘largely rationalist’ [2009, p. 127]):

Für Werther war in seinem letzten Subjektivismus, in seiner absoluten Innerlichkeit der Zwiespalt zwischen Idee und Wirklichkeit, Ich und Umwelt ein unüberbrückbarer, und es gab keine Rückkehr zur Einheit als durch den Tod, die Auslöschung des empirischen Seins.²⁴
(1978, p. 69)

Werther is not alone in being segregated by his tendency towards extreme introspection, and in resorting to suicide – a notion which exerted a fascination over the Romantics. The suicide

²² ‘seven years of insane and desperate study’.

²³ O’Connor suggests that it was only with the tumultuous events of the 1930s that the artist truly emerged from isolation: ‘Unfortunately, the pendulum swung too far the other way. Poetry, in its political aspect, tended to become the poetry of a party’ (1947, p. 36).

²⁴ ‘Werther was trapped in his extreme subjectivism and absolute inwardness, and the division between idea and reality, between self and world, was insurmountable; there was no longer a possibility of a return to unity other than through death, the extinction of empirical being’.

of Thomas Chatterton, for example, provided inspiration for Shelley, Wordsworth and Coleridge (as well as appearing in pre-Raphaelite Henry Wallis' famous painting in 1856). Saul notes that 'the Romantics abhorred the orthodox (Augustinian) Christian condemnation of suicide' (2009, p. 167), and names Schlegel's *Lucinde* (1799) as 'the definitive theoretical account of Romantic suicide' (p. 168). Saul elsewhere describes suicide as a 'liminal experience' (2006, p. 578) which 'transgresses not only the general existential border but also an internal ethical and cultural border. It is [...] an offence against received cultural norms' (p. 580). In the Romantic context, suicide appears to be the ultimate expression of liminal isolation, and of the rejection of social norms.²⁵

The (artistic) outsider is also often seen as a bearer of burdensome knowledge, which segregates him (and sometimes her). The artist is often lauded as having a comparatively greater insight into the true nature of existence, which can trigger despair and inertia, and hinder action. As Byron notes in his *Manfred* (1817), 'they who know the most / Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth, / The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life'²⁶ (1901, p. 85). Byron's judgement here recalls the wisdom of Silenus, reported by Nietzsche in his *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (§ 3) and likened to the insight that crippled Hamlet (§ 7). In these cases, too acute an insight into the truth behind man's existence can render it unappealing, and hinder one from living with ease; as this is not an experience common to all men, it can be an alienating discovery. In several of d'Annunzio's and Mann's characters, burdensome knowledge will be seen to segregate the creative individual.

All of these (stereotypical and clichéd) traits and experiences can render the artist something of an outsider; as Battersby states, during the Romantic period (and arguably from then on), the typical genius was 'atypical' (1989, p. 13). It is a trope common to the literature

²⁵ Saul also notes that Wether's suicide differs from the traditional (German) Romantic idea of suicide: for while the former kills himself in an 'act of madness' (2006, p. 591), 'Romantic suicide is [...] enacted in a state of high emotional serenity and self-knowledge' (ibid.).

²⁶ These lines appear in Nietzsche's *Menschliches Allzumenschliches* (*Human All Too Human*, 1878), and Nietzsche names them 'unsterblichen Versen' ('immortal verses' [MA-109]).

of d'Annunzio and Mann, but given the frequency with which the artist is portrayed as an isolated outsider, this is not a particularly interesting observation; more interesting, and more significant for this study, is the way that both d'Annunzio and Mann appear to view the Dionysian as a vital aid to the isolated artist, which can act as a foil to the artist's liminal position and enhance his creativity. For while both d'Annunzio and Mann appear to see some degree of isolation as an inevitable side-effect of creative talent, they also do not appear to view utter segregation as particularly beneficial for the artist; as will be seen, for both writers an experience of the Dionysian, and the profound and primitive intimacy that it triggers, can be a valuable stimulant to creativity.

v) **The Liminal Artists of d'Annunzio and Mann**

For both d'Annunzio and Mann, the nature of art and the artist provided a lifelong subject for literary exploration. Some prominent examples of their fictional artists were cited in the introduction to this thesis, including d'Annunzio's Claudio Cantelmo (*Le vergini delle rocce*) and Mann's Adrian Leverkühn (*Doktor Faustus*). A common trait of these figures is their solitude. In their portrayals of the artist both d'Annunzio and Mann draw upon the idea – even stereotype – of the artist as an outsider. The fictional artists considered here stand apart from their fellow man and find themselves marginalised by their creativity; they occupy a liminal space on the edge of social norms and are characterised by 'between-ness'. These artists recall the liminal personae described by Turner, who exist as a small group in a permanent state of liminality; but d'Annunzio's and Mann's artists are entirely solitary individuals and do not belong to any kind of group.

In the texts considered here, creativity goes hand in hand with solitude: Giorgio Aurispa, who is musically talented and pursues creativity in his attempt to become the

superuomo, is ‘il solitario’²⁷ (d’Annunzio, 1988, p. 930), and Aschenbach in Venice is ‘der Einsame’²⁸ (Mann, 2004, p. 570). Tonio Kröger is caught ‘zwischen krassen Extremen’²⁹ (p. 265) as an artist of bourgeois background perched between the two spheres, and Stelio Effrena is singled out by his unique artistic gift. In *Tristan*, Detlev Spinell (the dilettante ‘artist’) avoids social contact in the sanatorium in which he is residing under false pretences, until the arrival of the genuinely artistic Gabriele Klöterjahn, who is, herself, a lone participant in a profound musical experience. Similar methods are employed by both d’Annunzio and Mann to illustrate the isolation of these characters: we find artistic characters placed in liminal settings, for example, or contrasted as a single figure against a collective audience.

The liminal settings employed by d’Annunzio and Mann to emphasise their artists’ marginality are all spaces outside the city, where social norms and structures are (to some extent) abandoned. We encounter Detlev Spinell and Gabriele Klöterjahn in a sanatorium in the mountains; Giorgio Aurispa withdraws to a hermitage by the sea with his lover; Tonio Kröger visits a coastal hotel in Denmark; Aschenbach eventually arrives at a hotel on the Venetian lagoon; and the preparation for Stelio Effrena’s imminent work of art also takes place in Venice. Both d’Annunzio and Mann place a high symbolic value upon Venice – admittedly a city, but a unique one: where tourists outnumber residents; where East and West meet; where the boundary between land and sea is blurred; and which has traditionally been portrayed as a site of loosened morals and transgressive behaviour. *Tristan*’s sanatorium shares features with Venice: like the holiday resort, it is a location where daily life is less structured – it is filled instead with leisure or recovery time – and where social norms are somewhat relaxed. Both are also locations where people of various nationalities and occupations (but not classes – in both the residents are wealthy) mix. Aschenbach’s inability

²⁷ ‘the solitary one’.

²⁸ ‘the lonely one’.

²⁹ ‘between stark extremes’.

to communicate with some of his fellow guests (including Tazio's Polish family), at least in his or their native tongue, emphasises his isolation, and in a space of relaxed social structure he appears more alienated and unable to communicate than ever. The marginality of the sanatorium (named Einfried) is furthered by its ambiguous location: Mann informs us only that it is situated among mountains and that snow covers the premises. As Ezergailis comments, the sanatorium is so vaguely described as to remain 'charged with the widest possible symbolic associations' (Ezergailis, 1975, p. 347), creating the impression of a place that is anchored nowhere and exists outside normal geographical realms.

In the Einfried sanatorium social hierarchies and boundaries are to some extent suspended, because patients of all sorts ('Herren, Damen und sogar Kinder'³⁰ [Mann, 2004, p. 320]) coexist here. As a retreat for the sick, the sanatorium is already rendered a liminal location, for it hosts those whom illness has excluded from the ordinary routine of life, but who are not yet ready to be consigned to death. Einfried is also 'liminal' in the sense that it is removed from the world of work and commitment: its residents can forget the demands of everyday life, and participate in activities such as sledding trips.

As a city on the waters, historically a portal between East and West, and a city of quasi-Oriental architecture sinking into the lagoon onto which it was built, Venice is the archetypal place 'betwixt and between' (Turner, 1991, p. 95). As Mann's narrator comments, it is 'halb Märchen, halb Fremdenfalle'³¹ (Mann, 2004 p. 567). Venice appears in both *Der Tod in Venedig* and *Il fuoco*, commanding a presence in both texts that is equal to that of a prominent character. For both writers it is a city between life and death: while Aschenbach wanders into the arms of death in Venice, it is also the place where, arguably, he experiences a fullness of life that he has hitherto repressed. When we first encounter him in Munich, he is suffering from what he believes to be writer's block, and takes a walk in a vain attempt to

³⁰ 'men, women, and even children'.

³¹ 'half fairytale, half tourist trap'.

alleviate the difficulties. During this walk the sight of an exotic stranger triggers a hallucination of a wild swampland, a primordial landscape that bristles with life. Lush plants dominate the landscape and a tiger crouches ready to pounce. The abundance of life in this vision contrasts starkly with the spartan world Aschenbach seems to inhabit in Munich – we read of him sitting, monk-like, at his desk with two tall candle sticks – and presages his Venetian experiences: for it is the re-awakening of Dionysian impulses within Aschenbach that has triggered the vision, in which the object of his repression is made manifest. While Aschenbach does not travel quite as far as the tigers, in Venice (whose canals recall the watery landscape of the hallucination) he is confronted with a realisation of this vision, and although the Dionysian delivers him along a path to death, it also grants him an experience of those primordial impulses that were depicted in his hallucination. Ultimately, however, it is death and degeneration that triumph in *Der Tod in Venedig*: Aschenbach's Venice is 'krank' ('ill' [Mann, 2004 p. 567]), 'die faulriechende Lagune'³² (p. 541) and is plagued with 'eine widerliche Schwüle'³³ (p. 541). On the day of Aschenbach's death, just after he learns of the Polish family's imminent departure, the beach has a distinctly melancholy feel: 'Herbstlichkeit, Überlebtheit schien über dem einst so farbig belebten, nun fast verlassenem Lustorte zu liegen, dessen Sand nicht mehr reinlich gehalten wurde'³⁴ (p. 590). As his surroundings reflect, while the release of Aschenbach's repressed sexuality may occasion an initial surge in vitality and energy, mental and physical decline swiftly follow.

In *Il fuoco*, too, Venice is a city suspended between death, decay, and stagnation on the one hand, and life, vitality, and art on the other. Degeneration is visible: Effrena notes that the city can seem 'senza palpito e senza respiro, morta nelle sue verdi acque'³⁵ (d'Annunzio, 1989, p. 233); Venice's gondolas are likened to funeral barges, a metaphor also found in *Der*

³² 'the reeking lagoon'.

³³ 'a repulsive oppressiveness'.

³⁴ 'An autumnal feeling and a sense of expiration lay upon the beach, which had once been so colourful and animated, and was now almost deserted, and whose sand was no longer kept clean'.

³⁵ 'without a pulse and without breath, dead in its green waters'.

Tod in Venedig; and at one point Effrena and Foscarina are rowed through a landscape that is described as ‘stigia’ (‘stygian’ [p.429]), ‘come una visione dell’Ade’³⁶ (ibid.). But d’Annunzio – as well as Effrena, who shares several autobiographical details with his author – attempts to counteract this degeneration, and resists the image of Venice as a paradigm of decadence and decay. For Effrena Venice is ‘una Città di Vita’³⁷ (p. 254), and must be restored to this rightful state. In *Il fuoco*, therefore, we also find signs of life that are absent in Mann’s funeral Venice: we read that ‘la fresca marea rifluisce nella Città bella’³⁸ (p. 312); the natural elements of wind and water offer up creative inspiration to Effrena (‘Tutti i rumori vi si trasformano in voci espressive’³⁹ [p. 354]); and the energy that his oration provokes in his listeners gives hope for Venice’s revival. As Becker notes, d’Annunzio ‘paints Venice and indeed the whole of Italy as resurgent’ (Becker, 1991, p. 234). The modernisation and ‘revitalisation of Venice’ (p. 234) that we witness in *Il fuoco* also includes ‘the glorification of modern military technology’ (p. 234); hence we read of battleships on the Venetian waters, and activity in the arsenal. The rejuvenation that Effrena desires for Venice seems largely driven by a rediscovery of the Dionysian, along Nietzschean lines: Effrena’s climactic oration in the Doge’s palace provokes a Dionysian frenzy in his listeners, and Venice is, for an hour, reinvigorated with a Dionysian energy. During these delirious celebrations Dionysus is lauded as ‘Il Florido, il Fruttifero, [...] Dioniso liberatore’⁴⁰ (d’Annunzio, 1989, p. 262) emphasising the power of the Dionysian to inject life and reawaken fertility in this deteriorated city, caught between vitality and degeneration.

As a city between land and sea, the Venice of *Il fuoco* and *Der Tod in Venedig* is the coastal location *par excellence*. It is literally a liminal location: d’Annunzio writes of ‘la Città

³⁶ ‘like a vision of Hades’.

³⁷ ‘a City of Life’.

³⁸ ‘the fresh tide flowed back into the beautiful City’.

³⁹ ‘All the sounds are transforming themselves into expressive voices’.

⁴⁰ ‘the thriving one, the fruitful one, [...] Dionysus the liberator’.

anadiomene'⁴¹ (p. 267), and Mann leads Aschenbach to the 'Wasserstadt' ('water city' [2004, p. 524]), both highlighting the city's straddling of land and sea. D'Annunzio and Mann make use of seaside locations as liminal spaces elsewhere, too. Throughout Mann's literature the sea (or beach) provides a retreat for his characters, offering a space where thoughts of duty, social constraints, and business are relaxed. Generations of Buddenbrooks (most notably Tony and Hanno) have vacationed by the sea at Travemünde, for example, and Tonio Kröger travels to Denmark to stay on the coast (after a journey by sea). In *Der Tod in Venedig* it is Aschenbach's frustration at not being able to easily access the sea in Pola that eventually leads him to Venice, to the lido, where he is seduced to remain. In *Il trionfo della morte* it is to a hermitage on the Adriatic coast that Aurispa retreats with his lover, Ippolita, and, elsewhere, *Il piacere*'s Andrea Sperelli convalesces on the coast after being injured in a duel, and reflects upon his existence facing the sea. As one of the realms of Dionysus, as well as the setting of much of Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, the sea also offers myriad connotations and associations which appeal to d'Annunzio and Mann.

Alongside their use of symbolic landscapes, d'Annunzio and Mann also emphasise their artists' solitude by opposing them to a collective audience. This is especially the case for Aschenbach, Tonio Kröger, and Stelio Effrena. Giorgio Aurispa's (failed) creativity aims at the creation of the *superuomo* rather than of actual works of art; *Tristan*'s Spinell is too much of a charlatan to have any real audience; and Gabriele Klöterjahn's artistic experience is an entirely solitary one – as is her possible *Liebestod*.

In *Tonio Kröger* a gulf separates artist and audience, largely because of the illusory relationship that exists between them. Kröger complains to his friend, Lisaweta, that, as a writer, he is troubled by '[d]as Gefühl der Separation und Unzugehörigkeit, des Erkennt- und Beobachtetseins [...]'⁴² (Mann, 2004, p. 272); perhaps because his literature should provide a

⁴¹ 'the anadyomene City'.

⁴² 'The feeling of separation and not belonging; being known and observed'.

means of communication and unity with his readers, but instead only reinforces his isolation. Literature is even described here as an activity that is ‘befremdende’ (‘alienating’ [p. 247]). Recalling occasions where he has appeared in public, Kröger speaks of the futility of seeking a connection with his audience, lamenting, ‘[i]ch finde nicht, was ich suche, Lisaweta. Ich finde die Herde [...]’⁴³ (p. 279). It is entirely an illusion, or a mask, that Kröger’s readers come to ‘know’, for he is not the sort of artist to allow feeling and emotion into his work. It is only decadents and dilettantish bohemians, Kröger believes, who use their art to give vent to their emotions;⁴⁴ true literature must contain something ‘Außermenschliches und Unmenschliches’⁴⁵ (p. 270) and stand aloof from humanity in order to portray it without descending into sentimentality or ‘bacchantic howling’ (Reed, 1974, p. 405). Kröger is ‘allein und ausgeschlossen von den Ordentlichen und Gewöhnlichen’⁴⁶ (Mann, 2004, p. 252), a situation which appears to be a corollary of his artistic talent.

In *Der Tod in Venedig* Aschenbach does not complain of the same false familiarity that Kröger experiences with his readers: while Kröger exposes his audience’s supposed familiarity with him as illusory, Aschenbach is as much deceived by illusion as his readers. Having practised an art of sophisticated and lofty finesse, Aschenbach eventually realises (towards the end of Mann’s novella), the extent of his obsession with Tadzio, and its implications; after a desperate pursuit of Tadzio through Venice, ‘der Meister, der würdig gewordene Künstler’⁴⁷ (p. 588) collapses in a sweaty and feverish heap at the foot of a well, and is forced to admit that ‘wir Dichter [können] den Weg der Schönheit nicht gehen [...], ohne daß Eros sich zugesellt und sich zum Führer aufwirft’⁴⁸ (ibid.). One could argue that this revelation exposes Aschenbach’s former artistic persona as illusory, and conclude that

⁴³ ‘I don’t find what I am looking for, Lisaweta. I find the herd [...]’.

⁴⁴ ‘Und weil der ein Stümper ist, der glaubt, der Schaffende dürfe empfinden’ (‘And because he is a fool who believes that the creator must feel’ [p. 270]).

⁴⁵ ‘extra-human and unhuman’.

⁴⁶ ‘alone and shut out from the ordinary and the normal’.

⁴⁷ ‘the master, the dignified artist’.

⁴⁸ ‘we poets cannot walk on the path of beauty unless Eros accompanies us and becomes our guide’.

Aschenbach's readers have been deceived; but Aschenbach, too, has been taken in by this deception. At least until shortly before we first encounter him, he has believed wholeheartedly in his (excessively Apollonian) artistic values. Aschenbach's eventual recognition of Eros in his creativity is as surprising to him as it would be to his readers, were they to discover the truth of his Venetian experiences, and the true motivation behind the treatise that he writes upon the beach in sight of Tadzio.⁴⁹

In *Il fuoco*, there is no sense of illusion or falseness in the relationship between artist and audience, but the portrayal of this relationship nonetheless emphasises Effrena's solitude. As he enters the stage from which he is to give his speech (alone), he is greeted by the sight of many faces which become one, 'il mostro formidabile dagli innumerevoli volti umani'⁵⁰ (d'Annunzio, 1989, p. 231). But Effrena is not troubled by his solitude: he does not suffer from isolation but rather rejoices in the fact that his ambition and artistic burden single him out. He retains the Romantic stance of the aloof artist, but, as a *superuomo*, is able to bear his solitude cheerfully, in the knowledge that it is a precondition of his superior artistic talent. Equally, his relationship with his audience is not one of sterile distance but of dynamic communication, and he manipulates his listeners masterfully during his oration in the Doge's palace.⁵¹ The effect of Effrena's words is likened to '[una] incantesimo'⁵² (p. 241), and the interaction between speaker and listener is a fruitful one: 'Il palpito della folla e la voce del poeta sembravano rendere alle mura secolari la vita primiera e rinnovellar nel freddo museo

⁴⁹ Aschenbach's readers are unlikely ever to know the truth behind his Venetian experiences and death, and Mann's novella closes with the (ironic) sentence: 'Und noch desselben Tages empfing eine respektvoll erschütterte Welt die Nachricht von seinem Tode' ('And on the same day a respectfully shaken world received the news of his death' [p. 592]).

⁵⁰ 'the terrible monster of innumerable human faces'.

⁵¹ His control over his audience is seen when he directs their collective gaze for example: 'Col suo sguardo e col suo gesto egli sollevò l'anima della folla verso il capolavoro che spandeva nel cielo dell'aula una irradiazione solare' ('With his gaze and with his gesture he raised the soul of the crowd towards the masterpiece which spread a beam of sunlight across the sky of the hall' [p. 235]).

⁵² 'a spell'.

lo spirito originario'⁵³ (ibid.). By the end of his speech Effrena has succeeded in provoking a Dionysian frenzy in his listeners, and successfully welcomes Dionysus back to Venice, thus achieving his aim and demonstrating the efficacy of his audience-manipulation.

With Mann's artists, liminality is emphasised by the fact that the artist often straddles two worlds or spheres, and is of mixed heritage. Aschenbach, for example, is a product of northern and southern, and bourgeois and artistic influences: his northern father was a judicial officer, and his mother the daughter of a conductor from Bohemia. As we learn, 'Die Vermählung dienstlich nüchterner Gewissenhaftigkeit mit dunkleren, feurigeren Impulsen ließ einen Künstler und diesen besonderen Künstler erstehen'⁵⁴ (Mann, 2004, p. 508). This mixture of conflicting heritages was Mann's own experience, as the son of a middle-class grain merchant from Lübeck and a half-Brazilian farmer's daughter. The theme of mixed ancestry returns often in Mann's (artistic) characters – probably most notably in Tonio Kröger (whose very name indicates his divided character). Kröger's father ('ein [...] sorgfältig gekleideter Herr'⁵⁵ [p. 247]) is a businessman who shows little interest or respect for artists and their ilk (scolding Kröger for frittering his time away with poetry), much like the father in Mann's earlier *Der Bajazzo* (*The Joker*, 1897); Kröger's mother ('dunkle und feurige'⁵⁶ [ibid.]) is a skilled musician from the south. In *Gabriele Klöterjahn* it is the father who provides artistic impulses, and Gabriele describes to Spinell (to his delight) how her father's violin playing would reduce her to tears as a child (itself an echo of the deep love of music that unites Hanno Buddenbrook and his mother, Gerda). Such mixed heritages are not to be found among d'Annunzio's artistic characters: after all, his *superuomo* is a distinctly Latin one, and any foreign influence would probably be considered contamination.

⁵³ 'The surge of the crowd and the voice of the poet seemed to restore primal life to the centuries-old walls, and to reinvigorate the cold museum with its original spirit'.

⁵⁴ 'The marriage of official and austere conscience with darker, more fiery impulses had given rise to an artist, and to this artist in particular'.

⁵⁵ 'a carefully dressed man'.

⁵⁶ 'dark and fiery'.

Aschenbach may acknowledge the mixture of impulses and influences in his parentage – or at least, so we assume, given the text’s early and expository reporting of this biographical detail – but he appears dangerously unaware of the resulting conflict that takes place within his psyche. Having practised strict routine and discipline, Aschenbach has attempted to approach his creative profession in imitation of his forefathers, living in the manner of a senator or businessman. The effort required to do this has left Aschenbach fatigued and vulnerable to disintegration, which duly occurs – the result of his Venetian experiences, when his already resurgent Dionysian side is irrepressibly inflamed by a chance encounter with an adolescent boy. While Tonio Kröger is of similar origins, he is not doomed to the same fate, and is not isolated to the same crippling extent, possibly because he shows a keener awareness of his predicament.

Throughout Mann’s eponymous novella, Tonio Kröger is conscious of his alienation from humanity, and of the conflicting sides of his nature: he bemoans his position between the two spheres of the burgher and the artist, and the fact that he cannot settle in either. Bourgeois concern for respectability and duty make the life of the artist (especially the decadent or the bohemian) seem improper to him,⁵⁷ but he is irresistibly compelled to create, and he is apparently unable to be anything other than an artist.⁵⁸ As a creative individual with bourgeois sensibilities, the role of the artist is one that greatly concerns him. He disdains those dilettantes and bohemians who believe that the artist must vent his emotions in his work, and don velvet jackets and silk waistcoats in order to play the artist’s role. Kröger stands ‘betwixt and between’ (Turner, 1991, p. 95), and it is only when he accepts his liminal position, at the end of the novella, that his crisis is resolved. It is possibly Kröger’s ability to

⁵⁷ ‘ich hege auf dem Grunde meiner Seele [...] gegen den Typus des Künstlers den ganzen *Verdacht*, den jeder meiner ehrenfesten Vorfahren droben in der engen Stadt irgendeinem Gaukler und abenteuernden Artisten entgegengebracht hätte, der in sein Haus gekommen wäre.’ (‘I harbour in the depths of my soul [...] as much *suspicion* towards the figure of the artist as any of my honourable ancestors up there in the narrow city would have had towards any juggler or roving artist who had come into his house.’ [p. 273])

⁵⁸ Kröger believes that the true artist does not elect art as his profession, but is simply born an artist, and has little choice in the matter: ‘Einen Künstler, einen wirklichen, [ist] nicht einen, dessen bürgerlicher Beruf die Kunst ist’ (‘An artist, a true artist, is not one who has chosen art as a burgherly profession’ [p. 272]).

articulate his crisis – contrasting with Aschenbach’s repression and self-deception – that allows him to achieve a kind of equilibrium, balancing his burgherly and artistic sides.

Tristan’s Spinell may be a dilettante artist – or a caricature of the decadent artist – but he is a liminal figure nonetheless. He avoids Einfried’s residents, apart from Gabriele, and sits between masculinity and femininity, youth and age. He is described as a man in his thirties, whose face is babyishly round and fat, but whose hair is beginning to go grey at the temples.⁵⁹ Because of his contrasting features he is nicknamed ‘der verweste Säugling’⁶⁰ (Mann, 2004, p. 328) by fellow patients. Similarly, Spinell is a somewhat effeminate male. His hairless face is neither adult nor masculine, and, especially opposite the virile Herr Klöterjahn (whose name, Heilbut indicates, is a ‘local idiom denoting ample testicles’ [Heilbut, 1997, p. 158]), who angrily confronts Spinell after receiving a flamboyantly insulting letter, Spinell seems frivolous and impotent, the antithesis of the masculine world of commerce and business. Excluded from the world of virility and masculinity, Spinell befriends Gabriele, recalling a common trope of decadent literature, as explained by Weir: ‘[d]ecadent writers have no sympathy at all for the vigorous, masculine world of the bourgeois businessman. On the contrary, they willingly accept the idea that they, like women, are outside that world’ (Weir, 1995, p. 18). Their (largely) asexual rapport offers a subversion of conventional sexuality.

The traits that Spinell shares with the true artist, such as his liminality, arguably serve two functions. Firstly, they ensure that Mann’s parody remains sharp: Spinell’s social isolation appears freely chosen, unlike that of the true outsider. Secondly, these traits also suggest a degree of autobiography, for certain parallels exist between Spinell and his author.

⁵⁹ ‘Man vergegenwärtige sich einen Brünetten am Anfang der Dreißiger und von stattlicher Statur, dessen Haar an den Schläfen schon merklich zu ergrauen beginnt, dessen rundes, weißes, ein wenig gedunsenes Gesicht aber nicht die Spur irgendeines Bartwuchses zeigt.’ (‘One was confronted with a brown-haired man in his early thirties, of considerable stature, whose hair at the temples was already beginning to go noticeably grey, but whose round, white, slightly bloated face did not show a trace of beard growth’ [Mann, 2004, p. 327]).

⁶⁰ ‘the decayed infant’.

Barker points out that Spinell ‘reflects several of the writerly attributes of Thomas Mann himself’ (2007, p. 440): both ‘share [...] similarities in their handwriting, and difficulties with the act of writing itself’ (Barker, 2007, p. 440). Mann famously invested many of his characters with autobiographical traits, but Spinell is hardly a flattering self-portrait. Spinell seems more akin to the kind of artists who are publicly renounced by Mann in his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, and by his more explicitly autobiographical character Tonio Kröger, for example.⁶¹ A possible explanation for this is that Spinell may function as a vehicle of exorcism for Mann, allowing him to externalise aspects of his artistic persona that troubled him. Mann was heavily critical of decadent artists who promoted the worship of death and beauty, who created irresponsibly and immorally, or who were not even artists at all, but mere imposters. His strong criticism was probably sharpened by the fact that he had, in earlier literature, shown slightly more sympathy with the trends of the *fin-de-siècle* – he chronicles decadence more ambiguously in *Buddenbrooks*, for example – and by his lasting (bourgeois) suspicion of the artist.

A further characteristic that segregates both d’Annunzio’s and Mann’s artistic characters is one that was explored above as a marker of the Romantic artistic genius (and its successors), namely, the burden of knowledge or insight. In many of the texts under consideration the artist has gained – or been hampered by – a profound insight into the true nature of man’s existence, and of its inherent miseries and sufferings.⁶² It is partly Tonio Kröger’s knowledge of the comedy and tragedy of life, and the true motives that lie at the core of men’s souls, which segregates him, for example. Like Hamlet, he has glimpsed ‘das

⁶¹ Spinell also shares characteristics with Mann’s brother, Heinrich, and Gabriele d’Annunzio.

⁶² Mann was intimately familiar with the philosophy of Schopenhauer, who made up one third of Mann’s venerated ‘Dreigestirn’. While d’Annunzio evidences only an awareness of, rather than familiarity with, Schopenhauer (through passing references), the philosopher’s thoughts had become well known by the final decades of the nineteenth century, and were in the intellectual air of the period during which d’Annunzio was writing.

Innere der Welt und alles Letzte, was hinter den Worten und Taten ist'⁶³ (Mann, 2004, p. 264). With this knowledge comes loneliness,⁶⁴ and suffering; yet Kröger's artistic prowess simultaneously increases. In *Der Tod in Venedig*, it appears to be ignorance rather than knowledge that condemns Aschenbach, for he (deliberately) disregards the darker motives that emerge from his behaviour, and claims that harmless aesthetic delight lies behind his fascination with Tadzio. Eventually, however, he is burdened with dismaying insight into the artistic condition when he is forced to acknowledge the carnal, and (given Tadzio's age) sinister, undercurrents that lurk beneath the artist's veneer of aesthetic appreciation. Aschenbach's death follows soon after this uncomfortable revelation.

Effrena, as d'Annunzio's *superuomo*-artist, does not appear to suffer from the burden of knowledge. His solitude is marked by comparison to his crowds, to whom he communicates revelations. Before his oration Foscarina asks, '[n]on sentite già che la folla è disposta a ricevere la vostra rivelazione?''⁶⁵ (d'Annunzio, 1989, p. 197) Effrena displays a superior artistic consciousness, and he witnesses visions surpassing the capacity of ordinary men, which he attempts to convey during his oration. As the *superuomo*, however, he has learned to achieve harmony between the demands of his art and life itself: '[e]gli era giunto a compiere in se stesso l'intimo connubio dell'arte con la vita e a ritrovare così nel fondo della sua sostanza una sorgente perenne di armonie''⁶⁶ (p. 205). More like Tonio Kröger than Aschenbach or Aurispa, Effrena finds a way to channel his liminal position and potentially burdensome knowledge into creativity and productivity, and does not lament the solitude into which his heightened sensibility forces him.

In a manner similar to Effrena, Giorgio Aurispa is also set apart by an acute sensitivity. Unlike Effrena, though, he is deeply troubled by the futility and misery that he

⁶³ 'the interior of the world, and the ultimate, that lies behind words and actions'.

⁶⁴ 'die Einsamkeit' ('loneliness' [p. 264]).

⁶⁵ 'Do you not feel that the crowd is already inclined to receive your revelation?'

⁶⁶ 'he had managed to accomplish within himself the intimate union of art with life, and to rediscover thus, in the depths of his substance, an eternal source of harmony'.

perceives as inherent to man's existence. He considers that solitude is 'la suprema prova dell'umiltà o della sovranità di un'anima'⁶⁷ (d'Annunzio, 1988, p. 855) – but only if 'la possanza dell'anima sia tale da formare il perno incrollabile di un mondo'⁶⁸ (ibid.). He notes that his own solitude is sterilising and agonising, not liberating. His cerebral nature and psychological unrest segregate him and render identification with others difficult: '[u]n'altra singolarità organica di Giorgio Aurispa era la frequenza delle congestioni, di varia durata, nei plessi cerebrali'⁶⁹ (p. 790)]. Aurispa's recognition of the vanity of man's existence could be considered a kind of Dionysian knowledge, recalling the wisdom of Silenus, recounted in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (§ 3); although it is the futility of his own efforts to become the *superuomo* that ultimately defeats him.⁷⁰ He is certainly an illustration of Nietzsche's claim that '[d]ie Erkenntniss tödtet das Handeln'⁷¹ (GT-7), and vividly demonstrates the perils of an over-wrought and over-burdened mind. Echoing Marcuse's diagnosis of Werther (noted on page 92), we also read of Aurispa's burdensome subjectivity, which leaves him unable to identify with others: 'Essendo vano ogni sforzo per escire dalla solitudine del proprio *io*, bisogna a poco a poco rompere tutti quei vincoli che ancora ci legano alla vita comune ed evitare così l'inutile dispersione d'una quantità di energia preziosa'⁷² (d'Annunzio, 1988, p. 791).

As has been explored here, for both d'Annunzio and Mann, true artistic ability demands that the artist inhabits a lonely space. This individual is not necessarily condemned

⁶⁷ 'the supreme test of the humility or of the sovereignty of a soul'.

⁶⁸ 'if the strength of the soul is such that it can form the unshakable pivot of a world'. Elsewhere Aurispa states that a superior life would consist of 'una libertà senza confini, una solitudine fertile e nobile che mi avvolga nelle sue emanazioni più calde' ('a freedom without confines, a fertile and nobile solitude that surrounds me with its warmest emancipations' [p. 781]).

⁶⁹ 'Another organic singularity of Giorgio Aurispa was the frequency of his congestions of the cerebral plexus, of various duration.'

⁷⁰ 'Ed egli era di continuo perseguitato dal fatale pensiero di questa vanità d'ogni suo sforzo' ('And he was continually hounded by the fatal thought of the vanity of his own efforts' [p. 789]).

⁷¹ 'knowledge kills action'.

⁷² 'Every effort to emerge from the solitude of one's own *I* being in vain, one must gradually break all of those bonds which still tie us to everyday life, and thus avoid the fruitless dissipation of a quantity of precious energy'.

to complete isolation – Tonio Kröger confides in his friend Lisaweta and Stelio Effrena finds companionship in the poet Daniele Glauro – but he will be segregated by his talents and insight. Even meaningful family relationships may be difficult, as demonstrated by the lack of warmth between Aurispa and his relatives, and by the frequent figure of the anti-artistic father in Mann’s fiction. But d’Annunzio and Mann also see the act of artistic creation as one driven by the impulses of a Dionysian drive that strongly resembles the one expounded by Nietzsche in his *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. As seen in the previous chapter, one of the effects of the Dionysian is to trigger feelings of deep and ecstatic community in the worshipper – surely an alien experience to d’Annunzio’s and Mann’s isolated artists? As will now be seen, however, the artist *is* permitted to feel this heightened sense of community when he enters into a state of Dionysian creative intoxication.

vi) The Artist and Dionysian Unity

One of the most dynamic effects of Nietzsche’s Dionysian is its promotion of union and community among subjects who have been freed from the (Apollonian) illusion of individuation, and who, in thrall to Dionysus, become ‘gänzlich mit dem Ur-Einen’⁷³ (GT-5). The individual becomes ‘Mitglied einer höheren Gemeinsamkeit’⁷⁴ (GT-1), an experience which chimes with Turner’s notion of *communitas*, explored above. Such experiences of sublime unity and communion may seem at odds with the artist’s solitary position in d’Annunzio’s and Mann’s portrayals; but the artist who embraces the Dionysian is granted such an experience, and, relieved of his isolation, experiences profound intimacy with man and with nature. Thus the Dionysian can counteract the artist’s necessary solitude and, in its promotion of communion, allow the artist access to creative energies that have hitherto been closed off.

⁷³ ‘at one with the primordial unity’.

⁷⁴ ‘a member of a higher community’.

This section will consider the artist's experience of the Dionysian as one which offsets the artist's usual solitude (and even alienation) and will argue that, for d'Annunzio's and Mann's outsider artists, Dionysian union can be a creatively enriching experience – given the right conditions. Under the influence of the Dionysian, identity will be seen to be suspended, echoing Turner's understanding of the ambiguous state into which the liminal individual enters. As long as this suspension of identity remains a temporary experience, the artist is likely to meet with creative success, but if it becomes *loss* of identity, creativity will be extinguished and the artist's life endangered. A safe experience of the Dionysian enriches Tonio Kröger's creativity so that he feels able to surpass all of his previous works, and allows *Il fuoco's* Effrena to invigorate his audience (and the tired city of Venice) with artistic fervour. The Dionysian also triggers initial creativity in Aschenbach, who composes a brief but brilliant treatise in Venice, after suffering from creative block in Munich; and in Gabriele Klöterjahn, who rediscovers music – the Dionysian art-form *par excellence* – and plays the most Dionysian of all music, *Tristan und Isolde*. For both Aschenbach and Gabriele, however, the experience is too extreme, and constitutes a loss rather than a suspension of identity. The Dionysian leads these two figures finally into annihilation and oblivion. Giorgio Aurispa pursues the creative promise of the Dionysian, and is also struck by the music of *Tristan und Isolde*; but he, too, fails to gain any creative momentum and to reach his goal of becoming (or generating) the *superuomo*, similarly experiencing a loss, rather than suspension of, identity. Sometimes loss of identity is fuelled by a fatal over-identification provoked by the Dionysian: this will be seen to occur particularly with Aschenbach, who over-identifies with the Dionysian barbarians of his dream, and Aurispa, who over-identifies with Wagner's Tristan.

In several of the cases explored in the previous section, the artist's solitude was seen to cause pain: Aurispa frequently bemoans the 'distacco' ('distance' [d'Annunzio, 1988, p.

651]) that isolates him; Tonio Kröger complains to Lisaweta of his loneliness and ‘betweenness’;⁷⁵ and Aschenbach becomes defined by his loneliness when he becomes ‘der Einsame’⁷⁶ (Mann, 2004, p. 570), connoting emotional loneliness as well as physical solitude. As noted, for Effrena solitude is no burden, but a sign of his status as d’Annunzio’s *superuomo*, who stands proudly above the crowd. In *Tristan*, we read that the dilettante Spinell has (voluntarily) avoided social contact in the sanatorium prior to Gabriele’s arrival. Gabriele, despite being the more truly artistic character in the novella, appears not to have experienced the artist’s solitude: possibly because the world of art has been closed off to her since her marriage, when she left her musical father’s house and became a bourgeois housewife and mother.

In van Gennep’s conception of rites of passage, the liminal stage (Turner’s *communitas*) is one in which the individual becomes ‘ambiguous’ (Turner, 1991, p. 94). Identity appears to be suspended and participants become equal. Something similar occurs in Nietzsche’s delineation of the Dionysian, and during the Dionysian experiences of d’Annunzio’s and Mann’s artistic characters. Nietzsche’s Dionysian, as already outlined, provokes the collapse of individuation (GT-2) and the arousal of a state of unity (‘Einheitsempfindung’ [‘sensation of unity’, *ibid.*]). D’Annunzio and Mann both demonstrate that this aspect of their characters’ Dionysian experiences is vital, for it is partly release from individuation that releases creative impulses in the artist. Once the artist has been liberated from his individuated existence, he is also relieved of his isolation and possible loneliness.

For Aschenbach and Tonio Kröger, the Dionysian triggers deviation from their usual character, signalling a shifting identity. The ennobled and venerated Aschenbach, a descendant of officers and judges, abandons regard for decorum and reputation by stalking

⁷⁵ ‘Ich sage Ihnen, daß ich es oft sterbensmüde bin, das Menschliche darzustellen, ohne am Menschlichen teilzuhaben’ (‘I tell you, I am often sick to death of portraying humanity without being able to take part in it’ [Mann, 2004, p. 271]).

⁷⁶ ‘the lonely one’.

Tadzio ever more recklessly in Venice; and Kröger indulges in sensual adventures in the south, forgetting (temporarily) the principles of northern burgherly decorum that he has inherited from his father. Aschenbach, after a dream of graphic Dionysian revelry, in which he feels vividly involved, disregards the opinion of others, and engages in his deviant voyeurism with reckless abandon: '[e]r scheute nicht mehr die beobachtenden Blicke der Menschen; ob er sich ihrem Verdacht aussetze, kümmerte ihn nicht'⁷⁷ (Mann, 2004, p. 584). On the steamboat to Venice Aschenbach had eyed one of his fellow passengers with contempt: a grotesque and drunken old man who had disguised his age with cosmetics and desperately sought the company of younger men, oblivious of his lack of dignity. In Venice, however, Aschenbach becomes the object of his own criticism. He behaves with equal depravity to the old man and even undergoing a make-over at the hands of the hotel's barber that leaves him resembling the offensive passenger physically. This is a far cry from his public persona at the beginning of Mann's novella. Mann's narrator further erases Aschenbach's identity by referring to him with a string of pronouns ('der Alternde',⁷⁸ 'der Heimgesuchte',⁷⁹ for example). These pronouns resemble Aschenbach's former character less and less, and gradually 'der Reisende'⁸⁰ becomes 'der Verwirrte'.⁸¹

Tonio Kröger's Dionysian experience is milder than Aschenbach's and limited to his excessive experiences in the south. He falls into 'Abenteuer des Fleisches'⁸² (p. 264) and 'Wollust und heiße Schuld'⁸³ (ibid.), but he is simultaneously appalled at his own behaviour. He barely recognises himself in his licentiousness but also resists abandoning the south's 'heimlicher Zeugungswonne'⁸⁴ (p. 265) that benefits his art. In this Dionysian state Kröger's previous identity, like that of Aschenbach, is suspended; Kröger's temporary departure is

⁷⁷ 'He no longer dreaded the prying glance of other people; he no longer cared about arousing their suspicion'.

⁷⁸ 'the ageing one'.

⁷⁹ 'the obsessed one'.

⁸⁰ 'the traveller'.

⁸¹ 'the confused one'.

⁸² 'adventures of the flesh'.

⁸³ 'lust and hot guilt'.

⁸⁴ 'secret procreative ecstasy'.

marked by an exclamation of ‘Welch Irrgang’⁸⁵ (p. 265). Yet unlike Aschenbach, Kröger’s former identity is only temporarily overrun by Dionysian instincts, and his bourgeois conscience is never fully eclipsed. When we next encounter him, living in Munich, he complains to Lisaweta of the irresponsibility of art, and he appears to pursue a much more sober form of creativity. He now speaks of the impossibility of being able to create during spring, for it causes him to feel too much, and explains that he prefers to write with calm detachment.

In *Il fuoco* Effrena’s experience of the Dionysian is often shared with Foscarina. She is ‘[la] donna dionisiaca’⁸⁶ (d’Annunzio, 1989, p. 282), who offers Effrena access (‘via sexual intercourse’ [Otey, 2010, p. 174]) to the impulses and creative visions necessary to complete his great work of art and bring about the cultural renaissance at which he aims. It is Foscarina who experiences the most vivid suspension of identity in *Il fuoco*, possibly because the identity of the *superuomo* is totally secure, and because Foscarina’s identity is secondary to Effrena’s artistic needs. As she engages in creative collaboration with Effrena, she ‘becomes’ a character in his imminent work of art. His power over her is marked by his exclamation of ‘io t’ho creata’⁸⁷ (d’Annunzio, 1989, p. 470), and as he instructs her she feels as if ‘la sua stessa vita derivasse nell’opera che tutto assorbiva, [...] e i suoi aspetti, le sue attitudini, i suoi gesti [...] concorressero a formare la figura dell’eroina’⁸⁸ (p. 469). In such moments Foscarina is no longer Effrena’s lover, but his artistic material, and her own identity is obscured. She (willingly) renounces autonomy and subjugates herself to Effrena’s command.

In what is perhaps a reflection of Effrena’s contentment with his isolated position as an artist, he does not appear to undergo the same suspension of identity as Foscarina, even

⁸⁵ ‘How far I have gone astray’.

⁸⁶ ‘the Dionysian woman’.

⁸⁷ ‘I have created you’.

⁸⁸ ‘her own life came from the work that absorbed everything, [...] and her appearance, her disposition, her gestures [...] combined to form the figure of the heroine’.

during their most frenzied episodes of Dionysian intoxication. While Foscarina inhabits various theatrical figures, for example, he remains ‘l’animatore’⁸⁹ (p. 472), and retains mastery of the creative energy that fuels these figures.

Effrena’s identity is threatened, however, when Foscarina distracts him from his artistic goal, and he is forced to subjugate himself and his creativity to her inclination. The loss of his artistic identity in such moments is clear, and after one such incident he rests at her feet, ‘nell’atto somnesso’⁹⁰ (p. 334). Here Effrena’s identity is no longer that of the *superuomo*-artist, but merely of Foscarina’s lover, as he realises with dismay. Crucially, however, Effrena often feels intense impatience after, and sometimes during, these episodes, and his artistic identity is never irretrievably lost.

In *Il trionfo della morte* Giorgio Aurispa undergoes a more extreme loss of identity, but unlike Foscarina’s (who may even be more resilient to loss of identity as an actor) it does not produce any creative output. Aurispa suffers a crisis of identity for the entire duration of d’Annunzio’s novel. He exists in a liminal state throughout and consequently displays an ‘ambiguous’ character. Leading Aurispa through a train station, for example, Ippolita (the married woman with whom Aurispa conducts an affair, and whose character was based upon Barbara Leoni, one of d’Annunzio’s own lovers) gives him a warning that seems to extend beyond the current context: ‘[b]ada di non ti perdere!’⁹¹ (d’Annunzio, 1988, p. 671) Aurispa reflects on his inability to take possession of himself, and to maintain his identity,⁹² noting that he seems foreign even to himself. Paradoxically, extreme self-reflection and introversion have destabilised his identity even further, rather than leading him to secure knowledge of himself. Unlike Effrena, Aurispa has not achieved self-mastery: ‘Non gli apparteneva il

⁸⁹ ‘the creator’. The Italian term ‘animatore’ has been variously translated, in the context of *Il fuoco*, as ‘poet’ and ‘creator’ (by Susan Bassnett [1991]), or ‘life-giver’ (by Kassandra Vivaria [1900]).

⁹⁰ ‘in an act of submission’.

⁹¹ ‘Be careful not to get lost!’

⁹² ‘[i]o non mi possesgo, io sfuggo a me stesso’ (‘I do not possess myself, I elude even myself’ [p. 716]).

governo dei sui pensieri'⁹³ (p. 791). Instead Aurispa resembles Aschenbach, whose increasingly irrational thoughts spiral beyond the control of his ever diminishing conscience.

Aurispa appears in a state of limbo from beginning to morbid end, oscillating between mild optimism and resolve to follow Zarathustra's teaching, and destitute pessimism (of the Schopenhauerian, not Nietzschean, variety). As with Aschenbach, Aurispa's name is often replaced with pronouns, obscuring his identity; he is 'il solitario',⁹⁴ and 'il contemplatore',⁹⁵ for example. Seldom does he inhabit a role that gives structure to his identity: to his family he seems a stranger; as a lover he harbours secret hostility and, later, even murderous designs; he appears to have no friends or companions; and we are given only vague clues as to his profession, giving the impression of an anchorless, purposeless figure, delineated solely by his psychological crises. Consequently, as his thoughts become increasingly occupied by the idea of death and suicide, they become Aurispa's defining aspect. His eventual death is therefore as unsurprising as Aschenbach's.

In *Tristan* a shift of identity is undergone only by Gabriele, the text's only genuine artistic character. While Spinell may occupy a somewhat marginal position, his solitude appears elected rather than enforced, and parodic rather than tragic. Gabriele, by contrast, arguably undergoes a suspension of identity when she plays that most Dionysian of works, Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, on the piano after a long period of musical abstinence. It is at Spinell's insistence that she plays the piano again, against medical advice. As Gabriele had abandoned art and music when she married Herr Klöterjahn, her experience might be read as a *recovery* of identity, rather than *loss* of identity. Yet Gabriele states that she had married Herr Klöterjahn willingly ('ich wollte es eben'⁹⁶ [Mann, 2004, p. 341]), and had not been constrained to forsake art and music – as Spinell reads the situation. We may therefore

⁹³ 'He was not in control of his own thoughts'.

⁹⁴ 'the loner'.

⁹⁵ 'the contemplator'.

⁹⁶ 'I wanted it'.

conclude that Gabriele *Klöterjahn* (the mother and grain-merchant's wife), and not Gabriele *Eckhof* (the musical maiden, who, in Spinell's imagination, wears a golden crown in an overgrown garden) is her 'true' identity. Mann is characteristically ambiguous, and supplies only clues as to how to interpret Gabriele's experience.

The clearest indication is Mann's choice of music. In *Tristan und Isolde* two entities become eternally and ecstatically joined, as Mann describes: '[z]wei Kräfte, zwei entrückte Wesen strebten in Leiden und Seligkeit nacheinander und umarmten sich in dem verzückten und wahnsinnigen Begehren nach dem Ewigen und Absoluten'⁹⁷ (p. 351). Euchner suggests that 'the merger portrayed in Mann's story is not one of two individuals, but rather of a torn person's reconciliation with her own soul' (2005, p. 192); if this is the case then the 'zwei Kräfte' of Mann's description may be the two identities of Gabriele. Euchner continues, '[o]ne may read Gabriele's divided soul as representing – admittedly on a somewhat abstract level – the two lovers' (p. 192). Spinell's insistence on using Gabriele's maiden name, Eckhof, instead of Klöterjahn, chimes with this suggestion: he seems to observe a rupture between her former and current life, and appears intent on restoring her to her former identity. Gabriele is thus depicted as a fragmented entity, and her return to musical passion arguably restores her to completeness. If this is so, then Gabriele's Dionysian experience is one that salvages, rather than threatens, her identity – at least for a brief period, for she dies only days later.

For Turner, an experience of *communitas* follows entry into a state of liminality, where the subject's identity is suspended. Similarly, the Dionysian worshipper becomes a member of the 'higher community' of which Nietzsche speaks (GT-1) after the Apollonian *principium individuationis* has been abolished, and the subject is relieved of individuation. A similar process occurs in d'Annunzio's and Mann's portrayals of the artist's Dionysian

⁹⁷ 'Two forces, two enraptured beings strove in suffering and beatitude towards each other and embraced each other in ecstatic and delirious desire for the eternal and absolute.'

experience. The suspension of identity discussed above often precedes a period of intense intimacy and union (and sometimes fatal over-identification), as will now be discussed.

The most desperate pursuit of *communitas* is surely that of Giorgio Aurispa, who seeks intimacy with his lover, his family, and with his native land. His exhausting loneliness has led him to the belief that only in possession of another is true ecstasy to be found, and he confuses possession and union: '[c]'è su la terra una sola ebrezza durevole: la *sicurtà* nel possesso di un'altra creatura, la *sicurtà* assoluta, incrollabile. Io cerco questa ebrezza'⁹⁸ (d'Annunzio, 1988, p. 794). Transferring himself to a coastal hermitage with Ippolita, in the hope of curing his depression and crippling destitution, Aurispa withdraws to a liminal space. He still harbours hope that Ippolita will 'cure' him of his afflictions in this environment.⁹⁹ The title of the fourth book of *Il trionfo della morte*, which follows 'L'eremo' ('The Hermitage'), is entitled 'La vita nuova'¹⁰⁰ ('The New Life'), auguring recovery and rebirth. In reality, however, the book only propels Aurispa (and Ippolita) towards death, and the following book is aptly entitled 'Tempus destruendi' ('Time of Destruction').

While Nietzsche's Dionysian ecstatically rekindles the bond between man and nature, Aurispa's attempt to return to nature reveals a sterile connection. He realises, "[n]oi non abbiamo contatto con la natura"¹⁰¹ (p. 781) and reflects on the barrenness of man's relationship with nature: '[l]a terra non gli svelerà mai il suo segreto'¹⁰² (ibid.). Similarly, as he attempts to force communion with Ippolita through their isolated existence together, he finds no rich and transcendent connection. His ideal of intimacy contrasts markedly with the

⁹⁸ There is on the earth only one lasting intoxication: the *surety* of possession of another creature, the absolute, unshakeable surety. I seek this intoxication'.

⁹⁹ "[s]'ella mi guarisse! Un amore *sano e forte* mi potrebbe guarire" ("If she could heal me! A *healthy and strong* love might be able to cure me" [p. 776]).

¹⁰⁰ References to Dante's *La vita nuova* (*The New Life*, 1295), a celebration of courtly love and contemplative aesthetic appreciation, as well as an early example of the *dolce stil nuovo* ('sweet new style'), are clear. Ambrosio calls Dante's text '[a] revelation in writing [...] A new promise of new writing, in a new style (*il dolce stil nuovo*), a new way of keeping secret' (Ambrosio, 2007, p. 18), which recalls the hopes of Giorgio Aurispa.

¹⁰¹ "'We have no contact with nature"'.

¹⁰² 'The earth will never reveal its secret to him'.

reality of his relationship with her: he aims at sublime union, but eventually realises that carnality and sensuality are the dominant drives of their relationship.¹⁰³ Additionally, Ippolita's 'sangue plebeo'¹⁰⁴ (p. 990) is revealed, and he is disappointed by her flaws. He realises that she lacks his depth, and that she is instead made for a life of 'spensieratezza' ('light-heartedness' [p. 827]).

During the time in the hermitage, as salvation becomes more unlikely, Aurispa considers a final strategy to remedy his agonising isolation – that of rekindling contact with his native people: '[n]on debbo io, per ritrovare tutto me stesso, per riconoscere la mia vera essenza, non debbo io pormi a contatto immediato con la razza da cui sono uscito?'¹⁰⁵ (p. 848) In order to do this Aurispa and Ippolita attend the Vigil (a religious event) at Casalbordino, intending to become part of the mass of people that will gather there. The event should provide a beneficial counterpoint to Aurispa's isolation, placing him among a thronging crowd with whom he seeks identification. The event is distinctly Dionysian, and swathes of delirious worshippers become one in a processional ritual that circles the church repeatedly: 'Giravano, giravano, [...] che non più parevano un adunamento di singoli uomini ma la coerente massa d'una qualche cieca materia sospinta da una forza vorticosa'¹⁰⁶ (p. 880). Yet while the other worshippers at the Vigil are unified by their participation, and become a single entity moving in unison, Aurispa remains marginalised, watching the crowd from without rather than attempting to participate. To his dismay, the experiment fails, and Aurispa's isolation is consolidated: 'Il suo essere non aveva radici in quel fondo; non poteva aver nulla di comune con quella moltitudine'¹⁰⁷ (p. 891).

¹⁰³ 'contro ogni aspirazione platonica, egli non poteva considerare l'amore se non come opera di senso' ('he could not consider love as anything but a work of the senses' [p. 784]).

¹⁰⁴ 'plebian blood'.

¹⁰⁵ 'In order to rediscover my entire self, to recognise my true essence, must I not put myself in immediate contact with the race of which I was born?'

¹⁰⁶ 'They turned, they turned, [...] so that they no longer seemed a congregation of single beings but the congruent mass of some blind material driven by a whirling force.'

¹⁰⁷ 'His being had no roots in that foundation; he could have nothing in common with that multitude'.

Aurispa's exclusion from the (Dionysian) communion of the Vigil does not mean, however, that his individual identity remains intact; indeed, the experience leaves him more adrift than ever, for his last hope of establishing contact with his fellow-man has been dashed. Instead of experiencing a Dionysian suspension of identity, Aurispa's grasp on his identity is loosened still further by his despair and detachment, and he slides ever closer towards annihilation and death.

While Aurispa's isolation is reaffirmed by an encounter with an enraptured Dionysian mass with which he feels no kinship, Aschenbach experiences profound identification with the worshippers of his Dionysian dream. Having pursued Tadzio through Venice to the point of obsession, he finds his psychological turmoil expressed in a disturbing and graphic dream of bacchic worship: scantily-clad men and women, bearing daggers and snakes and tearing their hair in frenzy, assault his sleeping mind as they come hurtling towards him in a mountainous setting. Smells and sounds violate his senses, and he feels seduced by the images of the dream: '[a]ber mit ihnen, in ihnen war der Träumende nun und dem fremden Gotte [Dionysos] gehörig. Ja, sie waren er selbst, als sie reißend und mordend sich auf die Tiere hinwarfen und dampfende Fetzen verschlangen'¹⁰⁸ (Mann, 2004, p. 584). Unlike Aurispa, Aschenbach identifies with these Dionysian worshippers; but the wildness and barbarity of this dream marks Aschenbach's experience of *communitas* as an unhealthy one. Participation in these scenes of *sparagmos* shatters Aschenbach's painstakingly maintained identity and hurls him into final self-annihilation. The irreversibility of Aschenbach's identification with the Dionysian barbarians seen here indicates a case of catastrophic *over-identification*. Both Aschenbach and Aurispa arrive at similar (ruinous) points despite their opposing reactions to the frenzied Dionysian crowd – possibly because both are clearly

¹⁰⁸ 'But now the dreamer was with them, and in them, and belonged to the stranger god. Yes, they were himself as they threw themselves upon the animals, rapaciously and murderously, and wolfed down steaming chunks of flesh'.

already condemned from the beginning of Mann's and d'Annunzio's texts. Aschenbach's death comes days after the dream, and Aurispa's suicide takes place shortly after the Vigil.

A Dionysian horde resembling that of Aschenbach's dream and *Il trionfo della morte*'s Vigil also appears in *Il fuoco* – but without the grotesque and threatening aspects of these former two. The frenzy of the masses in Venice, and the spontaneous chorus of celebration that arises from it, is explicitly Dionysian: '[t]utta l'antica ebrietà dionisiaca pareva risorgere e diffondersi da quel Coro divino'¹⁰⁹ (d'Annunzio, 1989, p. 261). It is with art and aesthetic rapture that Effrena's audience are intoxicated, however, and not with barbarity or grotesque wildness. The Dionysian masses at Casalbordino seem in thrall to death, and display the signs of disease and decay that have ravaged their bodies; Effrena, by contrast, fills his listeners with a sense of vitality and vigour, as well as hope for the rejuvenation of Venice and the Latin cultural landscape. Shouts of '[e]voe!', the festival cry of the Bacchantes, echo throughout the Doge's palace, and Foscarina proclaims Venice '[l]a Città di Vita'¹¹⁰ (p. 254). While Effrena remains apart from his intoxicated audience after his speech, and reflects in solitude afterwards, he has orchestrated the feeling of Dionysian unity which spreads throughout Venice, and interacted productively with his audience.

With Foscarina, however, Effrena does experience *communitas*, and when they excite each other to a fevered state, through sensuality and creativity, they transcend the boundaries of quotidian human contact, and surpass the level of 'piccoli amanti'¹¹¹ (p. 433). Carnality does, sometimes, appear to threaten creative focus; as Otey notes, 'the fascination [Foscarina] exerts on [Effrena] as a woman and an artist could overwhelm their creative union' (2010, p. 172). Foscarina's true value for Effrena, however, is as a creative aid, and as the inspiration for visions of his coming work of art. When they create together, their relationship transcends mere physical pleasure. The novel's most climactic episode of creative ecstasy, during which

¹⁰⁹ 'An ancient Dionysian intoxication seemed to reawaken and spread itself through that divine Chorus'.

¹¹⁰ 'the City of Life'.

¹¹¹ 'petty lovers'.

Foscarina ‘becomes’ a character in Effrena’s next drama, is not followed by intercourse, for example, and the artist’s energies are channelled solely in an artistic direction. This is where Effrena truly experiences Dionysian *communitas*, but, as noted, it is primarily the subordinate participant, Foscarina, who experiences suspension of identity, while the dominant creator, Effrena, conducts the process and channels the energies released by their creative communion.

Creativity and *communitas* are also linked in the case of Tonio Kröger, who finds his creativity stimulated while experiencing Dionysian excesses in the south (‘[seine Künstlerschaft] verschärfte sich’¹¹² [Mann, 2004, p. 265]). Like Aurispa, he expresses a desire for human contact to counter his isolation, but Kröger is not as fatally isolated as Aurispa – Kröger feels a partial member of two opposing spheres, while Aurispa belongs to none – and he maintains a firmer hold on his identity. Kröger’s southern abandon is tempered by the return of his bourgeois conscience, and, like Aschenbach, by thoughts of his upstanding ancestors.

In *Tonio Kröger*, where the Dionysian is subtly depicted, *communitas* is not represented by clamorous bacchic crowds and panting maenads, but rather by more understated imagery. A mild incident of *communitas* or identification occurs when Kröger travels by ship to Denmark. A fellow passenger speaks to Kröger on the deck: ‘[o]hne Zweifel befand er sich in einer jener außerordentlichen und festlich-beschaulichen Stimmungen, in denen die Schranken zwischen den Menschen dahinsinken, in denen das Herz auch Fremden sich öffnet’¹¹³ (p. 297). The (presumably tipsy) passenger waxes lyrical about the stars, and remains in conversation with Kröger for a time, although their dialogue is not reported in full. The narrator refers to the passenger’s ramblings as ‘Torheit’ (‘foolishness’ [ibid.]), to which the more sober Kröger listens with amiable interest. While

¹¹² ‘his artistry was sharpened’.

¹¹³ ‘Without doubt he [the passenger] found himself in one of those extraordinary and convivial-contemplative moods, in which the barriers between men sink away, in which the heart opens itself to strangers’.

there is no truly profound or transcendent connection here – they talk of food and the stars, and nothing particularly personal – the incident shows Kröger that he *can* have human contact, and that he is not utterly excluded from participation in ‘das Leben in seiner verführerischen Banalität’¹¹⁴ (p. 278). This (muted) experience of *communitas* may aid Kröger in coming to his healthy and successful resolution at the end of the novella.

Communitas in *Tristan* also appears to be of a milder variety. The most likely possibility for a display of *communitas* is Mann’s description of *Tristan und Isolde*, played by Gabriele Klöterjahn. Mann’s narrator ecstatically recounts the sublime union expressed in Wagner’s music: ‘[o] überschwenglicher und unersättlicher Jubel der Vereinigung im ewigen Jenseits der Dinge! Des quälenden Irrtums entledigt, den Fesseln des Raumes und der Zeit entronnen, verschmolzen das Du und das Ich, das Dein und Mein sich zu erhabener Wonne’¹¹⁵ (p. 352). Impulses of communion are conspicuously manifest not only in the music itself, but also, possibly, in Gabriele’s experience. As discussed earlier, her musical episode could arguably be interpreted as either a *suspension* of identity, or a *recovery* of identity; as the second interpretation is favoured in this thesis, I would suggest that her playing of Wagner’s music, and the accompanying re-embrace of forgotten artistic drives, conveys her to a state of communion with both herself and the lovers of Wagner’s opera.

A warning comes from the music, and seems apt for Gabriele, who, as she plays, is conveyed to the realm of striving and Dionysian self-forgetfulness that it portrays: ‘[w]er liebend des Todes Nacht und ihr süßes Geheimnis erschaut, dem blieb im Wahn des Lichtes ein einzig Sehnen, die Sehnsucht hin zur heiligen Nacht, der ewigen, wahren, der einsmachenden ...’¹¹⁶ (p. 352) This warning suggests that Gabriele’s Dionysian experience

¹¹⁴ ‘Life in all its banality’.

¹¹⁵ ‘Oh exuberant and insatiable exultation in the unity of the eternal beyond of all things! Divested of the agonising error, free of the shackles of space and time, You and I mingled, and Yours and Mine joined in lofty ecstasy’.

¹¹⁶ ‘He who has lovingly beheld the night of death and its sweet secret will, in the delusion of day, yearn for one thing – a yearning for the holy night, for the eternal, the true, the unifying...’

will not be one from which she can recover, and Mann's deliberate ambiguities, blurring the boundaries between the world of Wagner's opera and of Mann's sanatorium, render this warning more necessary. When Mann's narrator speaks of night falling as Gabriele plays, for example, we cannot tell whether this is the night of *Tristan und Isolde* or of Einfried. The resulting sense of unity Gabriele feels with the music condemns her to a similar end to that of Wagner's famed lovers – although Mann's parody 'turns the deliverance of *Tristan and Isolde* into a medical nightmare' (Scaff, 1997, p. 41). Several days after playing the piano Gabriele begins coughing up large quantities of blood which (we assume) kills her. We learn that she had been humming as she suffered this fatal worsening of her condition. Like Aschenbach, who hears a 'tief girrendem, ruchlos beharrlichen Flötenspiel'¹¹⁷ (Mann, 2004, p. 582) in his Dionysian dream, Gabriele has internalised the dangers that music represents, and her production of 'music' (like Aschenbach's) probably signifies her imminent demise.

In *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Nietzsche speaks of the dangers of over-identification with *Tristan und Isolde*, and asks if it would even be possible to hear the music alone, unaccompanied by images and visuals, 'ohne unter einem krampfartigen Ausspannen aller Seelenflügel zu verathmen'¹¹⁸ (GT-21). Gabriele Klöterjahn certainly does not manage this, and suffers the very fate of which Nietzsche speaks. As a mere spectator of Gabriele's performance, Spinell is denied participation in any form of *communitas*; he also escapes death, for he is kept at a distance from the sublime turmoil of Wagner's music.

Returning to van Gennep's and Turner's ideas on liminality in rites of passage, we recall that the individual is returned to, and reincorporated into, the normal structures of society after their transitional, liminal experience. Yet 're-aggregation' (Turner, 1991, p. 94) is not the experience of all of d'Annunzio's and Mann's artistic characters. Gabriele Klöterjahn does not survive her musical communion with the deathly world of *Tristan und*

¹¹⁷ 'deeply cooing, wickedly ceaseless flute-play'.

¹¹⁸ 'without suffocating under a convulsive spreading out of the soul's wings'.

Isolde, and is lost to the seductive annihilation that the music evokes. Aschenbach likewise over-identifies with the Dionysian *communitas* of his dream, in a reflection of his psychological disintegration, and also dies. Giorgio Aurispa, too, is denied the possibility of re-integration, and death appears to him as the only alternative to his life of eternal isolation and suffering. For these three, time spent in the liminal space is a kind of damnation, and prevents them from achieving, or returning to, a healthy relationship within the structures of everyday existence.

By contrast, Stelio Effrena and Tonio Kröger are strengthened and enriched by their Dionysian liminal experience and negotiate successful relationships with the structural society from which their artistic prowess and sensibility has distanced them. Both *Il fuoco* and *Tonio Kröger* end optimistically, and with the promise of imminent works of art. When Foscarina departs, Effrena feels intense creative purpose, and prepares for the birth of his long-awaited drama as well as the inauguration of his great outdoor theatre which will rival Bayreuth; and Kröger writes to Lisaweta declaring that his future works will outdo anything he has previously composed (Mann, 2004, p. 318). Both have tasted the Dionysian and its drive towards communion, and are now re-integrated (or re-aggregated, to use Turner's term) into society as successful artists.

The case of Detlev Spinell is more difficult to judge. He is certainly a liminal individual who appears out of place and ill-equipped for survival within society's structures; but as an artistic imposter he does not undergo a suspension of identity and participation in *communitas* (which form part of the experiences of the more genuinely artistic characters studied here). We do not, therefore, expect him to follow the same path as these other artists, and at the end of *Tristan* he is neither condemned (like Aschenbach or Gabriele) nor inspired (like Tonio Kröger or Stelio Effrena). Indeed, Spinell seems largely unmoved by the novella's occurrences, and shows no signs of having undergone a process of transition. In the

final scenes of the novella he chances upon Gabriele's son in the gardens at Einfried, and the infant shrieks with laughter, apparently at the sight of Spinell; Spinell walks away 'mit den gewaltsam zögernden Schritten jemandes, der verbergen will, daß er innerlich davonläuft'¹¹⁹ (p. 371). These final comments suggest that Spinell remains much the same *poseur* and charlatan as he had been before. As a consequence he will probably maintain his stance aloof from society, therefore, but will also probably continue to produce nothing in the way of true art.

A final aspect of Turner's notion of liminality that requires brief discussion here is the 'layers of myth, ritual, and symbol' (Turner, 1991, p. 47) that are frequently a part of liminal discourse. The transgressions, contradictions and trespasses symptomatic of liminality are often overlaid with mythology and ritual, possibly in an attempt to give structure to disorder, and regularity to anomalies. As Turner says, myth, ritual, and symbol stress 'the axiomatic value of key structural principles with regard to the very situations where these appear to be most inoperative' (ibid.). In the texts under consideration in this study, myth, rituals and symbols certainly play a substantial role in the depiction of liminality and *communitas*: in each text the nature of the communion experienced has been seen to be strongly Dionysian.

The frenzied mob of Aschenbach's dream, which tears apart live animals and devours chunks of raw, steaming flesh is unmistakably a crowd of bacchantes, engaged in *sparagmos*. Both Otto (1933, p. 109) and Rohde¹²⁰ (2000, pp. 282-334) describe the ritual in terms reminiscent of Aschenbach's dream. Similar savage crowds horrify Giorgio Aurispa and Ippolita when they attend the Vigil, in *Il trionfo della morte*. Some participants carry rods resembling thyrsi¹²¹ ('un bastone crociato o fiorito'¹²² [d'Annunzio, 1988, p. 877]); one

¹¹⁹ 'with the violently hesitant steps of someone who wishes to hide the fact that they are internally fleeing'.

¹²⁰ The textual correlations between Mann's description of Aschenbach's dream and Rohde's accounts of Dionysian worship have been generally acknowledged. See, for example, Herbert Lehnert, 'Thomas Mann's Early Interest in Myth and Erwin Rohde's *Psyche*', *PMLA*, 79, 1964, pp. 297-304.

¹²¹ The thyrsus was a staff topped with flowers or a pine-cone, and was associated with Dionysus.

¹²² 'a staff topped with flowers or a crucifix'.

woman seems ‘circonfusa d’un mistero dionisiaco’¹²³ (p. 888); the common ‘delirio’ (‘delirium’ [p. 890]) recalls Dionysian intoxication; and the ritual has the air of ‘un mistero primitivo’¹²⁴ (p. 886). The grotesque nature of the devotees at the Vigil (many of whom have come to be healed) only emphasises the Dionysian atmosphere, and adds a threatening, noxious note. While the delirious crowds of *Il fuoco* are not as barbaric or grotesque as those of *Der Tod in Venedig* and *Il trionfo della morte*, they are nonetheless explicitly likened to Dionysian worshippers. There are ‘menadi’ (‘maenads’ [d’Annunzio, 1989, p. 262]), a ‘Coro bacchico’¹²⁵ (p. 267) arises, and ‘l’antica ebrietà dionisiaca’¹²⁶ (p. 261) is reawakened. Effrena’s artistic experiences, too, are manifestly Dionysian. He expresses a desire to wield Foscarina ‘come un fascio di tirsi’¹²⁷ (p. 284), for example, and refers to the hour of his speech as ‘un’ora di vita veramente dionisiaca’¹²⁸ (p. 494).

While overt references to Dionysus are absent from *Tonio Kröger* and *Tristan*, allusions can be detected. In *Tristan*, for example, Dionysus claims a strong presence in the extended description of *Tristan und Isolde*, in the striving towards annihilation, self-forgetfulness, and transcendent union. In *Tonio Kröger* a Dionysian flavour is given to Kröger’s excesses in the south. References to the south may suggest Dionysus (for Mann the Dionysian was often bound up with Italy, and is often to be detected when he describes an Italian setting), and his licentious pursuit of carnal pleasures comes under the aegis of Dionysus and his worship. Kröger also professes dislike for spring, because of the surge of emotion that it triggers; spring, as Nietzsche explains,¹²⁹ is a time of Dionysian fervour.

¹²³ ‘immersed within a Dionysian mystery’.

¹²⁴ ‘a primitive mystery’.

¹²⁵ ‘bacchic Chorus’.

¹²⁶ ‘the ancient Dionysian intoxication’.

¹²⁷ ‘like a bundle of thyrsi’.

¹²⁸ ‘an hour of truly Dionysian life’.

¹²⁹ ‘[B]ei dem gewaltigen, die ganze Natur lustvoll durchdringenden Nahen des Frühlings erwachen jene dionysischen Regungen, in deren Steigerung das Subjective zu völliger Selbstvergessenheit hinschwindet’ (‘[W]ith the violent approach of spring, which lustfully penetrates the whole of nature, that Dionysian excitement awakes, at whose climax the subject fades into complete self-forgetfulness’ [GT-1]).

This chapter has explored the liminality, isolation, and marginality that, for d'Annunzio and Mann, are inherent in the artist's experience. Solitude and even alienation are common to these figures, and some express a longing for deeper contact with humanity. The Dionysian provides this, and, as has been argued, the experience of intimacy that the Dionysian offers can be likened to Turner's notion of *communitas*, which follows a suspension of identity. For d'Annunzio and Mann, artists who undergo a *suspension* of identity, rather than a *loss* of identity, will benefit from the Dionysian; they will safely experience Dionysian union, and will be re-integrated afterwards, creatively enriched. But some artists lose their identities permanently when they encounter Dionysus, and fall into oblivion.

The next chapter will delve deeper into the creative potential of the Dionysian, and explore d'Annunzio's and Mann's portrayal of this drive as a force that triggers an experience of regression. As will be seen, Dionysian creativity is often reached through an embrace of forgotten or repressed instincts and desires, and once the Dionysian re-opens these psychological channels, creativity can result. Indeed, sometimes the experience of *communitas* is reached through a form of regression. As will be indicated, this is not a harmless and simple process that guarantees creativity, and by engaging with the Dionysian in this way, the artist risks being overwhelmed by impulses and instincts inimical to civilisation and creativity. In some cases, the power of these reawakened impulses proves too much for the artist to bear – much like the suspension of identity discussed in this chapter, which can reach an excessive degree and become irreversible – and regression therefore results in death.

Chapter Four: Dionysian Creativity and Primitive Regression

The previous chapter explored Mann's and d'Annunzio's representation of the (Dionysian) artist as a necessarily liminal figure, and discussed ways in which the Dionysian provides an artistically beneficial foil to the artist's isolation. Mann's and d'Annunzio's versions of this drive allow their artistic protagonists an experience of communion and plurality that counteracts their solitude, and fuels their creativity. In *Il fuoco*, for example, Stelio Effrena's experience of intense (erotic) communion with his lover Foscarina promotes creativity that, when properly harnessed, will allow him to succeed in his ambitious artistic goal of rejuvenating a tired cultural landscape and reviving a tragic tradition fit for the modern age. By contrast *Der Tod in Venedig*'s Aschenbach experiences communion only with the barbaric Dionysian hordes of his dream, signalling his departure from creativity, and a loss of identity.

In this chapter a further aspect of Dionysian creativity will be examined; namely, the regressive aspects of this drive, which, it will be argued, encourage a return to a more 'primitive' state of being. This is an aspect of Dionysian creativity that will be seen to complement that discussed in the previous chapter, as it helps the artist to reach a state of communion. For Nietzsche, the Dionysian promotes a more intuitive and instinctual mode of existence, and allows the individual to feel unified with others and with nature itself. While Nietzsche was far from being a believer in a Rousseauian return to nature, his portrayal of the Dionysian will be seen to involve regressive tendencies which seek a more raw, 'natural', and intuitive existence. D'Annunzio and Mann retain these regressive aspects in their portrayals of the Dionysian and its impact upon creativity. As will be seen, they, too, find creative value in a re-embrace of instinct, intuition, and spontaneity, which is often rendered possible by a physical departure from the modern, urban space. But for Nietzsche, d'Annunzio and Mann a

regressive encounter of the ‘primitive’, rendered possible by the Dionysian, offers a precarious mode of creativity. If this is a temporary regression, the artist is likely to find creative benefit, but if the artist is unable to re-adjust to civilisation and everyday existence afterward, both creativity and artist’s survival are threatened.

This chapter will also argue that the Dionysian promotion of the ‘primitive’ portrayed by d’Annunzio and Mann can be situated within the discourse of primitivism, which characterised cultural production at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Fuelled by a combination of disillusionment with modernity and an increasing exposure to geographically remote cultures, many painters, sculptors, writers and musicians began to look to so-called ‘primitive’ cultures as a remedy to the perceived ills of the modern, urban West. I will argue that the ‘primitive’ aspects of the Dionysian sought by the artists of d’Annunzio and Mann can be considered akin to those admired by artists who contributed to the trend of cultural primitivism (but without its problematic elements), and which were propagated by primitivist discourse. In both cases, a retrieval of the ‘primitive’ is believed to stimulate artistic creativity.

This chapter will begin by discussing the primitive and regressive aspects of Nietzsche’s Dionysian, and their creative value. Parallels with the Dionysian of the ancient Greeks will also be noted. Next, an overview of nineteenth- and twentieth-century primitivism (and the earlier roots of this cultural attitude or sensibility) will be offered. Having established the main goals and values of primitivism, the thoughts of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung regarding this cultural attitude will be discussed to shed light on the psychological undercurrents that made the ‘primitive’ so alluring. Finally, d’Annunzio’s and Mann’s portrayals of the regressive and primitive aspects of the Dionysian will be considered. It will be seen that two types of ‘regression’ emerge from their portrayals: the first involves a reversion to an earlier personal psychological state, and will be referred to as

‘internal regression’; while the second involves an embrace (or attempted embrace) of the way of life of an earlier civilisation, which will be labelled ‘atavistic regression’. Both can prove creatively rewarding under ideal conditions, and can prove debilitating and harmful if they are unmoderated.

Firstly, however, a definition of the term ‘regression’ must be established. Although Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was the first to use the term in a psychoanalytical context, and is arguably responsible for its entrance into common discourse, I will not utilise the term ‘regression’ in a strictly Freudian sense. Freud describes regression as a psychological process which relies upon fixations formed during childhood. The adult subject, upon encountering a situation which requires a defensive response, ‘regresses’ back to the psychosexual stage at which these fixations formed.¹ Given the sparse details that we glean regarding the childhood of each of d’Annunzio’s and Mann’s artists, it would be difficult to diagnose regression in a Freudian sense. Rather, the term ‘regression’ is here utilised in a more general sense, as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, where the meaning of regression is given as ‘reversion to or towards an earlier type or form, esp. one that is less developed’. This is the understanding of regression that has entered common discourse. Regression will be taken to involve psychological reversion that does not rely upon fixations, but which results in the subject embracing impulses, drives and values that are considered to have characterised an earlier stage of the individual’s (psychosexual) development, and/or an earlier stage of civilisation.

¹ As Freud explains: ‘Eine nicht real zu befriedigende Libidostauung schafft sich mit Hilfe der Regression zu alten Fixierungen Abfluß durch das verdrängte Unbewußte’ (‘A blocked libido that cannot be satisfied in reality manages, with the help of regression to old fixations, to discharge itself through the repressed unconscious’ [1955c, p. 352]).

i) Nietzsche's Dionysian and Regression to the Primitive

In his *Die Geburt der Tragödie* Nietzsche made the radical claim that '[d]as Dionysische [...] ist der gemeinsame Geburtsschoos der Musik und des tragischen Mythos'² (GT-24), and posited it as a drive which could revitalise the modern cultural landscape. In the previous chapter the Dionysian was seen to give impetus to creativity in its promotion of a sense of primordial unity, reached through intoxication, which offered a foil to the liminal isolation of the fictional artists of d'Annunzio and Mann. This state of communion is reached through a regressive process, which is aided by the influence of the Dionysian.

The regressive tendencies that will be seen in Nietzsche's Dionysian are arguably not his own invention, and can be traced back to the ancient worship of Dionysus. For the ancient Greeks Dionysian worship involved a (temporary) liberation from civilisation: 'for the duration of the City Dionysia³ prisoners were released from gaol, and [...] at the same festival the freeing of slaves was announced in the theatre (Aeschines 3.41)' (Seaford, 2006, p. 29). The regressive aspects of the cult of Dionysus were noted by Bachofen, who described '[die] Auflösung der politische Organisation und [der] Verfall des staatlichen Lebens'⁴ (1927, p. 132) that took place during worship of Dionysus. Segal notes regressive elements in Euripides' portrayal of Dionysus and Dionysian worship in *The Bacchae*, which 'develops the primarily negative side of Dionysus' blurring between Greek and "barbarian"; but there may also be a hint of its positive side in the implicit recognition of the universalising power of Dionysus in the theatre and specifically in tragedy' (1997, p. 391). Otto, too, highlights the primacy of the Dionysian experience, and suggests that those who seek creativity must remain in contact with it: 'Der Dionysische Zustand ist ein Urphänomen des Lebens – an dem

² 'The Dionysian, with its original joy even in pain, is the common womb of music and of tragic myth'.

³ The Dionysia were regular festivals held in Athens honour of Dionysus.

⁴ 'the dissolution of political organisation and the decline of political life'.

auch der Mann in allen Geburtsstunden seines schöpferischen Daseins teilhaben muß'⁵ (1933, p. 132).

One of the most valuable aspects of Nietzsche's Dionysian for the artist is its promotion of a state analogous to intoxication, the effects of which are often described in terms of retrogression, or return. The influence of the Dionysian allows the individual to forget, for a time, his agonising individuated existence, and returns him to a state of communion with the 'geheimnissvollen Ur-Einen'⁶ (GT-1). Here the German prefix 'ur-' emphasises the noun that follows, but also denotes this noun as the original, primary and primal version. The original unity to which the Dionysian individual is returned is therefore the earliest and most primitive form of unity. In this state, the Dionysian affirmer feels part of a higher community, and rejoices in an experience of plurality that grants him intimate togetherness with both the rest of mankind and with nature itself. However, as will shortly be demonstrated, this is no Rousseauian return to nature. This union combats the isolation and loneliness of the artist analysed and illustrated in the previous chapter. The Dionysian is, Nietzsche claims, the 'original' or 'primitive' ('ursprüngliche' [Nietzsche, GT-12]) element of Greek tragedy, which the civilised Greek glimpses again through Dionysian intoxication. The effect of the Dionysian '*leads back to the heart of nature*' ('an das Herz der Natur *zurückführt* [my emphasis]' [GT-7]), emphasising the restorative power of this drive.

Under these conditions the Dionysian individual is granted access to creative impulses that are normally stifled by our individuated existence. As Nietzsche explains, 'die Kunstgewalt der ganzen Natur, zur höchsten Wonnebefriedigung des Ur-Einen, offenbart sich hier unter den Schauern des Rausches'⁷ (GT-1). The individual is afforded profound insight

⁵ 'The Dionysian state is the original phenomenon of life – in which even man must participate in all of the births which take place in his creative existence'.

⁶ 'the mysterious original unity'.

⁷ 'der Weg zu den Müttern des Sein's, zu dem innersten Kern der Dinge [liegt] offen' ('the artistic power of the whole of nature, to the highest euphoric satisfaction of the primal unity, reveals itself here under the awe of intoxication' [GT-16]).

in this state, and is stimulated to creative impulses that are otherwise inaccessible. It is for these reasons that Nietzsche posits the Dionysian as an artistic ‘Geburtsschooss’⁸ (‘womb’). Without Dionysus’ influence, which sweeps aside Apollonian illusions – including the illusion of our individuated existence – and draws us back, intoxicated, to the instinctual and passionate world described above, the individual would remain excluded from these turbulent energies and mysterious insights.

Yet the embrace of nature that Nietzsche ascribes to the Dionysian affirmer is not to be confused with the return to nature advocated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). For Rousseau, whose ideas anticipated the Romanticism of the next century, ‘man’s best hope [was] to return to nature and to follow its example in the teaching of children’ (Outram, 2006, p. 98), as illustrated in his treatise *Émile, ou De l’éducation* (*Emile, or on Education*, 1762). For Rousseau, nature was ‘harmonious, peaceable, benevolent’ (Singer, 1966, p. 345), and a return to nature involved a return to innocence and protection. In *Émile* Rousseau states: ‘man is naturally good; [...] society depraves and perverts men’ (1918, p. 212); elsewhere he notes that ‘the ancients are nearer to Nature, and have more native genius’ (p. 250). To Nietzsche, Rousseau’s idea of nature was misguided: in *Götzen-Dämmerung* Nietzsche asks sarcastically, ‘Rousseau — wohin wollte der eigentlich zurück?’⁹ (GD-Streifzüge-48) and states that ‘es gab noch niemals eine natürliche Menschheit’¹⁰ (NF-1887, 10 [53]). In Nietzsche’s view, Rousseau ‘fails to recognise the dark and terrible forces of nature which must be overcome in order to arrive at a harmonious relationship with nature’ (Ansell-Pearson, 1996, p. 25). As Paglia notes, ‘nature, hailed by Rousseau and Wordsworth as a benevolent mother, is a dangerous guest’ (2001, p. 231). The very idea of a return to nature requires clarification in Nietzsche’s view, and in a note he explains, ‘Auch ich rede von

⁸ This is an example of the biological imagery that Nietzsche invariably employs to characterise the relationship of Apollo and Dionysus.

⁹ ‘Rousseau – to where exactly did he wish to return?’

¹⁰ ‘there never was a natural mankind’.

“*Rückkehr* zur Natur”, obwohl es eigentlich nicht ein Zurückgehn, sondern ein Hinaufkommen ist — hinauf in die hohe, freie, selbst furchtbare Natur und Natürlichkeit¹¹ (GD-Streifzüge-48).

In an earlier passage of the same book Nietzsche criticises the promotion of regression by priests and moralists who wish to bring man to an earlier state of virtue.¹² Perhaps giving a clue to his contempt for Rousseau, Nietzsche declares that one cannot go backwards¹³ – ‘man muss vorwärts’¹⁴ (GD-Streifzüge-43). In Nietzsche’s view, one does not return to nature as to a loving parent, but rather returns to confront the terror inherent in nature – which becomes part of the superior individual’s strategy of striving and ascendance. While Rousseau advocates a misguided version of returning to nature (in Nietzsche’s view), Nietzsche names Napoleon as a model for his own version. In Nietzsche’s eyes, as del Caro explains, ‘Napoleon earned his return to nature as an ascent to the natural’ (2004, p. 46), whereas ‘Rousseau [...], with his doctrine of equality represents the most poisonous poison, the end of justice’ (p. 46). For Nietzsche, then, if man is to rediscover a harmonious relationship with nature, he must first confront and overcome all of those terrible aspects which Rousseau overlooks.

Crucially, the return of Nietzsche’s Dionysian is moderated. In *Die Geburt der Tragödie* it is still to be distinguished from the utter abandonment of Dionysian *barbarians* (noted earlier) partly by the fact that the Dionysian Greek, unlike his barbaric counterpart, also comes under the influence of Apollo. These crude Dionysians flouted all laws and traditions in their wild sexual promiscuity, Nietzsche tells us: ‘gerade die wildesten Bestien

¹¹ ‘I too speak of a “return to nature”, although actually it is not a returning, but rather a coming-up – up into high, free, even terrible nature and naturalness’.

¹² ‘sie wollten die Menschheit auf ein früheres Maass von Tugend zurückbringen, zurückschrauben’ (‘they wished to bring mankind back, to screw mankind back, to an earlier measure of virtue’ [GD-Streifzüge-43]).

¹³ Nietzsche criticises those (including priests, moralists, and politicians) whose aim is ‘[der] Krebsgang aller Dinge’ (‘the retrogression of all things’ [GD-Streifzüge-43]). The German word ‘Krebsgang’ (‘retrogression’) is defined by *Duden* as ‘rückläufige, sich verschlechternde Entwicklung’ (‘backwards, deteriorating development’).

¹⁴ ‘one must go forwards’.

der Natur wurden hier entfesselt, bis zu jener abscheulichen Mischung von Wollust und Grausamkeit, die mir immer als der eigentliche "Hexentrank" erschienen ist'¹⁵ (GT-2). As Gooding-Williams points out, 'Dionysian Greeks, on the other hand, allegedly repudiated the literalism of the barbarian and strove *figuratively* to express Dionysian excess' (2001, p. 107). The regression undergone by Dionysian barbarians is too extreme to be creative or productive, and results in the 'Rückschritte des Menschen zum Tiger und Affen'¹⁶ (GT-2). Here there is a complete loss of humanity and return to a civilised state is rendered impossible. Only cultivated Dionysian Greeks are able to derive artistic output from the breakdown of the principle of individuation: 'erst bei ihnen wird die Zerreißung des principii individuationis ein künstlerisches Phänomen'¹⁷ (GT-2).

Thus far the psychological impact of the Dionysian has only been seen within the individual; but for Nietzsche the Dionysian can, and should, also be embraced communally – specifically, in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, by the German nation. Dismayed by the barren cultural landscape of contemporary Germany ('jene eben so düster geschilderte Wildniss unserer ermüdeten Cultur'¹⁸ [GT-20]), he advocates the Dionysian as a means of effecting a creative regression. What this impulse can bring about at a personal level can also be repeated for communities, even entire nations. His attempt to locate an affinity with the Dionysian in German music – Wagner's above all – suggests that the Dionysian must simply be rediscovered. He tells us that the birth of a tragic age for the German spirit is 'nur eine Rückkehr zu sich selbst, ein seliges Sichwiederfinden'¹⁹ (GT-19). As will shortly be seen, the notion of a contemporary nation rediscovering its artistic heritages through the Dionysian will be strongly echoed in *Il fuoco*.

¹⁵ 'the very wildest beasts of nature were here unleashed, resulting in that abominable mixture of lust and cruelty, which has always seemed to me to be the real "witches' brew"'.

¹⁶ 'regressions of man to tiger and ape'.

¹⁷ 'with them, the tearing apart of the principle of individuation became an artistic phenomenon for the first time'.

¹⁸ 'that dismally depicted wilderness of our tired culture'.

¹⁹ 'only a return to itself, a blissful rediscovery of itself'.

Creative regression under the aegis of the Dionysian is reaffirmed in Nietzsche's later writings. In *Menschliches Allzumenschliches* (*Human, All Too Human*, 1878), for example, Nietzsche talks of the necessity of '[climbing] a few rungs *backwards* [my emphasis]²⁰ (MA-20), a step which follows the abandonment of religious and superstitious beliefs, and entails the superior individual overcoming metaphysics.²¹ It is only 'die Aufgeklärtesten'²² (ibid.) who are able to liberate themselves from metaphysics and succeed in this regressive – but also progressive – goal. This passage was one which drew the attention of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, both of whom developed ideas on the psychological phenomenon of regression. In a note from 1887 Nietzsche claims that '[d]ie Kunst erinnert uns an Zustände des animalischen vigor'²³ (NF-1887, 9 [20]), positing art as an activity which resembles the raw vitality of untamed and animal instincts. Here the artistic impulse seems to be accessible only once the structures and restraints of civilisation have been removed – perhaps when one has climbed 'a few rungs backwards'. As seen above, the notion of regression in the service of progress appears again in *Götzen-Dämmerung*, and Nietzsche talks about his understanding of a 'Rückkehr zur Natur'²⁴ (GD-Streifzüge-48).

In Nietzsche's later articulation of the Dionysian, sexual arousal is lauded as a crucial part of creative inspiration. In *Götzen-Dämmerung* he describes how creativity requires 'die Erregbarkeit der ganzen Maschine'²⁵ (GD-Streifzüge-8) and, having posited *Rausch* as a precondition for creativity,²⁶ names sexual intoxication the 'älteste und ursprünglichste Form des Rausches'²⁷ (GD-Streifzüge-8). Satisfying one's sexual instincts, Nietzsche believes, can be creatively beneficial. However, he also warns the artist against elevating this drive at the

²⁰ 'einige Sprossen rückwärts steigen'.

²¹ 'die Metaphysik zu überwinden' ('[overcoming] metaphysics' [MA-20]).

²² 'the most enlightened'.

²³ 'art reminds us of states of animalistic vigour'.

²⁴ 'return to nature'.

²⁵ 'the excitability of the whole machine'.

²⁶ Nietzsche declares that *Rausch* is a 'physiologische Vorbedingung' ('physiological precondition' [GD-Streifzüge-8]) of creativity.

²⁷ 'oldest and most original form of intoxication'.

expense of others, declaring that the artist who devotes himself solely to carnality will deplete energies that might otherwise be artistically employed: ‘Es ist ein und dieselbe Kraft, die man in der Kunst-Conception und die man im geschlechtlichen Actus ausgiebt: es giebt nur Eine Art Kraft. *Hier* zu unterliegen, *hier* sich zu verschwenden ist für einen Künstler verrätherisch’²⁸ (NF-1888, 23 [2]).

In the creatively inspiring erotic intoxication which Nietzsche discusses in *Götzen-Dämmerung*, there is also evidence of regression. When the artist allows himself to be creatively stimulated by the sex drive, he experiences a primitive form of energy and intoxication. Notes from the period before the publication of *Götzen-Dämmerung* support the idea of sexual excitement as a form of regression. In 1887 Nietzsche emphasises the primacy of the sex drive – which belongs to the ‘ältesten Fest freude [sic] des Menschen’²⁹ (NF-1887, 9 [102]) – and notes that it, along with intoxication and cruelty, dominates within the artist. In the same note Nietzsche speaks of the animalistic nature of creativity, which seems to receive impetus from these three elements (‘der Geschlechtstrieb, der Rausch, die Grausamkeit’³⁰ [ibid.]).

There is possibly a promotion of regression, too, in Nietzsche’s continued use of the ancient Greeks as a model for creativity. In *Götzen-Dämmerung*, Nietzsche tells us that (ancient) Dionysian art grew out of ‘Orgasmus’ (‘orgiasm’ [GD-Alten-4]) and proceeds to laud the ancient Dionysian mysteries as a guarantee (for the pre-Socratic Greek) of an affirmative and ascendant existence. Orgiasm is certainly not a phenomenon considered acceptable by the modern West, and it reflects a pre-Christian acceptance of more ‘primitive’ drives. By this point, creativity for Nietzsche has come to encompass not just the activity of the artist, but also the endeavours of the superior individual who strives to ‘create’ himself as

²⁸ ‘[i]t is one and the same strength that one expends in art-conception and in the sexual act: there is just one type of strength. To be defeated here, to waste oneself here, is treacherous’.

²⁹ ‘oldest jubilations of man’.

³⁰ ‘the sex drive, intoxication, and cruelty’.

a work of art. Evoking the ancient Greeks and their Dionysian mysteries, Nietzsche offers a strategy for this creativity; this is a form of regression, but one that draws the subject back to an earlier form of civilisation (for Nietzsche, the civilisation *par excellence*), rather than to a state of barbarity or animalism. In ‘die Mysterien der Geschlechtlichkeit’³¹ (GD-Altan-4) Nietzsche finds a key to the affirmative attitude of the ancient Greeks, which can fuel our own self-creation, and exalts their treatment of procreation – and thus the sex drive which enables it – as a paradigm of creativity, in all senses of the word.

For Nietzsche, then, the Dionysian is a drive which can provoke a regression to a more ‘primitive’ state in the individual, where instinct and intuition dominate and a sense of primal union is perceived. It also offers a means of stimulating a cultural revival through the rediscovery of ‘primitive’ and primordial energies, and allowing contemporary Germany to emulate, and perhaps surpass, the hitherto unparalleled artistic achievements of the ancient Greeks. The regression that the Dionysian triggers, however, must be tempered by a complementary drive, the Apollonian, which prevents the subject from regressing too far – to a state of barbarism for example. In his later writings Nietzsche exalts the value of the Dionysian for the creation of the *self* as a work of art, but, as has been argued, the regressive nature of the Dionysian also stimulates this creativity.

Nietzsche’s Dionysian exaltation of instinct, intuition, and spontaneity – balanced by the Apollonian in 1872, and by Dionysus’ appropriation of aspects of the Apollonian in later writings – provided an attractive alternative to the stagnation and sterility that was perceived to afflict modernity as the turn of the century approached. As was discussed in Chapter Two, Nietzsche’s rise to fame after 1890 was largely due to the dramatic technological, social, political and economic changes that had taken place in the second half of the nineteenth century, which suddenly rendered his thought appealing. Some readers, such as Expressionist

³¹ ‘the mysteries of sexuality’.

artists, were to find aspects of vitalism in his writings, for example, which they saw as a welcome antithesis to modern sterility,³² and an exaltation of the individual that countered the sense of anonymity resulting from urbanisation.³³ Around the turn of the century many of the attitudes that made Nietzsche's thought seem so appealing also caused artists and intellectuals to turn away from the modern, urban West and to observe allegedly 'primitive' cultures, free from the discontents of (Western) 'civilisation'. Such primitivist attitudes will now be discussed.

ii) Cultural Primitivism

Towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, Western cultural production can be seen dramatically to increase its occupation with non-Western and pre-modern themes and techniques. Most visibly in the visual arts, but also in music and literature, simpler and more 'naïve' techniques appear, as well as rural and exotic themes. This is the cultural attitude that has been termed 'primitivism', and which constitutes a problematic period in the history of Western cultural exchange; for it involved the artistic appropriation of themes and techniques believed to characterise civilisations considered 'primitive' in comparison to the modern, urban West. This was driven partly by disillusionment with Western modernity in the aftermath of the sudden industrialisation and urbanisation of the second half of the nineteenth century. In his *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), Hardy talks of the 'ache of modernism' (1985, p. 180), for example. The dramatic social, political and economic changes that took place during this period were discussed in the second chapter of this thesis in the context of Europe's (belated) reception of Nietzsche's

³² Donahue explains that 'as all studies of Expressionism emphasise, the initially liberating shape of modernity had congealed: the self as epistemological centre, voicing both nourishing Nature and threatening City, had become totally sterile; "Ichdissoziation" (dissociation of self [...]) is the primal moment of Expressionism' (2005, p. 174).

³³ Donahue also cites the expressionist poet Ernst Blass, who found that Nietzsche appealed because of his promotion of 'Der Mut zum eigenen Selbst und eigenen Erlebnis' ('the courage to be oneself, and have one's own experience' [p. 5]).

thought. Some of the attitudes that rendered Nietzsche's ideas appealing appear also to have resulted in what Perry refers to as 'the going away' (in Harrison, Frascina and Perry, 1993, p. 8) from urban spaces and the withdrawal to unknown rural spaces. Hence painters like Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) retreated to areas like Pont-Aven (p. 8), in rural Brittany, and eventually to even more remote locations such as Tahiti (p. 28).

Trilling finds the cultural criticism inherent in primitivism to be a defining characteristic of modernism: 'it seems to me that the characteristic element of modern literature, or at least of the most highly developed modern literature, is the bitter line of hostility to civilisation which runs through it' (1980, p. 3). Yet a disillusioned criticism of the current period is not unique to the early twentieth century, and the sentiments and desires that underpin primitivism can be found throughout the history of the West. Cuddon (2013) locates elements of 'primitivism' as far back as Michel de Montaigne's *Des cannibales*³⁴ (*Of Cannibals* [1580]), Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*³⁵ (1580), as well as Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (c. 1610) and *As You Like It* (c. 1599), for example (p. 561). Cuddon also suggests that 'Dante, Tasso, Spencer and Milton expressed similar ['primitivist'] ideas, often in relation to a prelapsarian state' (ibid.). Enlightenment philosopher and historian Giambattista Vico (1688-1744) is counted among the critical thinkers who display an element of primitivism, but who predate the cultural trend under discussion. Vico emphasised the irrationality and brutality of 'primitive' (earlier) peoples, and attributed to them a mode of creativity that appeared inaccessible to contemporary man. In his *Scienza nuova* (*New Science* [1725]) he states:

poetic wisdom, the first wisdom of the gentile world, must have begun with a metaphysics not rational and abstract like that of learned men now, but felt and imagined as that of these first

³⁴ Montaigne's essay details the ritual practices of the Tupinambá people in Brazil.

³⁵ Sidney's *Arcadia* is a romance written in the style of Heliodorus, a Greek writer who is thought to have lived either during the third or fourth century AD.

men must have been, who, without power of ratiocination, were all robust sense and vigorous imagination (Vico, cited in Pompa, 1990, p. 44).

An echo of this sentiment appears in a statement from T. S. Eliot (in whose literature elements of primitivism are frequently located): ‘poetry begins, I dare say, with a savage beating a drum in a jungle’ (Eliot, cited by Ellis, 2009, p. 21).

Rousseau is often seen as a precursor to the earliest strands of primitivism; largely because of his glorification of nature as an alternative to the corruption of civilisation and the city³⁶. As already indicated, for Rousseau, ‘man’s best hope [was] to return to nature and to follow its example in the teaching of children’ (Outram, 2006, p. 98), as illustrated in his treatise *Émile, ou De l’éducation*. Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) ‘followed Rousseau [...] in defending the superiority of primitive cultures to their modern counterparts’ (Chantler, 2004, p. 491), although he also believed ‘that every epoch must be evaluated on its own terms as a stage in the development of a culture’ (ibid.). In his *Briefwechsel über Ossian und die Lieder alter Völker (Correspondence about Ossian and the Songs of Ancient Peoples [1773])*, Herder claims that ‘primitive’ cultures are ‘the more barbarous, that is, the more alive, the more free, the closer to the senses’ (cited by Chantler, p. 491). As Habib notes, the Romantic poets (including Shelley, Byron and Wordsworth) were repulsed by the squalor and mechanisation they perceived in the modern city, and ‘turned for spiritual relief to mysticism; to nature; to Rousseauistic dreams of a simple, primitive, and uncorrupted lifestyle’ (2004, p. 332).

Moving towards the twentieth century, the (delayed) reception of Nietzsche is also posited as contributing to the trend of primitivism, by Trilling (1980, p. 16) and Pan (2001, p. 17), for example. Trilling notes that while Kaufmann is correct in warning us against concluding that Nietzsche portrays the (more ‘primitive’) Dionysian more enthusiastically

³⁶ See, for example, Charles E. Ellison, ‘Rousseau and the Modern City: The Politics of Speech and Dress’, *Political Theory*, 13 (1985), pp. 497-533.

than the Apollonian in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, ‘no one reading Nietzsche’s essay for the first time is likely to heed this warning’ (ibid.). Similarly, Pan finds that Nietzsche ‘first formulated the distinction between primitive and modern that is elaborated in expressionism [considered a primitivist branch of art] by differentiating a Dionysian from a Socratic impulse in ancient Greek culture’ (2001, p. 17) and by affirming ‘the validity of an intuitive, aesthetic mode of relating to the world’ (ibid.) in the Dionysian. Gordon also suggests that the work of expressionist artists ‘reflects that Dionysian or vitalist impulse that had earlier been advocated by Friedrich Nietzsche’ (Gordon, cited in Erwin, 2003, p. 285). Coinciding with the period during which Nietzsche’s thought rose to prominence, James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1890) is also widely cited as influencing the primitivist trend (again, by Trilling [1980, p. 13], for example). In Frazer’s study of religion and mythology Trilling finds criticisms of irrational and wild practices, but also notes that ‘[i]f [Frazer] deplores the primitive imagination, he also does not fail to show it as wonderful and beautiful’ (p. 15). Both Nietzsche and Frazer, then, whose works were selling very well at the end of the nineteenth century, oppose a rational, or overly rational, modernity to a ‘primitive’ irrationality and intuition, and – whether deliberately or not – indicate positive aspects in the latter.

Around the same time thinkers and theorists, such as Max Weber (1864-1920) and Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), sought explanations for the discontents of modernity. As Barkan and Bush note, ‘their ideal types approximated the polarised ideals of the primitive and the civilised’ (1995, p. 2). The antithesis of ‘civilised’ (equated with the modern Western world) and ‘primitive’ (equated with geographically or temporally remote, and allegedly less advanced, peoples) was to underpin the values and desires of primitivism. Like the Romantics several decades before them, many artists around the turn of the century began to look beyond the Western, urban space for creative inspiration, and pursued a more ‘organic’

and ‘intuitive’ form of art. This can probably be seen most strikingly in the visual arts, such as painting and sculpture. From the 1880s artists like Gauguin, van Gogh and Stanhope Forbes turned to rural communities for artistic inspiration, resulting in a proliferation of paintings featuring peasants, farmers and rustic rituals. As Perry notes, ‘[t]hroughout Europe as a whole, including Russia, Scandinavia and Britain, and in Germany in particular, the vogue for forming artists’ communities and colonies away from urban centres had been established in the mid-nineteenth century’ (in Harrison, Frascina and Perry, 1993, p. 9). Perry gives Stanhope Forbes’ *A Street in Brittany* (1881) and Gauguin’s *Vision après le sermon* (*Vision After the Sermon*, 1888) as examples of the resulting works of art. While the ‘primitivism’ of the first is limited largely to the painting’s content – it shows peasant women in traditional dress and engaged in traditional crafts – the latter displays both ‘primitive’ style and content. Gauguin’s painting displays exaggerated and unexpected colours, distorts scale and dimension, and does not hide the painter’s brush-strokes. Such formal features were regarded – sometimes stereotypically – as characteristics of the artefacts of ‘primitive’ peoples. In his *Primitive Art* (1927), for example, anthropologist Franz Boas describes African masks which treat the form of the face ‘decoratively with the greatest freedom’ (2010, p. 70), showing eyes which are ‘slits with geometrical ornaments’ (ibid.); he also describes silhouetted representations of the human body by Bushmen, which feature ‘exaggeration of the length of the limbs’ (p. 166).

In his examination of primitivism in fine art, Perry (in Harrison, Frascina and Perry, 1993) also discusses the Fauves and the German Expressionists, whose works display common features. The Fauves, a loose group of predominantly French artists working during the first decade of the twentieth century, who included Henri Matisse (1869-1954), painted with bright, unnatural colours and eschewed realism. Their very name, which translates literally as ‘wild beasts’, clearly indicates the ‘primitive’, even animal, impulses that these

artists sought to capture and express. In 1905 Marcel Nicolle reviewed the Fauves with disdain, likening their works to ‘the barbaric and naïve sport of a child who plays with a box of colours he has just got as a Christmas present’ (cited by Perry, in Harrison, Frascina and Perry, 1993, p. 46). Fauvist works certainly suggest a – deliberate – regression towards more naïve and intuitive modes of creativity. The German Expressionists, such as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Fritz Bleyl, Erich Heckel, and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, who formed the group known as *Die Brücke*³⁷ (*The Bridge*) in 1905, adhered to a similar use of colour in order to convey emotions and portrayed more sexually explicit themes than the Fauves. They looked to ‘primitive’ artefacts in the Dresden Ethnographical Collections, believing to find in these artefacts “‘truthful” unsophisticated forms of art, uncorrupted by modern bourgeois culture’ (Perry, in Harrison, Frascina and Perry, 1993, p. 66). As Perry also notes, both the Fauves and the artists of *Die Brücke* are known to have engaged with Nietzsche’s works (p. 47 and p. 63).

Bell (1972) locates primitivist elements in literature: for example, in the works of Herman Melville (p. 20), especially *Moby Dick* (1851); Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899; p. 38); D. H. Lawrence³⁸ (p. 12), including *The Rainbow* (1915); T. S. Eliot (p. 42), including *The Waste Land* (1922) and James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922; p. 45). These literary texts portray geographically remote peoples (Polynesians in *Moby Dick* and peoples of the Congo in *Heart of Darkness*); undermine the notion of an opposition between ‘civilised’ and ‘primitive’ (*Heart of Darkness*); allude to myth and legend (Arthurian legend in *The Waste Land* and classical mythology in *Ulysses*); and, in *The Rainbow*, Lawrence ‘attempts to gather into a modern sensibility some of the richness and strength of the primitive sensibility

³⁷ The group’s name was almost certainly a reference to Nietzsche’s *Also sprach Zarathustra*, in which Zarathustra describes man as ‘eine Brücke und kein Zweck’ (‘a bridge and not an end-point’ [Za-I-Vorrede-4]), implying that man is to be a bridge to the *Übermensch*.

³⁸ For a study of D. H. Lawrence’s ‘primitivism’ see Jascha Kessler, ‘D. H. Lawrence’s Primitivism’, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 5 (1964), pp. 467-488, and Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 159-174.

without surrendering the poise of the civilised self' (p. 18). Much primitivist literature, as well as the discourse that underpinned it, also often had a more sinister function, which was to justify European colonial ventures. McLaren (2006) cites d'Annunzio's play *Più che l'amore* (*More than Love* [1906]) and Marinetti's *Mafarka le futuriste* as two of the most influential works of Italian colonialist literature (p. 110 and p. 112). D'Annunzio's play showcases Africa as 'terra incognita'³⁹ [...] and *terra promessa*⁴⁰ (p. 110), ripe for the arrival of the Italian *superuomo*; and Marinetti's novel similarly portrays Africa as 'a primitive or virgin territory separate from the decadence of the West in which the birth of the Futurist man was possible' (p. 112).

Primitivism can arguably be found elsewhere in d'Annunzio's literature. Many of his works are set in the rural region of the Abruzzo and depict its traditions and rituals. These include the collection of short stories *Terra vergine* (*Virgin Land* [1882]), *Il trionfo della morte* and *Le novelle della Pescara* (*The Stories of Pescara* [1902]). D'Annunzio was born in Pescara and grew up in the Abruzzo.⁴¹ A recent study of his literary use of the region by Härmänmaa (2013) considers the Abruzzo's function both as a literary realm of primitivism and as a locus which satisfied d'Annunzio's own longings for the 'primitive'. It was a region to which he often returned to write, apparently finding this untamed natural space more conducive to creative production. As Härmänmaa indicates, 'in the 1880s, the simple countryside formed a striking contrast to d'Annunzio's lifestyle among the high society of Rome' (p. 701). Mazzarotto (1949, p. 512) notes that he habitually stayed in a convent at Francavilla al Mare (one of *Il piacere*'s settings), where he wrote *Il piacere, L'innocente* (*The Innocent One*, most commonly translated as *The Intruder*, 1892) and *Il trionfo della morte*.

³⁹ 'unknown land'.

⁴⁰ 'promised land'.

⁴¹ While his juxtaposition of the natural landscapes and 'primitive' people of this region against the modern Italian city can therefore be considered primitivistic, the Abruzzo does not hold the same exotic and unknown value for d'Annunzio as, say, the jungle for Henri Rousseau, or the Congo for Conrad. Nonetheless, for (the majority of) d'Annunzio's readers the region was one of mystery and superstition, which had remained in the past and where nature still dominated.

Härmänmaa also points out that the region had long been presented ‘as both an idyllic region of heroic people and a land of magical barbarism’ (2013, p. 702) in classical texts, in documents from the Kingdom of Italy, and in accounts of individuals’ travels. D’Annunzio’s portrayals of the Abruzzo retain this element of ambivalence, and while the region is one of fertile abundance and natural beauty in *Il trionfo della morte*, it is also the scene of shocking and grotesque rituals. As Härmänmaa explains, ‘[o]n the one hand, it symbolises vitality and natural human impulses, as is often the case in his early short stories; yet on the other hand, it points to something far more sinister, such as mindless violence, cruelty, or fanaticism’ (ibid.). This mindless and grotesque fanaticism is also seen in the paintings of Michetti, who was a friend of d’Annunzio. In particular, in *Il voto (The Offering [1883])* Michetti depicts a scene of religious devotion which is strongly echoed in d’Annunzio’s portrayal of the Vigil at Casalbordino in *Il trionfo della morte*. In Michetti’s painting devotees prostrate themselves upon the floor of a basilica and crawl towards the altar with their tongues to the ground.⁴²

While d’Annunzio’s primitivism is striking and obvious, in the case of Thomas Mann traces of primitivism are less immediately visible. He largely favours modern urban settings⁴³ and often writes through the eyes of the burgher. Nonetheless, Mann’s engagement with the ‘primitive’ has been noted; for example, by Robertson (1990), who finds that Mann, in combining psychoanalytic ideas with those of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, was able to ‘[articulate] his conviction that the primitive is present within civilisation, and within the individual psyche’ (p. 90). Mann wishes, Robertson claims, ‘to explore and understand [the ‘primitive’] with the aid of his modern consciousness. Hence his irony, as a means of keeping the primitive at bay while acknowledging its authority and its appeal’ (p. 91). Erwin also locates elements of primitivism in *Doktor Faustus*, reminding us, for example, of

⁴² Härmänmaa notes that d’Annunzio and Michetti visited the Abruzzo together in 1882 to witness a pilgrimage (2013, p. 704), and that d’Annunzio based the scenes at Casalbordino in *Il trionfo della morte* on this experience.

⁴³ Texts such as the short story *Die vertauschten Köpfe (The Transposed Heads, 1940)* and the tetralogy *Joseph und seine Brüder (Joseph and his Brothers [1930-1943])* are notable exceptions.

Leverkühn's embrace of 'the ideas of primitivism and barbarism' (2003, p. 292) in his musical breakthrough. Erwin reminds us of Kretschmar's revelation to Leverkühn of the regressive and primitive nature of music.⁴⁴ *Doktor Faustus* also contains the declaration (made by the narrator Serenus Zeitblom), that 'das [...] Gegenteil der bürgerlichen Kultur sei *nicht* Barbarei, sondern die Gemeinschaft'⁴⁵ (Mann, 2007, p. 541), supporting Robertson's findings regarding Mann's understanding of the 'primitive' and the 'barbaric'. In his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* Mann explicitly expresses the creative value he sees in the 'primitive', with which (he suggests) the artist must remain in contact:

Um einen Künstler aber, dem das Primitive ein durchaus fremdes Element, der jedes "Rückfalls" ins Primitive durchaus unfähig geworden wäre, stünde es, glaube ich, nicht gut. Ein Künstler ist vielleicht nur eben so weit Künstler und Dichter, als er dem Primitiven *nicht* entfremdet ist [...]⁴⁶ (1974, p. 151).

In *Doktor Faustus* the 'primitive' is largely accessed through Dionysian music. I will argue that the Dionysian functions as a 'primitivist' foil to modernity elsewhere in Mann's literature, particularly in the texts under discussion.

The problematic nature of primitivism was noted above. Later strands of primitivism moved away from the derogatory and negative representations of geographically remote peoples ('based on nineteenth-century concepts of social evolution' [Li, 2012, p. 983]), and instead romanticised peoples considered 'primitive', attributing to them a more 'organic' or 'truthful' form of artistic creativity. Yet the same problematic binaries of 'modern' and 'primitive' were promoted, and geographically remote peoples remained a fetishised 'other'. Later in the twentieth century, as Li argues, 'neoprimitivism' (p. 987) attempted to resolve

⁴⁴ Kretschmar speaks of 'die Neigung der Musik, ins Elementare zurückzutauchen' ('the tendency of music to plunge backwards into the elemental' [Mann, 2007, p. 97]).

⁴⁵ 'the [...] antithesis of burgherly culture is *not* barbarism, but the collective'.

⁴⁶ 'But an artist to whom the primitive had become a thoroughly alien element, who was incapable of "relapsing" into the primitive, would face difficulties. An artist is possible only an artist and poet as long as he is not estranged from the primitive [...]'.

the issues of primitivism. Li notes the strategies, such as inversion, parody and magical realism, used by writers in an attempt to create an acceptable form of primitivism, but also finds that, paradoxically, some of these strategies tend to propagate the problematic attitudes that they purport to reject (p. 1001).

This overview of ‘primitivist’ discourse and its impact upon artistic production – in the visual arts as well as literature – has revealed an enduring preoccupation with the ‘primitive’ other, and a persistent longing for the allegedly ‘simpler’ and more ‘organic’ way of life of this other. Primitivism can be seen as a critique of modernity, which juxtaposes vitalistic longings with the perceived sterility and stagnancy of the modern West, especially during the final decades of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. These longings were inherently regressive in nature, betraying a desire for the perceived simplicity of peoples considered anterior to the modern West in terms of development. As Paul Klee noted, when commenting upon the artefacts on display in ethnographical museums, ‘So weit müssen wir zurück’⁴⁷ (cited in Erwin, 2010, p. 285). Nietzsche has been seen to have provided some impetus for the primitivist attitude, and in Nietzsche’s Dionysian we find a symbol for many of the desires and hopes of those who turned towards the rural or the exotic as a foil to modernity. Before examining d’Annunzio’s and Mann’s portrayals of these ‘regressive’ and ‘primitivist’ aspects of the Dionysian, brief consideration will be given to psychoanalytical discussions of the cultural trend of primitivism. Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung both reflected upon the draw of the ‘primitive’ to modern, ‘civilised’ man, and allow us to understand the cultural attitude from a psychological perspective. Their explanations for the phenomenon of primitivism, and of the relationship between the ‘primitive’ and the ‘civilised’ will provide crucial clarification when examining the texts of d’Annunzio and Mann.

⁴⁷ ‘We must go back to this stage’.

iii) Psychoanalysis and the Primitive

The discontents of civilisation, which underpinned much of the art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, occupied thinkers and theorists, who attempted to explain why the primitive was proving so attractive to the modern West. Prominent among these thinkers were Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, both of whom sought psychological explanations for these discontents. Their ideas, discussed here, will not provide a dominant framework within which to analyse d'Annunzio's and Mann's texts, but are ranged instead alongside the cultural primitivism discussed above, by way of complementary exploration. Freud's and Jung's ideas regarding the draw of the primitive do not offer unproblematic frameworks with which to analyse literature today, partly because their attempts to account for the draw of the primitive simultaneously support the period's dichotomy of 'civilised' versus 'cultural'; but they nonetheless allow an insight into the attitudes of the period. They are presented here as sources *containing* primitivism, rather than as theoretical tools with which to analyse the texts under discussion.

In his *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur (Civilisation and its Discontents, 1930)*, Freud explains the psychological conflicts that arise when individuals exist together in a large-scale society. These conflicts result from the repression (at least to a certain extent) of certain drives, which is demanded by civilisation, and are posited as the key to the attraction of the primitive. While the individual who exists free of civilisation and culture may obey all of his desires and instincts, free from the fear of punishment, members of a large-scale society may not. Just as the infant learns that satisfying certain urges will lead to punishment from parental authority, so the individual must renounce certain drives for the sake of civilisation, and to avoid punishment and 'unpleasure' ('Unlust') from external authorities. As Freud notes in *Die Zukunft einer Illusion (The Future of an Illusion, 1927)*, 'Es scheint [...], daß sich

jede Kultur auf Zwang und Triebverzicht aufbauen muß'⁴⁸ (1955d, p. 327). A paradigmatic example is the sexual drive. Unbridled satisfaction of the sexual drive would work against the creative goals of civilisation and is therefore punished, by religion for example. Aggressive impulses must also be quelled for the sake of civilisation. As Freud explains, humans are not naturally well-disposed towards their neighbour, who constitutes 'eine Versuchung, seine Aggression an ihm zu befriedigen, seine Arbeitskraft ohne Entschädigung auszunützen, ihn ohne seine Einwilligung sexuell zu gebrauchen, sich in den Besitz seiner Habe zu setzen, [...] ihm Schmerzen zu bereiten, zu martern und zu töten'⁴⁹ (p. 470). But if an individual is to gain long-term benefit from his neighbour, he must learn to co-operate, which requires a suppression of the instinct towards aggression and exploitation. When the instinct towards aggression is not satisfied externally, however, it turns inwards, as Freud explains, and is directed against the ego: 'Die Aggression wird introjiziert, verinnerlicht'⁵⁰ (p. 482). This leads to the formation of the super-ego ('Über-Ich'), whose tension with the ego ('Ich') results in the feeling of guilt⁵¹ (p. 484).

As Freud notes, the discontents (such as frustrated aggression) that result from civilisation's demands may lead to the contention that 'wir wären viel glücklicher, wenn wir sie aufgeben und in primitive Verhältnisse zurückfinden würden'⁵² (p. 445). The effort required to meet civilisation's demands can even lead to neurosis: 'der Mensch [wird] neurotisch [...], weil er das Maß von Versagung nicht ertragen kann, das ihm die Gesellschaft

⁴⁸ 'It seems [...] that every civilisation must be built upon coercion and renunciation of instinct'.

⁴⁹ 'a temptation to satisfy one's aggression on him, a temptation to exploit his manpower without compensation, a temptation to use him sexually without consent, to seize his possessions, [...] to harm him, torture him, and kill him'.

⁵⁰ 'The aggression is introjected, internalised'.

⁵¹ Here Freud strongly echoes Nietzsche's understanding of the formation of 'bad conscience' in *Zur Genealogie der Moral (Towards a Genealogy of Morals, 1887)*; as the formation of 'bad conscience' can be considered a version of sublimation, it will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁵² 'we would be much happier if we were to give it [civilisation] up and to find our way back to primitive relationships'.

im Dienste ihrer kulturellen Ideale auferlegt'⁵³ (p. 446). Precisely this attitude lay at the roots of artistic primitivism, and earlier Romanticism. Freud observes that one of the reasons that this attitude has become so widespread is the increased 'Berührung mit primitiven Völkern und Stämmen'⁵⁴ (ibid.) that has been rendered possible by technological advancements – such as faster and more convenient modes of transport, photography, and so on. These 'primitive' peoples appear to lead happier lives, Freud writes; he explains, however, that this is largely a misguided conclusion based on flawed and insufficient observations.

The repressions required by civilisation create an apparent gulf between the man of the modern West and peoples considered more primitive. But Freud warns that occasionally the mental structures which effect the repression that civilisation demands will fail, revealing modern man to be a 'wilde Bestie'⁵⁵ (p. 471). Repressed instincts are merely held at bay, not abolished, and remain in the unconscious. The instincts that apparently characterise the 'primitive' man as against the civilised man, then, are to be found persisting within the members of civilisation, partially undermining any notions of inherent differences between modern, Western man and the exotic, 'primitive' other. This idea had already occurred to d'Annunzio, who, in a speech of 1920 (a decade before Freud's *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*), declared: 'Dopo tante confessioni e dopo tanti martirii, la radice della barbarie primitiva non è ancor divelta dall'anima civica. Anzi sembra inespugnabile'⁵⁶ (1926, p. 366). Robertson notes that with Freud's location of 'primitive' characteristics within the 'civilised' mind, 'psychoanalysis [became] a method of studying primitive survivals' (1990, p. 83). The longings of the civilised for the perceived simplicities and harmony of the 'primitive' is revealed by Freud as a symptom of the process of civilisation itself, and one which seems

⁵³ 'a person [becomes] neurotic because he cannot bear the extent of the renunciation that society demands in service of its cultural ideals'.

⁵⁴ 'contact with primitive peoples and races'

⁵⁵ 'wild beast'.

⁵⁶ 'After so many confessions and after so many martyrdoms, the root of primitive barbarism has still not been eradicated from the civic soul. Indeed, it seems unassailable',

inevitable. The draw of the ‘primitive’ betrays a yearning for those parts of the psyche, and for the satisfaction of those instincts, of which civilisation demands renunciation. Artists who looked to geographically remote and apparently ‘uncivilised’ peoples appear to have been driven by a search both for the ‘other’ and for the (lost) ‘self’.

In exposing the ‘primitive’ depths of modern, Western man, Freud arguably goes some way towards collapsing the pernicious binary of ‘primitive’ and ‘civilised’ that had been used to justify colonial ventures and peddled again by more well-meaning primitivist artists. However, as Brickman notes, in his ‘recourse to the categories and methods of Victorian anthropology as well as to mechanisms such as Lamarckian inheritance and biogenetic recapitulation, [Freud] reinstated primitivity as an evolutionarily prior and therefore [...] a racially indexed category’ (2003, p. 52). Freud subscribed, for example, to (now discredited) theories positing ‘primitive’ cultures as an earlier stage of evolution now surpassed by Western civilisation. This was an idea propagated by early anthropologists such as Edward Tylor.⁵⁷ Indeed, when Freud posited neurosis as a possible consequence of the repression that civilisation demands (in *Totem und Tabu*⁵⁸ [*Totem and Taboo*, 1913]), neurosis was understood as a regressive reversion to an earlier state of psychosexual development. As Brickman notes, Freud conceives of ‘neurosis [as] a primitive state of mind’ (2003, p. 67), leading to the establishment of the highly problematic view that ‘neurotics = children = primitives’ (ibid.). It is also to neurotics that Freud refers when he states: ‘es leben Menschen, von denen wir glauben, daß sie den Primitiven noch sehr nahe stehen, viel näher als wir, in denen wir daher die direkten Abkömmlinge und Vertreter der früheren Menschen erblicken’⁵⁹ (1961, p. 5).

⁵⁷ Tylor (1832-1917), as well as the anthropologist Lewis Morgan (1818-1881) used the categories ‘savagery, barbarism, and civilisation’ (Andreatta and Ferraro, 2014, p. 75) to classify cultures.

⁵⁸ This text carries the subtitle ‘Einige Übereinstimmungen im Seelenleben der Wilden und der Neurotiker’ (‘Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics’).

⁵⁹ ‘there are people living whom we believe still stand very close to primitive man, much closer than we do, and in whom we glimpse the direct descendants and representatives of early man’.

Freud's discussions of the lure of the primitive, and civilisation's discontents, reveal man's subconscious and regressive wish to return to a state of instinctual and intuitive existence, free of civilisation's inhibitions. A regressive longing is also evident in another phenomenon discussed by Freud in the first chapter of *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*; namely, the feeling that is referred to as 'das ozeanische Gefühl'⁶⁰ (1955d, p. 422). The term was coined by Romain Rolland, who, after reading Freud's *Die Zukunft einer Illusion*, which investigates the origins of religion, used it in a letter to Freud to describe a feeling for which no explanation seemed to exist. As Freud reports at the beginning of *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, Rolland (who is unnamed and referred to only as a friend) described the sensation thus: 'Ein Gefühl, das er die Empfindung der "Ewigkeit" nennen möchte, ein Gefühl wie von etwas Unbegrenztem, Schrankenlosem, gleichsam "Ozeanischem"'⁶¹ (p. 421). Freud concludes that the feeling can be traced back to 'eine frühe Phase des Ichgefühls'⁶² (p. 430). It harks back, he claims, to that early stage of psychological development when the infant has not yet recognised its individuality or grasped the difference between the interior and exterior world. At this stage the infant believes all things to be part of a single entity. Freud explains:

Ursprünglich enthält das Ich alles, später scheidet es eine Außenwelt von sich ab. Unser heutiges Ichgefühl ist also nur ein eingeschrumpfter Rest eines weitumfassenderen, ja – eines allumfassenden Gefühls, welches einer innigeren Verbundenheit des Ichs mit der Umwelt entsprach.⁶³ (p. 435)

Freud finds that the 'oceanic' feeling, which Rolland suggested could be the *fons et origo* of religion, is a residue of this early stage of perceived unity with one's environment.

⁶⁰ 'the oceanic feeling'.

⁶¹ 'A feeling, that he would like to call the sensation of "eternity", a feeling as of something boundless, limitless, as it were "oceanic"'.

⁶² 'an early phase of ego-feeling'.

⁶³ 'Originally the ego encompasses everything; later it divides an exterior world from itself. Our present ego-feeling is therefore merely a shrunken residue of a more widely encompassing – indeed, an all-encompassing – feeling, which corresponded to an inner bond between the ego and its environment'.

The ‘oceanic’ feeling has been discussed more recently by Torgovnick, in her investigation of the West’s relationship to the ‘primitive’. She finds that ‘[p]rimitive beliefs and social relationships [are sometimes] seen as equivalent to the “oceanic”’: to a dissolution of boundaries between subject and object and between all conceived and conceivable polarities’⁶⁴ (1991, p. 18). Torgovnick finds that Freud associates the ‘oceanic’ with the female – for its connection to the body of the mother, with which the infant initially believes to be connected, and which must therefore be rejected – as well as with the primitive or infantile, and takes issue with Freud’s belief that the ‘oceanic’ must be renounced in the name of normal psychological development and for the sake of civilisation. She notes that Freud neglects to observe the harmful effects of a rejection of the ‘oceanic’, which include ‘an alienation from one’s past and from one’s environment, the establishment and perpetuation of relations of mastery rather than reciprocity, the repudiation of the “feminine” as a source of “primary narcissism” and loss of self’ (p. 207). Again, these afflictions resemble those bewailed by certain artists and writers around the turn of the century. Loss of the ‘oceanic’ is a prerequisite for civilisation, but also ensures the individual’s alienation from certain, pleasurable, psychological experiences. A longing for the primitive seems also to involve a longing for the ‘oceanic’, and in the striking frequency with which the primitive female other was portrayed by certain artists (such as Gauguin) we arguably see an attempt to recapture the (maternal) female that was rejected with the ‘oceanic’.

Freud’s location of ‘primitive’ elements within ‘civilised’ man is echoed by Jung, whose friendship with Freud broke down around 1913 after many years of mutual support for each other’s work. In a lecture given in 1928 entitled ‘Das Seelenproblem des modernen Menschen’ (‘The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man’) Jung references Freud’s portrayal of

⁶⁴ She locates this feeling, for example, in D. H. Lawrence’s *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) and in the writer’s longing for ‘an idealised primitive state in which man, nature, and eternity are one’ (p. 170).

the unconscious as ‘Schmutz und [...] Dunkelheit und [...] Übel’⁶⁵ (1981, p. 102) and as ‘Unrat und Schlacke’⁶⁶ (ibid.); he also references Freud’s attempts to discourage interest in the unconscious and notes that his warnings against the darkness of the ‘seelischen Hintergrund’⁶⁷ (p. 97) went unheeded. Instead, Jung claims, modern man’s interest in the unconscious has grown considerably. He notes ‘jene ganz allgemeine Überhandnahme des Interesses für seelische Erscheinungen, Spiritismus, Astrologie, Theosophie, Parapsychologie usw.’⁶⁸ (p. 100), and throughout the lecture offers explanations for this. He asks whether it is mere coincidence that interest in the unconscious has increased in the aftermath of historic scientific discoveries and innovations, such as Einstein’s Theory of Relativity (p. 106). Modern man’s fascination with the unconscious may be situated within the antipositivism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and as Bell notes, ‘modern primitivism [...] is part of a general concern in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the subconscious mind and anti-rational modes of understanding’ (1972, p. 71).

For Jung, man’s progression towards modernity has constituted a gradual departure from the unconscious, with which man now seeks reacquaintance. By contrast, allegedly ‘primitive’ cultures, Jung finds, have remained in touch with their unconscious, and can offer us ways of re-establishing communication with this lost aspect of ourselves. This, Walker claims, is the attitude of ‘*idealising*’ primitivism, as opposed to ‘*sentimental*’ primitivism (2002, p. 137), both of which he locates within Jung’s writings. While ‘sentimental’ primitivism displays veiled contempt for the ‘primitive’ other, Walker explains, and may be used to justify colonialist activities, ‘idealising’ primitivism ‘sees that Other *as* Us, or rather, *in* Us’ (p. 136), and regards the (‘primitive’) other as a means of restoring modern man’s identity. As Walker notes, this primitivist attitude holds ‘the primitive in us [as] more

⁶⁵ ‘dirt and darkness and evil’.

⁶⁶ ‘refuse and slag’.

⁶⁷ ‘psychic background’.

⁶⁸ ‘that general and excessive interest for psychic phenomena, spiritualism, astrology, theosophy, parapsychology etc.’

authentic, more in contact with the wellsprings of life' (ibid.). Jung claims that 'it is not only primitive man whose psychic processes are archaic. [...] [E]very civilised human being, whatever his conscious development, is still an archaic man at the deeper levels of his psyche' (p. 129). Here he echoes Freud's understanding of modern man as a 'savage beast' tamed only by repression; but Jung finds greater value in this 'savage beast' and does not call for its suppression.

The 'primitive' within 'civilised' man is, 'in Jungian terms, more in contact with the archetypes of the collective unconscious' (Walker, 2002, p. 136). Jung's idea of the 'collective unconscious' ('das kollektive Unbewusste') proposed that a second unconscious exists alongside the personal, individual unconscious discovered by Freud. It is defined by Jung as '[...] inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents'⁶⁹ (1991, p. 43). Walker defines it as belonging to 'a category of ideas that posit a universal human nature – one that, if not eternal, is at least very slow in changing' (2002, p. 9). It links 'primitive' and 'civilised' man, somewhat undermining any ideas about innate differences. A collective unconscious allows a culture to retain its 'rootedness', which Jung considered crucial to the mental health of a civilisation. While Jung adhered to the same conflation as Freud (of 'primitive', child, and neurotic), Kunin notes that for Jung 'this equation is not negative' (2003, p. 57). Kunin explains that for Jung "'primitive" is positive precisely because it is more fully related to the collective unconscious, hence the conscious articulation of archetypes in myth. Modernity is partially negative due to its attempts to ignore the collective unconscious' (ibid.).

An important term to note when considering Jung's relevance to primitivism is the concept of '*participation mystique*', a term he borrowed and adapted from anthropologist

⁶⁹ This statement was made in a lecture given by Jung in English on October 19th 1936.

Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939). The term was used by Lévy-Bruhl for the first time in his *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (*How Natives Think*, 1910) to ‘identify what it is about the mentality of so-called primitives that makes them understand things differently from Westerners’ (Haule, 2010, p. 668). Lévy-Bruhl claimed that ‘Primitive man [...] lives and acts in an environment of beings and objects, all of which, in addition to the properties that we recognise them to possess, are endued with mystical attributes’ (Lévy-Bruhl, 1985, p. 65). Jung adopted and expanded the meaning of Lévy-Bruhl’s term, and utilised it throughout his works, beginning with *Psychologische Typen* (*Psychological Types*, 1921). Winborn summarises the areas Jung wishes to address with his use of this term: ‘he highlights the blurring of subject-object boundaries resulting in an experience of *a priori* oneness, that *participation mystique* is regularly observed in people from cultures which Jung labels as “primitive”, and that it occurs in the mental states of early infancy’ (2014, p. 4). For Jung, the term can be applied to early psychological stages of development, as well as to ‘primitive’ man. It can also be experienced by adults of ‘civilised’ societies on occasions where individuation is challenged – for example, when one goes to the theatre and becomes part of a collective audience. A similar effect can be achieved through sensual interaction, as Jung notes in *Psychologische Typen*:

Das sinnliche Fühlen, oder besser gesagt, das im Zustande der Sinnlichkeit befindliche Fühlen ist kollektiv, d.h. es schafft ein Bezogen- oder Affiziertsein, welches den Menschen immer zugleich auch in den Zustand der “participation mystique” versetzt, also in den Zustand einer partiellen Identität mit dem empfundenen Objekt⁷⁰ (1921, p. 133).

⁷⁰ ‘Sensual feeling, or rather the feeling that is found in the state of sensuality, is collective. It produces a relatedness or proneness to affect which always puts the individual in a state of *participation mystique*; that is, in a state of partial identification with the perceived object’.

Winborn notes that ‘projection and identification’⁷¹ (2014, p. 4) are the two main phenomena that can trigger *participation mystique*, leading to its sense of profound unity.

The sensation of *participation mystique* is experienced via a regressive process. Gray informs us that one of Jung’s explanations for modern man’s return to a collective is that ‘groups re-establish to a certain extent the neonatal omnipotence and the sense of security originally provided by the symbiotic union with the mother’ (1996, p. 133). Jung himself stated that *participation mystique* ‘is really a return to the primitive condition’ (Bishop, 1995, p. 25; original in English). Profound participation in a collective distracts the subject from his individuation and allows for an experience of oneness recalling that of the infant and of the ‘primitive’. This notion strongly recalls Freud’s idea of the ‘oceanic’, for both terms describe a state of infantile union with one’s environment (including one’s mother), which is shattered by the infant’s realisation of his status as a separate, bordered, entity, and his mother as a separate individual.

Van den Berk notes that Jung conceives of both a ‘healthy and an unhealthy’ (2013, p. 39) version of *participation mystique*:

It is healthy for a person to realise that he *is* an intrinsic part of reality. [...] But something detrimental takes place when, at an adult age, this *participation mystique* slows down a healthy process of individuation and a person misses out on important aspects of his individual independence’ (ibid.).

Gray notes that participation in a collective can offer ‘strength and direction for those unable to sustain the work of individuation’ (p. 137), highlighting the therapeutic potential of a return to *participation mystique*, especially for modern man.

⁷¹ Von Franz defines Jungian projection as ‘an unconscious, that is, unperceived and unintentional, transfer of subjective psychic elements onto an outer object’ (1995, p. 3). The term has now entered common discourse and is no longer utilised only in strictly psychoanalytical contexts.

A further aspect of *participation mystique* that is relevant here, and which is explored by Bishop (1995), is Jung's use of the term 'as a synonym for the state of Dionysian reconciliation, defining both in terms of loss of individuality and individuation' (p. 257). Bishop notes the striking similarities between Jung's description of *participation mystique* and Nietzsche's description of the Dionysian state in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (ibid.), Jung's knowledge of which is widely accepted.⁷² He cites a statement made by Jung in one of his *Visions Seminars*, which were given in English between 1930 and 1934: 'The Dionysians were seeking that effect – namely, to be like everything else, to feel themselves in everything' (Jung, cited in Bishop, 1995, p. 257). Bishop also notes that, in Jung's *Psychologische Typen*, 'the barbaric aspect of man had been identified with the Dionysian' (p. 174), and that 'the return to the primordial experience in the process of artistic creativity [...] [represents] a return to Dionysos' (ibid.). He cites Jung's description of a return to Dionysus as '[ein] Wiedereintauchen'⁷³ (p. 175). As Bishop demonstrates, Jung appears to conceive of *participation mystique* as a Dionysian experience that is undergone via a regressive process, and which can be creatively beneficial. This gives Jung's idea of *participation mystique* particular relevance for this thesis, for something resembling this *participation mystique* is sought or experienced by certain characters in the texts under discussion, as part of their regressive Dionysian engagement that – it is hoped – will fuel artistic creation.

In terms of primitivism, Jung appears to find that regression to a 'primitive' state can trigger creativity and relieve modern man of the burdens of civilisation, such as wearying individuation or an over-reliance on rationality, echoing the beliefs of those artists who, dissatisfied with modernity, sought solace in exotic and allegedly less developed cultures. Like the primitivist discourse discussed above, Jung's statements regarding 'primitive' man

⁷² See Paul Bishop, *The Dionysian Self: C. G. Jung's Reception of Friedrich Nietzsche* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1995).

⁷³ 'a re-immersion' (translated by Bishop).

are problematic; but, as Winborn notes, Jung propagates the contrast between ‘civilised’ and ‘primitive’ ‘to draw attention to particular characteristics of the modern psychological state which he considered problematic’ (2014, p. 5). While this does not render Jung’s use of the ‘primitive-civilised’ dichotomy entirely harmless, it does differentiate him from those primitivists who employed such dichotomies to justify colonialist activities, for example.

In the texts under discussion, a longing for something resembling *participation mystique* is evident.⁷⁴ Given that Jung discussed *participation mystique* after the publication of the texts under consideration, no suggestion of influence will be posited, however.⁷⁵ It will simply be noted that Jung’s treatment of the subject is relevant to these texts, and that his theories regarding *participation mystique* are applicable to, and illuminate, (some of) the experiences d’Annunzio’s and Mann’s characters.

Linked to the value he placed on *participation mystique*, Jung also found particular importance in myth, which he found to be a prominent feature of the native peoples he observed in the non-Western world. By comparison, he perceived the ‘rootlessness of modern Western culture, psychologically impoverished since the Renaissance by its break with the mythic world and suffering from a dangerous split between the conscious world of modern rationalism and the shadow world of the unconscious’ (Walker, 2002, p. 138). In primitivist art (such as the paintings of Gauguin, Matisse and others, described earlier) Jung found therapeutic value: ‘[i]t is as if [...] we bring to expression that part of the psyche which reaches back into the primitive past and reconcile it with present-day consciousness, thus mitigating its disturbing effects upon the latter’ (1933, p. 73). He refers to the discontents of

⁷⁴ The sensations of oneness that constitute the *participation mystique* also recall the feeling of Dionysian communion that was examined in the previous chapter, as an experience that offers a creatively stimulating foil to the artist’s isolation. As a return to *participation mystique* is a regressive process, however (associated by Jung with both ‘primitive’ man and the infant), it will be discussed in this chapter, in the context of the regression that is triggered by the Dionysian.

⁷⁵ For a discussion of the relationship between Jung and Mann in the context of Mann’s later works, see Paul Bishop, “‘Literarische Beziehungen haben nie bestanden’? Thomas Mann and C. G. Jung”, *Oxford German Studies*, 1 (1994), pp. 124-172.

the modern, civilised man as ‘the dubious gifts of civilisation’ (p. 98), and notes that even if civilised man does turn back to nature, inspired by Rousseau, ‘we “cultivate” nature’ (ibid.).

In ‘Das Seelenproblem des modernen Menschen’ Jung declares: ‘Der Untergrund der Seele ist Natur, und Natur ist schöpferisches Leben’⁷⁶ (1981, p. 108). He does concede that the unconscious has ‘[ein] abschreckendes Aussehen’⁷⁷ (ibid.) but also states: ‘das Unbewußte [ausübt] eine mächtige Anziehungskraft, und zwar nicht etwa nur auf krankhafte Naturen, sondern auch auf gesunde, positive Geister’⁷⁸ (ibid.). As Torgovnick notes, Jung ‘actively worked towards reclaiming those unfulfilled parts of the self’ (1996, p. 33) whose repression (as Freud claimed) had been demanded by civilisation. Modern man’s fascination with the unconscious should not, Jung believed, be taken as a sign of degeneration or decadence, but as a step towards a more complete and healthy grasp of one’s identity, and for the benefit of mental health.

For Freud and Jung, then, the lure of the primitive reflected the outcome of the psychological repression demanded by civilisation or socialisation. Both accepted that a ‘savage beast’ lay hidden in the unconscious of ‘civilised’ man, but Jung found greater value in these hidden depths than Freud, and sought to establish channels of communication with these, through religion for example.

We will now turn our attention to d’Annunzio’s and Mann’s portrayals of the ‘primitive’ as a lure to ‘civilised’ man (here, the artist). In the texts discussed, however, the ‘primitive’ is not symbolised by geographically remote cultures but by the Dionysian, which promotes precisely those impulses and sensations that primitivist artists sought. This drive will be seen to trigger ‘internal regression’, which will be discussed first, whereby the individual adopts (at least temporarily) a more instinctual, intuitive and spontaneous mode of existence. Sensations regarding Freud’s ‘oceanic’ feeling and Jung’s *participation mystique*

⁷⁶ ‘The depths of the soul are nature, and nature is creative life’.

⁷⁷ ‘an alarming appearance’.

⁷⁸ ‘the unconscious exerts a powerful attraction, and not just over the sick, but also over healthy, positive souls’.

are also arguably sought by some of the fictional artists under discussion. Additionally, the Dionysian will be seen to offer a channel for ‘atavistic regression’ (which will be discussed second), whereby the artist seeks, sometimes subconsciously, to recuperate creative energies from earlier cultures – usually the pre-Socratic Greeks, who, as Nietzsche tells us, were cognisant of the power of the Dionysian.

iv) **The Artist and Internal Regression**

In the texts under discussion, some form of internal regression, both attempted and actually achieved, is an experience undergone by Gustav von Aschenbach, Gabriele Klöterjahn, Tonio Kröger, Giorgio Aurispa, Stelio Effrena and Foscarina. For these characters, engagement with the Dionysian triggers a regressive process that reverses the repression Freud describes as a requirement of civilisation. At such times the artist acts according to instinct and intuition, which often translates into unbridled sexual desire. In the cases of Aschenbach and Kröger, paternally imposed repression has resulted in an extreme repression of the ‘primitive’ and of the more creative and bohemian influence of their southern mothers. Gabriele Klöterjahn left behind a musical childhood when she married a bourgeois merchant and was obliged to focus solely on the creation of offspring; and Aurispa is cripplingly afflicted by a disillusionment with modernity and the isolation and sterility that it causes. *Il fuoco*’s Effrena does not appear to suffer because of civilisation’s demands and has not practised repression in the manner of Aschenbach and Kröger. He is, nonetheless, like all of the characters under discussion, a member of the modern West, and is therefore estranged from the ‘primitive’ and the ‘primordial’ – the coveted objects of turn of the century primitivism. All of these characters undergo, or attempt to undergo, regression, whether consciously or not, as a means of stimulating creativity, be it creativity that results in the composition of conventional works of art, or in the shaping of the *self* as the work of art.

Creativity is often reached by recuperating a lost aspect of the artist's identity and by retrieving something resembling the 'oceanic' sensation discussed by Freud and Torgovnick, and *participation mystique* discussed by Jung. This is especially true of d'Annunzio's texts, where the male hopes to find creative inspiration in his female companion. In most cases, the artist enjoys an initial stimulation of creativity alongside his regressive experience of the Dionysian; but in several cases the internal regression undergone by the artist goes too far to promote art, and any initial creativity is lost.

The most repressed character under discussion is without doubt Mann's Aschenbach. We read of his monastic lifestyle in Munich and of his extreme efforts to eliminate from his work any impulse or characteristic that could be considered 'primitive'. He has, for example, eradicated 'jedes gemeine Wort'⁷⁹ (Mann, 2004, p. 515) from his style of writing. Obsessive discipline characterises his daily routine, which includes a cold shower after rising early, followed by two or three 'inbrünstig gewissenhaften Morgenstunden'⁸⁰ (p. 510) which are devoted to productivity. The rigidity of this routine recalls the neurotic symptoms that Freud warns can emerge as a side-effect of the repression demanded by civilisation.⁸¹ In Aschenbach's case (as well as Tonio Kröger's), repression of certain instincts has been demanded both by civilisation in general (as Freud described) and by northern, burgherly society. The fathers of both Aschenbach and Kröger are members of the north-German middle-class and impose an influence over their sons which opposes the more artistic and passionate influence of their southern mothers. Aschenbach has unquestioningly adopted the values of his paternal ancestors, applying them to his own form of 'war',⁸² and therefore encounters the Dionysian after a lifetime of asceticism. Yet Freud warns that repression

⁷⁹ 'every rough word'

⁸⁰ 'vehemently conscientious morning hours'.

⁸¹ Freud states: 'der Mensch [wird] neurotisch [...], weil er das Maß von Versagung nicht ertragen kann, das ihm die Gesellschaft im Dienste ihrer kulturellen Ideale auferlegt' ('a person [becomes] neurotic because he cannot bear the extent of the renunciation that society demands in service of its cultural ideals' [1955d, p. 446]).

⁸² When he thinks of his ancestors, who were officers, judges, and administrators, Aschenbach attempts to cast his own occupation in a more respectable light, and attempts to cast it as a form of service: 'die Kunst war ein Krieg, ein aufreibender Kampf' ('art was a war, a gruelling battle' [Mann, 2004, p. 568]).

requires constant effort ('einen anhaltenden Kraftaufwand'⁸³ [1949, p. 253]), and that a lapse in these efforts can lead to a 'Wiederkehr des Verdrängten'⁸⁴ (p. 257). In the exhausted Aschenbach, whose repression begin to erode, we witness the return of 'uralte, seiner Jugend überlieferte und bis dahin niemals von eigenem Feuer belebte Gedanken'⁸⁵ (Mann, 2004, p. 553). This confirms the regressive nature of his experience. Not since his youth have these resurgent thoughts been allowed to manifest themselves in his psyche. These feelings are described as 'so neu oder doch so längst entwöhnt und verlernt'⁸⁶ (p. 504), indicating that it is the discipline and self-control he has practised since his youth that has caused his estrangement from them. As Aschenbach's Apollonian austerity crumbles (through fatigue) he is reunited with more basic instincts, which – rendered dangerous and uncontrollable by unfamiliarity – are expressed in a form of desire considered deviant, that of a middle-aged man for an adolescent boy.⁸⁷

As Aschenbach subconsciously allows the Dionysian to influence him, relaxing his repression, his creativity is initially sparked. On the beach, in view of Tadzio, he is able to compose a brief but brilliant treatise,⁸⁸ whose 'Lauterkeit, Adel und schwingende Gefühlsspannung binnen kurzem die Bewunderung vieler erregen sollte'⁸⁹ (ibid.). This is the first act of creation we witness him completing. The creative block⁹⁰ that troubled Aschenbach at the beginning of Mann's novella seems reversed. Yet this act of writing has been fuelled by impulses which have (hitherto) been banished from Aschenbach's work. We

⁸³ 'a constant expenditure of force'.

⁸⁴ 'return of the repressed'.

⁸⁵ 'primal thoughts, which had been passed down from his youth and until now had never been set alight by his own fire'.

⁸⁶ 'a feeling, so vivid, so new or at least so long discouraged and forgotten'.

⁸⁷ It is perhaps for this reason that Mann choses Tadzio as the object of Aschenbach's desire: both homosexual and paedophilic connotations render it the most transgressive form of lust imaginable, emphasising Aschenbach's inexperience at handling the unfamiliar instincts that now afflict him.

⁸⁸ This work is described as an 'Abhandlung' (p. 556) of '[erlesene] Prosa' ('choice prose' [ibid.]).

⁸⁹ 'purity, nobility and oscillating tension of feeling would soon excite the admiration of many'.

⁹⁰ We read, for example, of the '[zunehmende] Abnutzbarkeit seiner Kräfte' ('increasing wearing-away of his energies' [p. 501]).

read that Eros has guided Aschenbach in this creative act⁹¹ and that sexual desire is at its heart. As he writes he engages in a process of ‘Verkehr’ (‘intercourse’ or ‘communion’ [p. 556]) with Tadzio’s body, emphasising the sexual nature of this episode of creativity. The description of this act as ‘intercourse’, implying interaction, suggests that this is how Aschenbach views it. Yet Tadzio is not an active participant, and any suggestion of interaction seems to be a delusion, or projection, on Aschenbach’s part. As noted earlier, projection was one of the ways in which Jung believed *participation mystique* was activated, and here Aschenbach might be said to imagine a profound, almost mystical, relationship between himself and the youth, the product of which is Aschenbach’s brief treatise. Either way, had Aschenbach not engaged first with the Dionysian, leaving him more receptive to impulses of which civilisation demands the repression, this treatise would never have come about. He may still have completed a creative act, but it certainly would not have resembled the composition inspired by Tadzio’s beauty. Under the sway of the Dionysian, Aschenbach has undergone a regressive experience which has re-ignited his creativity. His regressive embrace of instinct does not end here, however, and it is destined to reach a dangerous extreme where creative focus is impossible to maintain.

While Aschenbach initially insists – to himself – that his fascination with Tadzio is based upon innocent aesthetic appreciation, he must eventually acknowledge that more carnal, and sinister instincts underpin his interest in the adolescent. At first Aschenbach casts himself as a cultured admirer of an exemplary piece of Western art, likening Tadzio to the statue of the Spinario (or Boy with Thorn), for example (Mann, 2004, p. 530); but the reader soon realises that Aschenbach’s fascination is with a living body, of flesh and blood, and that aesthetic appreciation merely cloaks erotic desire. It is the sexual instinct which has been unleashed by the Dionysian, and which responds to Tadzio’s body; and Aschenbach’s interest

⁹¹ ‘Nie hatte er die Lust des Wortes süßer empfunden, nie so gewußt, daß Eros im Worte sei’ (‘[n]ever before had he felt such sweet delight in the word, never had he been so aware that Eros is in the word’ [p. 556]).

arises from the ‘primitive’, rather than the ‘civilised’ side of his character. Although he is initially able to write in Tadzio’s presence, as time goes by Aschenbach moves ever closer to the ‘primitive’ and further from the ‘civilised’, leading to a loss of creative focus. After composing the brief treatise on the beach, Aschenbach writes nothing else. He eventually becomes a slave to a most transgressive form of desire, surrendering to his instincts, culminating in scenes of barbaric atavistic regression that will be discussed shortly.

Under the influence of the Dionysian, Aschenbach behaves in a way that directly opposes the upbringing imposed upon him by his father and by his own self-discipline, and obeys impulses antithetical to the dignified and respectable world of the burgher; Tonio Kröger’s encounter with the Dionysian leads to a similar situation. Like Aschenbach, Kröger’s upbringing has been characterised by burgherly and paternally imposed repression. As an adolescent, for example, Kröger was scolded by his father and teachers when his poetry was discovered. Kröger, however, feels their disapproval was justified, revealing discomfort with his creative tendencies: ‘Wenigstens gehört es sich, daß man mich ernstlich schilt und straft dafür, und nicht mit Küssen und Musik darüber hinweggeht’⁹² (p. 246).

Kröger’s experience of the Dionysian occurs when he departs from the north, leaving behind his ‘Vaterstadt’ (‘paternal town’ [p. 263]) and its influence, for the south. It is to the land of his (musical) mother’s origin that he wanders (‘vielleicht war es das Blut seiner Mutter, welches ihn dorthin zog’⁹³ [p. 264]), in an apparent migration from northern, paternal austerity to southern, maternal bohemianism. Here, Kröger temporarily abandons the paternally inherited disapproval which he has always harboured for bohemians and hedonists,⁹⁴ and instead lives as one of them, indulging in carnality and ‘Wollust’ (‘sensuality’ [ibid.]). Kröger has not subscribed to the same excessive Apollonianism as

⁹² ‘It is only right that I am at least properly scolded and punished for it, and that it is not brushed over with kisses and music’.

⁹³ ‘maybe it was the blood of his mother that drew him there’.

⁹⁴ ‘Wir sind doch keine Zigeuner im grünen Wagen, sondern anständige Leute, [...] die Familie der Kröger’ (‘We are no gypsies in green caravans, but respectable people, [...] the Kröger family’ [p. 247]).

Aschenbach, however, and is not as vulnerable to the primitive instincts that he rediscovers in the south, under the influence of the Dionysian. Aschenbach has utterly shunned the ‘primitive’ side of his nature, and practised a thoroughly northern and burgherly form of artistic creation; but Kröger has always existed ‘zwischen krassen Extremen’⁹⁵ (p. 265), and has remained aware of both the northern and southern, paternal and maternal, ‘primitive’ and ‘civilised’ sides of his character. Unlike Aschenbach, Kröger is able to recognise the Dionysian as it approaches. He is comparatively far more capable of ‘sublimating’ the potent impulses and instincts that accompany the Dionysian, as will be seen in the next chapter.

Kröger’s regressive experience is one which proves creatively fruitful. Unlike the creative spurt of Aschenbach’s engagement with the Dionysian, however, Kröger attains lasting creativity. This creativity is shown to rely upon a regressive experience as it follows his hedonistic, carnal adventures in the south, and his (temporary) departure from burgherly values and principles. After these experiences, his art becomes ‘wählerisch, erlesen, kostbar, fein, reizbar gegen das Banale und aufs Höchste empfindlich in Fragen des Taktes und Geschmacks’⁹⁶ (p. 265). If he had not attempted to embrace a bohemian lifestyle, indulging in base, sensual pleasures, Kröger would not have experienced the artistic enhancement that resulted. For the conflict between hedonistic sensuality and bourgeois decorum, although exhausting, produces a fruitful tension⁹⁷ in Kröger, which in turn stimulates creativity.⁹⁸

A visceral reaction (‘Ekel’ [‘disgust’, p. 265]) against uncivilised sensual abandon draws Kröger back to the north (to Munich) and to a bourgeois way of life. Paglia finds the presence of the Apollonian in such reactions: ‘Disgust is an Apollonian response, an aesthetic judgement’ (2001, p. 93). If Apollo causes us to feel distaste, here it is the Dionysian that

⁹⁵ ‘between stark extremes’.

⁹⁶ ‘fastidious, delicate, rich, subtle, irritable at banality and highly sensitive in matters of rhythm and taste’.

⁹⁷ ‘in dem Maße, wie seine Gesundheit geschwächt ward, verschärfte sich seine Künstlerschaft’ (‘as his health was weakened, his artistry was sharpened’ [p. 265]).

⁹⁸ It is noteworthy, however, that when Kröger engages with the Dionysian, he has not, like Aschenbach, led a life of extreme (outward) asceticism, and has not (yet) attempted to stamp out every element of hedonism; it is only after his taste of Dionysian abandon and excess that Kröger decides to adopt the *modus operandi* of a bourgeois, although he remains plagued with guilt at his artistry and troubled at his isolation.

offends. Outwardly Kröger appears to eschew the ‘primitive’ and ‘base’ impulses which he had satisfied in the south, as well as the bohemian art that embraces them. His friend Lisaweta even mocks his ‘Patriziergewänder’ (‘aristocratic clothing’ [Mann, 2004, p. 269]), which Kröger defends by claiming that an artist is outlandish enough in his interior, without the need for dilettantish attire. In an effort to relieve the guilt caused by his regression to a state of primal sensuality in the south, Kröger takes pains to behave as a decent burgher when he returns to the north, apparently seeking the corrective influence of his northern father and upbringing. Tellingly, during his time of southern hedonism, Kröger had longed for a deeper kind of happiness, which he could not find in carnal pursuits: ‘eine schwache, sehnsüchtige Erinnerung [...] an eine Lust der Seele, die einstmals sein eigen gewesen war, und die er in allen Lüsten nicht wiederfand’⁹⁹ (p. 264). This appears to be a longing for ‘den hellen Lebendigen, den Glücklichen, Liebenswürdigen und Gewöhnlichen’¹⁰⁰ (p. 318), from which Kröger cannot fully sever himself, preventing him from living as those artists who venture into demonic beauty but despise humanity.¹⁰¹ As well as declaring to detest those hedonists who obey a ‘trunkene Philosophie’¹⁰² (p. 278) – possibly an allusion to the Dionysian and those who embrace it utterly – Kröger also retains a love for the banality of life. This combination proves an effective prophylactic in his encounter with the Dionysian and his experience of regression, and at the end of Mann’s novella Kröger declares that he is on the verge of unparalleled creativity, which will lead to unprecedented works of art.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ ‘a weak, longing memory [...] of a desire of the soul, which once had been his, and which he could not find in all other forms of desire’.

¹⁰⁰ ‘the light-hearted ones, the happy, worthy of love, and ordinary’.

¹⁰¹ ‘die Stolzen und Kalten, die auf den Pfaden der großen, der dämonischen Schönheit abenteueren und den “Menschen” verachten’ (‘the proud and cold, who venture onto the path of great and demonic beauty, and who “despise mankind”’ [p. 318]).

¹⁰² ‘drunken philosophy’.

¹⁰³ ‘Was ich getan habe, ist nichts, nicht viel, so gut wie nichts. Ich werde Besseres machen, Lisaweta, – dies ist ein Versprechen. [...] Ich schaue in eine ungeborene und schemenhafte Welt hinein, die geordnet und gebildet sein will’ (‘What I have achieved so far, that is nothing, not much, as good as nothing. I will produce better, Lisaweta – that is a promise. [...] I gaze into an unborn and hazy world, which wishes to be ordered and refined’ [p. 318]).

In *Tristan*, as with Aschenbach and Tonio Kröger, the Dionysian triggers a regressive experience that results in uncharacteristic behaviour. We learn that Gabriele Klöterjahn left behind a musical upbringing when she married and that she has been forbidden to play the piano since the birth of her excessively healthy son, Anton – which left her in a state of ill-health. Her husband and the bourgeois world he represents seem antithetical to the world of (Dionysian) music, and for Gabriele burgherly civilisation appears to have demanded the sacrifice of artistic impulses. While Euchner arguably overlooks Gabriele's seemingly genuine claims to have married Herr Klöterjahn willingly, and suggests that Gabriele's marriage constitutes a situation of 'prolonged misery' (2005, p. 206) – for which there is no real evidence, other than Spinell's fanciful interpretations – her situation could nonetheless be termed one of 'repression', for a former source of pleasure has been cut off. Yet once encouraged by Spinell – '[w]ir sind frei...Sie sind frei, gnädige Frau!'¹⁰⁴ (Mann, 2004, p. 347) – Gabriele plays the piano again in the Einfried sanatorium. She plays several of Chopin's nocturnes¹⁰⁵ before Spinell discovers the music sheets for *Tristan und Isolde*, which she begins to play unprompted. In playing the piano again Gabriele abandons caution for the sake of pleasure, and indulges in musical excess. She plays what is arguably the most Dionysian of all music, which Nietzsche singled out as the best example of the dangers of the Dionysian (GT-21). While Freud would probably consider her musical performance a 'civilised' act, for art is one of the defining achievements of civilisation, Mann's choice of music adds a sinister undercurrent to the episode and colours the artistic act as one which engages with darker and more dangerous instincts, rather than as a mark of civilisation. Here Gabriele departs from her normal state and rediscovers artistic impulses that had previously been confined to the past; as Euchner notes, at the piano, Gabriele can 'start working through the thicket that denies her access to herself' (2005, p. 196) in a process of rediscovery.

¹⁰⁴ 'We are free...You are free, dear woman!'

¹⁰⁵ As Schnitman notes (1971, p. 405), possibly a hint at the apparent attack of tuberculosis that she will suffer soon afterwards, for Chopin also died of tuberculosis.

In *Tristan*, regression to the ‘primitive’ is largely symbolised by the unleashing of instincts triggered by the Dionysian music of *Tristan und Isolde*. As in *Der Tod in Venedig* and *Tonio Kröger*, these are mainly sexual instincts, which can be, Freud tells us, hostile to civilisation if unrestrained. This music is, as Hutcheon states, of an ‘orgasmic nature’ (1990, p. 285), and, as Bassett explains, portrays ‘a sexual love so intense that even the physical bodies of the lovers are a barrier to its fulfilment’ (2006, p. 6). In Mann’s description of the music that Gabriele plays, sexuality is (implicitly) unleashed and exalted as we read of ‘ein Versinken in sublimier Begierde’¹⁰⁶ (Mann, 2004, p. 354), and ‘[d]er Überschwang einer ungeheuren Lösung und Erfüllung’¹⁰⁷ (ibid.). However, a protruding blue vein¹⁰⁸ betrays Gabriele’s inner turmoil and emotional involvement as she plays Wagner’s climactic music, and she participates in the music to a greater degree than Spinell (who cannot play the piano). Whether or not Euchner’s interpretation of this scene (discussed on page 115) is correct, and the wild sexual impulses evident in Wagner’s music are also, to some extent, Gabriele’s experience, her Dionysian regression certainly involves some form of heightened sexuality and erotic abandon; this may be limited to her experience of musical reproduction, or the effect of some ecstatic reunion.

Gabriele’s regressive experience is entirely personal; she (subconsciously) seeks to return to an earlier state (that of her musical adolescence), and arguably retrieves a lost aspect of her identity. An episode of creative ecstasy occurs along the way, but as with Aschenbach, it is only brief and isolated. Her regression involves abandon (in her disregard of medical instruction) and excess (in her reproduction of a piece of music that Mann considered ‘ein überaus unzüchtiges Werk’¹⁰⁹ [1961, p. 182]), from which recovery seems unlikely. Several hints lead us to believe that she (like Aschenbach) will perish: the pale blue vein that is

¹⁰⁶ ‘a descent into sublime lust’.

¹⁰⁷ ‘the exuberance of a tremendous release and fulfilment’.

¹⁰⁸ This is described as ‘ein kleines, seltsames Äderchen [,] [...] blaßblau und kränklich’ (‘a small, peculiar vein [,] [...] pale blue and sickly’ [p. 323]).

¹⁰⁹ ‘a thoroughly indecent work of art’.

visible on her forehead (and becomes more prominent when she plays the piano) has constantly emphasised her fragility; and she has been rendered angelic by both her bourgeois husband¹¹⁰ and the degenerate Spinell.¹¹¹ Schnitman also finds an allusion to Gabriele's death in the fact that as Spinell wanders into the garden after her downturn, the snow has melted, which '[implies] the demise of Gabriele, who has been consistently associated with the snow' (Schnitman, 1971, p. 413). When she arrives at Einfried, for example, thick snow covers the garden. Gabriele's death seems imminent when her attack of tuberculosis is announced by Gabriele's companion in the sanatorium, Rätin Spatz, who interrupts a confrontation between Herr Klöterjahn and Spinell.

In *Il trionfo della morte*, *Tristan und Isolde* also signals the release of uncontrollable sexual instincts, and a return to a more primal state. While Giorgio Aurispa has not practised repression equal to Aschenbach and Kröger (and possibly Gabriele), he does offer a paradigmatic example of disillusionment with modernity and of the suffering that results from the sacrifices that civilisation demands. He laments modern man's alienation and estrangement from nature, and feels similarly alienated from his fellow man, as was seen in the previous chapter. Aurispa longs to follow the teachings of Nietzsche-Zarathustra, and become the *superuomo*. He realises, though, that his own impotence and sterility (as afflictions of modernity) will always impede him, reflecting sadly that 'Una discordia incessante agita e sterilisce tutti i miei pensieri'¹¹² (d'Annunzio, 1988, p. 717).

Aurispa's hopes for recovery and redemption lead him to withdraw to the hermitage by the sea in San Vito with Ippolita. Aurispa's flight to the countryside arguably resembles, to a certain degree, the wandering of Tonio Kröger, for, like Kröger, Aurispa returns to a land

¹¹⁰ Herr Klöterjahn cautions, 'take care, mein Engel' ('take care, my angel' [Mann, 2004, p. 321]).

¹¹¹ Spinell whispers to her 'wie als höbe er sie in scheuer Andacht sanft und hoch empor und bettete sie auf Wolkenpfühle, woselbst kein schriller Laut und keine irdische Berührung sie erreichen sollte' ('as if he were elevating her gently upwards in shy devotion, to lay her upon cloud cushions, where no shrill sound or earthly contact should reach her' [p. 342])

¹¹² 'A constant discord stirs and sterilises all my thoughts'.

that has maternal connotations. Kröger migrates to the land of his mother's origin, while Aurispa seeks the comfort of the womb, 'una solitudine raccolta e benigna come un grembo'¹¹³ (p. 777). The likening of this area to the womb emphasises the regressive nature of this withdrawal and hints at the possibility of, or hope for, rebirth. Like the gendered strand of primitivist discourse that longed for the female other, these two characters experience a regressive longing for a retrieval of the 'primitive' and the maternal – and arguably, the comforting and unifying sensations of (Freud's) 'oceanic' and (Jung's) *participation mystique*. Aurispa's flight from the city resembles d'Annunzio's own frequent stays in the Abruzzo, noted earlier. Perhaps in Aurispa we find a more extreme version of d'Annunzio's own longings, although there is no evidence that the author shared his protagonist's debilitating sense of impotence. Similarly, Aurispa's struggle to resist his seductive and overtly sexualised lover may recall d'Annunzio's own difficulties in balancing artistic productivity with sensual pursuits.¹¹⁴

Aurispa withdraws to the hermitage in hope of recovery: he seeks a Rousseauian return to nature – which, he hopes, will welcome him benevolently and offer healing. He still possesses 'una brama ardentissima di vivere'¹¹⁵ (p. 784) and has not yet reached the point of utter destitution. He pins his hopes partly on Ippolita, and the prospect of 'La Vita Nuova' ('The New Life' [p. 784]), for he still hopes to overcome the crippling lust that she incites in him – which is reminiscent of Effrena's distracting erotic desire for Foscarina and Aschenbach's for Tadzio – and render their love more transcendent.¹¹⁶ When Aurispa first arrives at the hermitage he finds himself in an atmosphere of harmony, fertility, and vitality. The rural location of the hermitage seems the very personification of abundance and life, and

¹¹³ 'a pleasant and benevolent solitude like that of the womb'.

¹¹⁴ Woodhouse notes that '[t]he power of sex and his attraction to women were, throughout his life, to be d'Annunzio's main spur and inspiration for creative writing' (2001, p. 24). He also notes that d'Annunzio 'often expressed regret, [...] that his devotion to sexual pleasures weakened or diminished his artistic prowess' (p. 6).

¹¹⁵ 'an ardent longing to live'.

¹¹⁶ 'sperava di poter dare al suo amore un alto significato morale' ('he hoped to be able to give his love a high moral significance' [d'Annunzio, 1988, p. 784]).

augurs well for his hoped-for recovery. Initially he feels like a convalescent¹¹⁷ and rejoices in an ‘ebrietà pànica’¹¹⁸ (d’Annunzio, 1988, p. 781). He reflects upon the healing that can be derived from such constant contemplation of nature, which will lead (he hopes) to ‘il palpito concorde di tutto ciò che è creato’¹¹⁹ (ibid.). The sensation Aurispa seeks strongly resembles Jung’s idea of *participation mystique*, whereby the individual returns to a state of harmony and communion with nature.

Soon after his welcome into the arms of nature, however, Aurispa’s attempted regression into primitive innocence is interrupted by confirmation of his earlier articulated fear that contemporary man can no longer exist in harmony with nature.¹²⁰ Aurispa’s misplaced belief in the benevolence of nature is suggested, for example, by the drowning of a child in the sea – the cruel indifference of which is emphasised by its calmness and gentleness following the death¹²¹ – and the near-drowning of Ippolita. Such events suggest that Aurispa has naively overlooked the cruelty and perilousness of nature (recalling Nietzsche’s criticism of Rousseau). An early note by Nietzsche regarding nature seems pertinent here: ‘Die Natur ist nichts so Harmloses, dem man sich ohne Schauder übergeben könnte’¹²² (NF-1870, 7 [155]). While it would be difficult to claim that d’Annunzio, in Aurispa, pits a Rousseauian return to nature against a Nietzschean version – largely because d’Annunzio only encountered Nietzsche after beginning his novel – the ideas of the two

¹¹⁷ In *Il piacere*, literal, rather than figurative, convalescence is linked to a successful rediscovery of the ‘primitive’. When Andrea Sperelli, wounded after a duel, leaves Rome and withdraws to a rural location (Francavilla al Mare, again in the Abruzzo) he is able to ‘riprendere coscienza di sé stesso, a ritrovare il sentimento della sua persona, a rientrare nella sua corporeità primitiva’ (‘regain consciousness of himself, to rediscover awareness of his person, to re-enter into a state of primitive corporeality’ [p. 134]). The portrayal of the Abruzzo in *Il piacere* is not as ambivalent as in *Il trionfo della morte*, and is the region where Sperelli successfully recovers from his wound and rediscovers art.

¹¹⁸ ‘panic drunkenness’.

¹¹⁹ ‘the harmonious pulse of all that is created’.

¹²⁰ ‘La terra non gli svelerà mai il suo segreto’ (‘The earth will never reveal its secret to him’ [d’Annunzio, 1988, p. 718])

¹²¹ ‘Il mare in calma respirava presso il capo del morticino, dolcemente’ (‘The calm sea breathed around the head of the dead boy, sweetly’ [p. 957]).

¹²² ‘Nature is not so harmless that one could be consigned to it without shuddering’.

philosophers regarding a return to instinct and nature can nonetheless be used to illuminate Aurispa's experience, and may also help us understand the reasons for his failure.

Fleeing the city and the restraints of civilisation allows Aurispa and Ippolita to lead a leisurely existence of unbridled pleasures; in the hermitage they are utterly unburdened by the demands of urban life, work and society, and they can simply live according to their desires. Again, it is sexual desire that comes to dominate their existence and consume their energies. Their days are characterised by a 'pesantissimo ozio'¹²³ (d'Annunzio, 1988, p. 935), and withdrawal into nature has brought out Aurispa's animalism, leaving him as enslaved to sexual desire as a beast: 'Il nuovo modo di vivere, all'aria aperta, in quella campagna, su quel mare, favoriva lo sviluppo della sua animalità, eccitava nella sua natura inferma una forza fittizia e il bisogno di esercitarla sino all'eccesso'¹²⁴ (p. 949). Imagining his future with Ippolita, Aurispa sees himself 'legato a quella carne come il servo al suo ferro, privo di volontà e pensiero, istupidito e vacuo'¹²⁵ (p. 916). This vision of his future self could not be further from his ideal of the *superuomo*. Additionally, Aurispa reflects upon Ippolita's sterility, which he believes renders their sexual relationship meaningless and base: 'Mancava al suo amore la ragion prima: l'affermazione e lo sviluppo della vita di là dai limiti dell'esistenza individua. Mancava alla donna amata il più alto mistero del sesso: "la sofferenza di colei che partorisce"'¹²⁶ (p. 916). The lack of procreative possibility ensures that the sexual act between Aurispa and Ippolita is purely an act of pleasure and implies that no creative benefit is to be derived from this relationship. The arrival of a piano at the hermitage is welcomed by Aurispa as a possible means of interrupting 'l'ozio delle lunghe ore

¹²³ 'extremely heavy lethargy'.

¹²⁴ 'The new way of life, in the open air, in that countryside and on the coast, favoured the development of his animality, exciting a fictitious force within his sick nature and the need to exercise it excessively'.

¹²⁵ 'tied to that flesh like a slave to his irons, void of will and thought, becoming stupid and vacuous'.

¹²⁶ 'His love lacked its primary reason: the affirmation and the development of life beyond the limits of individual existence. And the beloved woman lacked the highest mystery of sex: "the sufferings of she who gives birth"'. Here d'Annunzio appears to reference a declaration made by Nietzsche's Zarathustra: 'Dass der Schaffende selber das Kind sei, das neu geboren werde, dazu muss er auch die Gebärerin sein wollen und der Schmerz der Gebärerin' ('For the creator to become the child that is newly born, he must also wish to be the mother who gives birth and desire the pains of childbirth' [Za-II-Inseln]).

diurne e di evitare le tentazioni...'¹²⁷ (p. 948). It merely becomes a means of unleashing further impulses towards sexual abandon, however, and allows a deathly seduction to take place.

Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* is once again used to demonstrate the release of sexual drives that occurs as part of Aurispa's internal regression. It is not the only erotic music played by Aurispa and Ippolita in the hermitage (they also play Grieg's *Erotik* for example), but it is by far the most significant, and d'Annunzio dedicates roughly fifteen pages to describing it. As in *Tristan*, the music is played by the woman, and Ippolita performs while Aurispa listens, becoming lost in the music.¹²⁸ D'Annunzio's ekphrasis of *Tristan und Isolde* focuses on the erotic nature of the music, which Aurispa vividly recalls witnessing on a pilgrimage to Bayreuth. At the centre of this work of art is, we are told, 'il desiderio insaziabile'¹²⁹ (p. 974), and aspiration towards '[la] suprema voluttà'¹³⁰ (p. 987). Desire is inflamed to a frenetic fury¹³¹ and the ecstasy of the final climax is hindered by the limits of the lovers' bodies: 'le anime avidi di confondersi incontravano l'ostacolo impenetrabile dei corpi'¹³² (p. 979).

The ecstatic union of *Tristan and Isolde* recounted here reflects Aurispa's longing for absolute possession of his lover.¹³³ After playing Wagner's music, renunciation of the sexual drive seems impossible, and death appears to offer the only alternative to a life of enslavement to animal carnality. It is for this reason that Aurispa finally decides attempt a re-

¹²⁷ 'the lethargy of the long daytime hours and of avoiding temptations...'

¹²⁸ Curiously, both Mann and d'Annunzio also note the lamentable quality of the instrument upon which their characters play Wagner's music, and note that despite this both Gabriele and Ippolita succeed in conveying the effect of the orchestra with their great talent and sensitivity. It may even be the case that Mann had read d'Annunzio's novel and that the many parallels between the two scenes are the result of parodic intention on Mann's part; although it is difficult to find sufficient evidence to support this interpretation, aside from textual coincidences, and we cannot say for sure whether Mann actually read (or knew of) *Il trionfo della morte*.

¹²⁹ 'insatiable desire'.

¹³⁰ 'supreme sensual pleasure'.

¹³¹ '[c]on una divorante furia, [...] il desiderio si dilatava, s'agitava, fiammeggiava sempre più alto' ('with an all-consuming fury, [...] desire was inflated, excited, and blazed ever higher' [p. 975]).

¹³² 'their souls, longing to mingle, encountered the impenetrable obstacle of their bodies'.

¹³³ 'C'è su la terra una sola ebrezza durevole: la *sicurtà* nel possesso di un'altra creatura, la *sicurtà* assoluta, incrollabile. Io cerco questa ebrezza' ('Upon earth there is only one lasting intoxication: the *surety* of possession of another creature, absolute and unshakable security. I seek this intoxication' [p. 776]).

enactment of the death of Tristan and Isolde, but his own attempted re-enactment of the *Liebestod* is characterised by bathos rather than rapture. One night, after plying Ippolita with alcohol in order to intoxicate her (and render her more pliable), he encourages her to take a walk in the countryside surrounding the hermitage. Originally, Aurispa had intended to throw himself and his lover into the path of an oncoming train, but by the time they step out into the dark the train is already thundering past. Instead, Aurispa leads Ippolita to a nearby cliff, coaxing her to its precipitous edge. Once she realises that he intends to leap from the precipice, and take her with him, she fights viciously ('si difese con le unghie, con i morsi, come una fiera'¹³⁴ [p. 1018]) and screams for help. Her cries of 'assassino' ('murderer' [ibid.]) emphasise her total lack of compliance, and destroy any possibility of a *Liebestod*. The scene becomes one of murder and undignified scrapping, little resembling the lofty demise of Wagner's lovers. Eventually Aurispa succeeds in throwing them both off the cliff, and they hurtle towards death wrapped in each other's arms ('avvinti' ['bound together', ibid.]) – but there is no sublime love in their embrace.

Ironically, the place to which Aurispa withdraws in an attempt to effect a personal rebirth, establish contact with his ancestors, stimulate his creativity, and heal his crippling melancholy, becomes the site where his impotence is confirmed. His internal regression leaves him more destitute and desperate than ever. The tension that Freud describes between civilisation and certain instincts, necessitating repression, is strikingly evident in *Il trionfo della morte*, and once the lovers surrender to their instincts they become dominated by characteristics hostile to civilisation, which Aurispa (like Aschenbach and Gabriele Klöterjahn) is eventually unable to restrain, leading to his suicide. Aurispa's search for the 'primitive' (which is encountered most strongly – and fatally – in the Dionysian music of

¹³⁴ 'she defended herself with her nails, with bites, like a wild beast'.

Tristan und Isolde), then, leads him only to barbarism and animalism, enslavement to antisocial instincts and death.

In *Il fuoco*, the *superuomo*-artist does not display the same dissatisfaction with modernity displayed by Aurispa and has not practised extreme (and neurosis-inducing) repression that leaves him in a state of psychological exhaustion. Nonetheless, Effrena is still a member of modern Western civilisation and can still benefit from a retrieval of the Dionysian and its more ‘primitive’ impulses, which will aid him in his artistic goal of inaugurating a tragic tradition for the modern age. As will be discussed shortly, in his oration to the crowds in Venice he revives the Dionysian and incites his listeners into a bacchic frenzy, where they resemble the ancient deity’s wild worshippers. In his episodes of creativity with Foscarina, who allows him access to the Dionysian, regressive aspects are also clear. Foscarina allows Effrena to retrieve ancient creative energies, which are accessible ‘via sexual intercourse’ (Otey, 2010, p. 174); their episodes of erotic intoxication are described as wild, even animalistic at times, and appear to show unbridled sexuality (of the kind Freud warns is antithetical to civilisation). When creatively focused, these episodes show the benefit of the ‘primitive’ influence of the Dionysian, and reveal how it can be incorporated into modern times for the benefit of civilisation (here: art); but occasionally these episodes of carnality threaten art and creativity, distracting the artist and leaving him unable to resist carnal pleasures for the good of creative productivity.

Effrena’s desire for Foscarina frequently escalates into barely containable, wild erotic lust. This appears to occur in particular when Dionysus is near, for example after Effrena’s speech, when both he and his listeners are reunited with creative Dionysian impulses. Following his oration, and after he has dined with several fellow artists, he meets with Foscarina so that they can fulfil their promise of consummation. An atmosphere of unbridled sexuality has already been suggested by the sensual awakening triggered by Effrena’s

words.¹³⁵ Between Effrena and Foscarina sexual desire becomes irresistible. He is afflicted by ‘una volontà mostruosa’¹³⁶ (d’Annunzio, 1989, p. 304) and ‘[un] istinto crudo’¹³⁷ (ibid.), while she longs to submit to her lover (‘Tutto il suo corpo allora si contorse e vibrò intorno a un nucleo di fuoco, chiedendo di soggiacere’¹³⁸ [p. 311]). Periodically, the two lovers’ lust becomes ‘insano e smisurato’¹³⁹ (p. 304) and borders on madness. After Effrena’s oration, for example, he is possessed by ‘un ardore selvaggio’¹⁴⁰ (p. 303) for Foscarina’s body, and later on we read of Foscarina biting Effrena ‘come una fiera’¹⁴¹ (p. 330), leaving a territorial mark. In such incidents excessive sexual desire reduces the artist and his muse to feral beasts (indeed, their lustful gazes are ‘ferino’ [‘feral, p. 311]), and to a level of primitivism where art and culture are unthinkable. Effrena’s desire is explicitly primitive, and of a regressive nature: ‘di lontano gli veniva quel torbido ardore, dalle più remote origini, dalla primitiva bestialità delle mescolanze subitane, dall’antico mistero delle libidini sacre’¹⁴² (p. 304). This form of lust recalls man’s animal origins and brushes with instincts so bestial that creative focus seems irrevocably lost. For d’Annunzio’s *superuomo*, however, gaining mastery over such instincts is not as impossible as it is for, say, Mann’s Aschenbach.

Sexuality can, however, also fertilise Effrena’s mind and establish communication between the ancient Dionysian energies rediscovered by Foscarina, and the artist who can shape them into art. Effrena is the only artist under discussion who engages in collaborative creation. While both Effrena and Aschenbach are inspired to sudden creativity by the presence of the objects of their desire (Foscarina and Tadzio respectively), only in *Il fuoco* does this object of desire play an active role in creation. Aschenbach’s act of writing may be

¹³⁵ ‘Pareva [...] che una sovrabbondanza di vita sensuale gonfiasse le arterie degli uomini’ (‘It seemed that an overabundance of sensual life was swelling the arteries of men’ [d’Annunzio, 1989, p. 304]).

¹³⁶ ‘a monstrous will’.

¹³⁷ ‘a crude instinct’.

¹³⁸ ‘Her whole body contorted itself and trembled around a nucleus of fire, longing to submit’.

¹³⁹ ‘insane and excessive’.

¹⁴⁰ ‘a wild desire’.

¹⁴¹ ‘like a wild animal’.

¹⁴² ‘That torpid desire came to him from afar, from the most remote origins, from the primitive bestiality of sudden couplings, from the ancient mystery of sacred lusts’.

described as a process of ‘Verkehr’ between Tadzio’s body and Aschenbach’s mind, but this intercourse is one-sided. In *Il fuoco*, however, Foscarina’s body willingly fertilises Effrena’s mind, and he is astonished that ‘le linee d’un volto, le movenze d’un corpo umano potessero toccare e fecondare così fortemente l’intelletto’¹⁴³ (p. 470). In their collaborative creativity, the influence of the Dionysian and its ‘primitive’ impulses is evident. Yet rather than stimulating pure carnality, here the Dionysian stimulates embodied creativity. Just as Jung saw sensuality as a means of achieving *participation mystique* and establishing profound identification, so the sexual relationship of Effrena and Foscarina allows them to feel primally united – which in turn unleashes hitherto neglected creative impulses.

Collaborative creativity between Effrena and Foscarina is highly sexualised. Effrena exploits the Dionysian energies rediscovered by Foscarina through interaction that ‘becomes a process of rape’ (Otey, 2010, p. 174), and she furnishes him with creative Dionysian impulses in a process that resembles (subverted) fertilisation. Reflecting upon Foscarina as a means of accessing primitive myth, Effrena expresses violent sexual desire: ‘io ti possederò come in un’orgia vasta; io ti scrollerò come un fascio di tirsi’¹⁴⁴ (d’Annunzio, 1989, p. 284). It is in her role as an actor that Foscarina appears most receptive. She is ready to be filled with words supplied by Effrena, and becomes ‘concavo come un calice per ricevere quell’onda’¹⁴⁵ (p. 211). In *Il fuoco* the creative process seems to offer d’Annunzio a means of reaffirming patriarchal structures and of retrieving the virility and potency lacking in earlier protagonists such as Giorgio Aurispa. For even when Foscarina ‘fertilises’ Effrena in a reversal of traditional gender roles, the latter is not emasculated. He appropriates the (female)

¹⁴³ ‘the lines of a face, the movements of a human body should so strongly touch and fertilise the intellect’. Effrena’s reaction to Foscarina’s body here strongly recalls that of Aschenbach opposite Tadzio, when he is suddenly inspired to write.

¹⁴⁴ ‘I will possess you as if in a vast orgy, I will wield you as a bundle of thyrsi’. A thyrsus is a wand carried by Dionysian worshippers, often wound with ivy and topped by a pine-cone.

¹⁴⁵ ‘concave like a chalice, ready to be filled by that wave’.

experiences of impregnation, gestation¹⁴⁶ and birth in a way that actually reinforces his masculinity. Foscarina's 'fertilisation' is not an act forced upon Effrena, but rather *by* him.¹⁴⁷

When d'Annunzio's artist is able to channel the primitive Dionysian, and the unbridled sexual desire that it triggers, into artistic activity, he is able to tap unparalleled sources of inspiration. This is seen in the climactic episode of collaborative creativity that occurs towards the end of *Il fuoco*. As Foscarina enters a room, Effrena is suddenly struck by a vision of her as a figure of profound and ancient wisdom, which she renders attainable to Effrena. She appears 'sicura come se venisse dalle profondità della Saggezza, di là dove tutte le agitazioni umane sembrano un gioco di venti nella polvere d'un cammino senza termine',¹⁴⁸ (d'Annunzio, 1989, p. 309). Effrena envisages Foscarina in a scene from his coming drama and instructs her as she becomes the character who discovers the tomb of Agamemnon and Cassandra,¹⁴⁹ guiding her through the scene that appears and vanishes alternately in his mind. As noted earlier, Foscarina here becomes Effrena's artistic raw material and acts according to his instruction, allowing his partial visions to be completed. There is a Dionysian intoxication in this process of creation and they experience ecstasy and profound communion: '[e]ntrambi erano intenti alle scintille che si generavano dalle loro forze commiste. Una medesima vibrazione elettrica correva per i loro nervi meravigliosi',¹⁵⁰ (p. 473).

Foscarina stimulates sensations and unleashes creative forces that have lain dormant – both in Effrena and in Italy's contemporary cultural landscape. Her affinity with the Dionysian, as well as her ability to place this potent drive at Effrena's artistic disposal, means

¹⁴⁶ We read, for example: 'l'opera ch'egli nutriva entro di sè, ancora informe, ebbe un fiero sussulto di vita' ('the work that he was nourishing within himself, still shapeless, gave a proud jolt of life' [p. 244]).

¹⁴⁷ The forceful nature of Effrena's exploitation of Foscarina's rediscoveries is evident when, for example, he rushes towards her 'con impeto come se volesse percuoterla per trarne scintille' ('with force, as if he wanted to strike sparks from her' [p. 472]).

¹⁴⁸ 'sure, as if she came from the depths of Knowledge, from beyond where human troubles seem like a game of the winds in the dust of an endless path'.

¹⁴⁹ The theatrical work that is beginning to take shape in Effrena's mind is actually d'Annunzio's *La città morta*, which premiered in 1898.

¹⁵⁰ 'Both were intent upon the sparks that were being generated by their mingled forces. The same electric vibration ran through the miraculous nerves of both'.

that she is a crucial component of Effrena's desired cultural renaissance. Similarly, as an actor and woman, Foscarina apparently relies upon the more masterful hand of the male artist to refine and shape these Dionysian energies and impulses into artistic output. Yet Foscarina struggles, at times, to subjugate her desires and demands as a lover to the creative needs of Effrena, and as was seen in the previous chapter, occasionally threatens his identity as an artist. Her stifling embrace can render him 'inerte' ('inert' [p. 332]), for example. Her decision to leave Venice at the end of *Il fuoco* and travel abroad is a sacrifice designed to liberate Effrena and leave him free to devote himself to his art. She will continue to work for their artistic endeavour and will earn money to fund his plans. She promises to return once his drama has been composed, and take her place upon the stage as one of his characters.¹⁵¹

Where the aspiring *superuomo* of *Il trionfo della morte* fails in his ambitions, Effrena succeeds, becoming d'Annunzio's first fully-fledged *superuomo*. A crucial point of contrast between the two protagonists is their lovers, who, as companions to Effrena and Aurispa, should act as midwives for the arrival of the *superuomo*. Both Foscarina and Ippolita are unable to bear children – the former because of age, the latter because of a past illness – but while Ippolita's sterility renders her seductive and sexualised nature hostile to Aurispa's creative goals (her womb is likened to 'una fornace ardente'¹⁵² [d'Annunzio, 1988, p. 916], in which his seed perishes), Foscarina is able to aid Effrena in his artistic endeavour, and play a vital role in the birth of his coming work of art. This is because Foscarina is the 'donna dionisiaca'¹⁵³ (d'Annunzio, 1989, p. 282), who performs a crucial role in the process of regression that fuels Effrena's Dionysian creativity. Additionally, she offers a fertility higher

¹⁵¹ 'È necessario che ciascuno si trovi pronto al suo posto, e con tutte le forze, venuta l'ora, io non mancherò' ('It is necessary that each of us is ready in their place, and with all their energies, when the hour comes' [p. 512]). Effrena's need for distance from the woman who inspires him echoes a statement made by Nietzsche in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*: 'Der Zauber und die mächtigste Wirkung der Frauen ist, um die Sprache der Philosophen zu reden, eine Wirkung in die Ferne, eine *actio in distans*: dazu gehört aber, zuerst und vor Allem — Distanz!' ('The magic and most powerful effect of woman is, to speak the language of philosophers, an effect of distance, an *actio in distans*: that requires above all, however, – distance!' [FW-60]).

¹⁵² 'an ardent furnace'.

¹⁵³ 'Dionysian woman'.

than that which fuels the conception of offspring, and assists in the procreation of art. By contrast, Ippolita is referred to (with increasingly frequency) as ‘la Nemica’¹⁵⁴ (d’Annunzio, 1988, p. 850) in *Il trionfo della morte*, and she appears to hinder Aurispa rather than aiding him. While Foscarina is referred to as a ‘[strumento] dell’arte’¹⁵⁵ (d’Annunzio, 1989, p. 478) Ippolita is described as a ‘strumento di piacere e di lascivia, strumento di ruina e di morte’¹⁵⁶ (d’Annunzio, 1988, p. 820) and ‘strumento di bassa lascivia’¹⁵⁷ (p. 990). D’Annunzio’s portrayal of Ippolita arguably does not succeed in convincing modern audiences of her malevolence. Whereas Aurispa reads her sexual drive as a means of enticement and entrapment, for example, we find Aurispa’s inability to resist sexual temptation to be his own responsibility. Although we are told that Ippolita becomes intoxicated by her ability to seduce Aurispa (‘la inebriava’¹⁵⁸ [p. 951]), we cannot support Aurispa’s vilification of her for failing to desire suicide after listening to *Tristan und Isolde*, and for not sharing his irrational and desperate desires.¹⁵⁹ In both texts woman threatens her lover’s goals, but the success of the *superuomo* of *Il fuoco* suggests that, ultimately, responsibility lies with Effrena and Aurispa. If they are strong and determined enough, woman will not thwart them.

For the artists under discussion, then, an encounter with the Dionysian can provoke creativity partly through its tendency to unleash the ‘primitive’ side of the artist’s character. The Dionysian has been seen to provoke a regressive embrace of those impulses and instincts that Freud noted must be repressed if civilisation is to survive. In the texts considered, internal regression (both attempted and achieved, both conscious and subconscious) arguably involves a search for identity. Just as artistic primitivist discourse at the turn of the century can be seen to reflect the modern West’s search for a lost – or repressed – aspect of itself, the

¹⁵⁴ ‘the Enemy’.

¹⁵⁵ ‘instrument of art’.

¹⁵⁶ ‘instrument of pleasure and lasciviousness, [an] instrument of ruin and death’.

¹⁵⁷ ‘instrument of base lasciviousness’.

¹⁵⁸ ‘it intoxicated her’.

¹⁵⁹ After she plays Wagner’s music, Aurispa is disappointed that she does not aspire to a similar *Liebestod*, and is dismayed to hear her declare, ‘su la terra non si muore così’ (‘in real life one does not die like that’ [p. 988]).

regressive experiences of d'Annunzio's and Mann's artistic characters can be seen as an attempted recuperation of aspects of their identity, which have been suppressed or abandoned. This is seen when Gabriele Klöterjahn rediscovers musical ecstasy under the influence of the Dionysian, in a regressive recuperation of lost artistic impulses, for example. For some of the characters discussed, the Dionysian unleashes 'primitive' impulses and instincts cannot be harnessed; this may be due to an excessive practice of repression beforehand, which renders the 'primitive' lethal (as with Aschenbach), or due to the inherently weak will of the subject compared to overwhelming 'primitive' instincts (as with Aurispa). Lasting creativity appears to require that the process of internal regression is restrained, and that the subject has not been estranged from the 'primitive' for too long.

Parallels exist between the process of internal regression discussed here, and the more atavistic regressions that will now be considered. In both cases, creative success and the artist's survival seem to depend upon a moderate regressive experience, under the influence of the Dionysian. This will be seen to allow the creativity of past cultures to be recuperated, and placed in the service of the present.

v) **The Artist and Atavistic Regression**

In the texts under discussion, the atavistic regression provoked by the Dionysian proves as precarious as the experience of internal regression explored above. Atavistic regression aims to re-establish contact with an ancestral people. Here, reunion may be sought with one's ancestors (as with Giorgio Aurispa, who returns to the land of his recent ancestors, the Abruzzo) or with an earlier civilisation (as with Stelio Effrena, who looks to the dramatic traditions of the ancient Greeks). The individual who seeks contact with his ancestors, and his ancestral soil, arguably longs for something resembling Jung's idea of the *participation*

mystique, whereby modern rootlessness is replaced by sensations of timeless, and even mystical, unity.

The atavistic regression examined here is often tied to artistic concerns. Creative sterility in the present causes the artist to look to the creativity of ancestral peoples. This is not a phenomenon that can be found in all of the texts under consideration, however. It appears only in *Il trionfo della morte*, *Il fuoco*, and *Der Tod in Venedig*. In *Tristan and Tonio Kröger*, where the Dionysian is portrayed more subtly, Mann does not include this form of regression as part of the Dionysian experience.

Having come under the influence of the ‘primitive’ Dionysian, which has resurfaced from the depths of Aschenbach’s unconscious after a lifetime of repression, Aschenbach has been seen to act more instinctually and intuitively in Venice. His behaviour has become dominated by long-repressed sexual instincts which now cause havoc in their resurgence. Apart from the brief act of writing completed on the beach (Aschenbach’s final creation), productivity is involuntarily exchanged for voyeurism and Aschenbach disregards the future for the pleasure of the present. Immediate pleasure has come to dominate his Venetian existence, and his neurotic symptoms (recounted in the first two chapters of Mann’s novella) have arguably diminished with the relaxation of repression. Shortly after learning of the cholera epidemic, his knowledge of which Aschenbach keeps secret from Tadzio’s family, Aschenbach has a dream which reveals the fatality of his psychological shift, and demonstrates an atavistic regression that proves highly harmful, both to creativity and to the artist.

The horrors of Aschenbach’s Dionysian dream in chapter five, in which he witnesses *sparagmos*, have already been glimpsed. These shocking scenes, conjured up by Aschenbach’s unconscious, offer a horrifying reflection of Aschenbach’s psyche and suggest that the instincts and impulses he has passively allowed to overpower him cannot now be

tamed or reversed. Compared with the austere environment in which we first encountered Aschenbach in Munich, this dream presents an assault on the senses. The dreamer smells ‘der beizende Ruch der Böcke’¹⁶⁰ (Mann, 2004, p. 583), hears cries ‘wie kein jemals erhörter’¹⁶¹ (ibid.) and is intoxicated by fumes (‘Dünste bedrängten den Sinn’¹⁶² [ibid.]). However, the once respectable Aschenbach is not horrified and repelled by his dream, and indeed longs to join these barbaric Dionysian worshippers in their wild and brutal practices (p. 584).

In Nietzschean terms, Aschenbach appears to have regressed psychologically to the state of those Dionysian barbarians so contemptuously described in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, whose savage rituals were too wild to offer any kind of creative inspiration. Throughout *Der Tod in Venedig* we have seen Aschenbach attempting a conscious identification with certain figures of antiquity, in an attempt to defend and validate his attraction to Tadzio. He has looked to Plato’s *Phaedrus*, for example, to offer a noble and respected precedent for his fascination with the adolescent. Ultimately, however, Aschenbach’s most vivid identification is not with those ancient Greeks who produced great works of philosophy and literature, but with the primitive ‘barbarians’ who embraced the Dionysian with no concern for civilisation or culture, and worshipped the deity through brutal practices. Again, Jung’s understanding of identification as one of the phenomena that can provoke *participation mystique* must be noted here, for Aschenbach’s identification with these Dionysian barbarians triggers a sensation of union that we have thus far not seen in Mann’s isolated protagonist.¹⁶³ Aschenbach’s experience is a wholly negative one, however. He feels irresistibly drawn into the scenes of dismemberment and insane intoxication that he witnesses in his dream, and awakes

¹⁶⁰ ‘the biting stench of rams’.

¹⁶¹ ‘like none ever heard before’.

¹⁶² ‘fumes beset the mind’.

¹⁶³ Van den Berk notes that Jung would have preferred to refer to *participation mystique* as ‘unconscious participation’ or ‘irrational participation’ (2013, p. 38): the fact that Aschenbach’s identification occurs within a dream brings Mann’s portrayal of his experience close to Jung’s understanding of *participation mystique*.

hopelessly enthralled to ‘*Der fremde Gott*’¹⁶⁴ (p. 582): ‘Aus diesem Traum erwachte der Heimgesuchte entnervt, zerrüttet und kraftlos dem Dämon verfallen’¹⁶⁵ (p. 584). Aschenbach’s lack of control over his experience of internal regression (given impetus by the Dionysian) leads him to an atavistic regression that proves highly damaging, despite his efforts to identify with the most ‘civilised’ and creative ancient Greeks. His Dionysian dream signals the end of both Aschenbach’s creativity and his life. He dies just days later.

The barbaric crowd of Aschenbach’s dream echoes the scenes of the Vigil in *Il trionfo della morte*, which signal a similarly troubled regression. Just as Aschenbach has sought to follow the ancient Greeks – thus apparently justifying his forbidden desire – but identifies most strongly with Dionysian barbarians, so Aurispa seeks the creativity of the pre-Socratic Greeks and the healing primitivism of the Abruzzo, but finds in his ancestral people only madness, sickness and superstition. Aurispa’s inability to control his regression was considered earlier, and it was seen to trigger a return to instinctual existence that resulted in enslavement to the sexual drive. Hoping to establish a harmonious relationship with nature, Aurispa’s departure from the modern urban space provoked only lethargy, lassitude and carnality. The Abruzzo attracts Aurispa not only as an untamed natural space, but also as the land of his ancestors, with whom he hopes to connect. Here, a primitive way of life still exists:

Riti di religioni morte e obliate vi sopravvivevano; simboli incomprensibili di potenze da tempo decadute vi rimanevano intatti, usi di popoli primitivi per sempre scomparsi vi persistevano trasmessi di generazione in generazione senza mutamento¹⁶⁶ (d’Annunzio, 1988, p. 845).

¹⁶⁴ ‘the foreign god’.

¹⁶⁵ ‘From this dream the afflicted one awoke unnerved, shattered, and powerlessly enslaved to the demon’.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Rites of dead and forgotten religions survived here; incomprehensible symbols of powers long gone remained intact here, customs of primitive peoples who had disappeared forever persisted, transmitted from generation to generation without change’.

It is in the hope of establishing contact with the traditions and values of his ancestors, and sensing unity with them, recalling Jung's idea of *participation mystique*, that Aurispa agrees to attend the Vigil at Casalbordino with Ippolita, for it provides an opportunity to enact this reconnection:

Era necessario, nel suo pensiero, ch'egli seguisse quella profonda corrente, ch'egli facesse parte di quella selvaggia agglomerazione umana, ch'egli sperimentasse l'aderenza materiale con lo stato infimo della sua razza, con quello strato denso e permanente in cui le impronte primitive duravano forse intatte.¹⁶⁷ (p. 864)

During the religious Vigil participants prostrate themselves before the altar and offer riches in the hope of receiving a cure for whatever disease, illness or affliction troubles them. A Dionysian atmosphere is evoked by the multitude: individuation is lost, and the enraptured worshippers seem 'invasi da una frenesia feroce'¹⁶⁸ (p. 880). They approach the altar 'agitandosi come in convulsioni demoniache'¹⁶⁹ (p. 883), and frenzy drives some to '[i] sacrifici sanguinosi, agli strazii della carne'¹⁷⁰ (p. 880). While the bacchantes in Aschenbach's dream draw blood from the bodies of living animals as they dismember them, the worshippers at the Vigil do violence to their own bodies, in a sign of irrational religious devotion. Some worshippers even drag their tongues across the ground as they crawl towards the altar, recalling Michetti's painting, *Il voto*.

The individuals become a mass, a single entity, whirling in procession around the church. One woman appears 'quasi circonfusa d'un mistero dionisiaco, spirante quasi un'aura di antichissima vita su quella moltitudine barbarica'¹⁷¹ (p. 888). The participants resemble

¹⁶⁷ 'It was necessary, in his mind, that he should follow that profound current, that he should be part of that wild human throng, that he should attempt physical adherence with the lowest level of his race, with that dense and permanent level in which primitive imprints may still be intact.'

¹⁶⁸ 'invaded by a ferocious frenzy'.

¹⁶⁹ 'writhing as if in demonic convulsions'.

¹⁷⁰ 'bloody sacrifices, to torments of the flesh'.

¹⁷¹ 'surrounded almost by a Dionysian mystery, almost breathing an aura of ancient life onto that barbaric multitude'.

‘strani animali gibbosi’¹⁷² (p. 872) in their wretched and abject behaviour. Like the Dionysian horde of Aschenbach’s dream – among whom were ‘Männer, Hörner über den Stirnen’¹⁷³ (Mann, 2004, p. 583) – the initiates in this ritual are no longer fully human; they have become alarming hybrids. Härmänmaa notes that in the scene of Casalbordino, ‘the image of Abruzzo as a cradle of sinister primitivism is most fully developed’ (2013, p. 703). While the Vigil is ostensibly a Catholic event, elements of paganism, and the pre-Christian demonic, are clear. It appears to be a grotesque amalgam of Christian traditions and ancient superstition, and the brutality of barbaric Dionysian worship does not seem far off. As Härmänmaa notes, in this isolated part of Italy ‘the Christian religion has descended into a madness’ (p. 704). Sickness reigns over this Dionysian mass, and barely a healthy body is to be discerned among those gathered here, seeking healing. The crowds gathered here do not offer a glimpse into Aurispa’s ancestors, with whom he seeks contact: he finds only ‘una razza disfatta’¹⁷⁴ (d’Annunzio, 1988, p. 902), and ‘corpi accomunati alla bestia immonda e alla materia escrementale’¹⁷⁵ (ibid.). For a moment it looks as though Aurispa, too, who is pathologically hypnotised rather than inspired to identification, will become infected by the contagion of the primitive mass,¹⁷⁶ but ultimately both he and Ippolita are repulsed by the bestial horde, and leave when Ippolita becomes faint with horror, partly after glimpsing an epileptic suffering a seizure, which reminds her of her own illness. Having sought the innocence and simplicity of his rural ancestors, Aurispa has found only deformity, decay and insanity, which provoke only revulsion and increase his sense of isolation.

The scene of the Vigil presents a bleak verdict on Aurispa’s attempted atavistic regression. Whereas his internal regression has gone too far and left him enslaved to the

¹⁷² ‘strange gibbous animals’.

¹⁷³ ‘Men, horns above their brows’.

¹⁷⁴ ‘a deformed race’.

¹⁷⁵ ‘bodies surrounded by bestial filth and excrement’.

¹⁷⁶ ‘Era l’effetto del contagio. Sentiva Giorgio omai di non esser più padrone di sè. I nervi lo dominavano, gli imponevano il disordine e l’eccesso delle loro sensazioni’ (‘It was the effect of the contagion. Giorgio no longer felt in control of himself. His nerves dominated him, they commanded him with their disorder and excessive sensation’ [p. 882])

‘primitive’, the barbarism of the Vigil has repelled Aurispa and prevented him from connecting to his ancestors. The Vigil merely cements Aurispa’s isolation and his alienation from his roots, although identification and unification with the grotesque hordes of the Vigil would arguably have been no healthier. After recovering from the trauma of the Vigil, the region’s primitive ritualism is witnessed again, but in a far healthier manifestation. While the Vigil had showcased superstition, bodily decay, bestial insanity, base promiscuity, and clerical corruption, Aurispa’s next encounter with Abruzzan tradition celebrates vitality, fertility and growth in the gathering of the harvest.

The rituals surrounding the harvest recall ancient mysteries and ‘Dionisie rurali’¹⁷⁷ (p. 928). Aurispa asks himself whether he should not rather have attempted reunion with the roots of his race in these kind of rituals, rather than in the savagery of Casalbordino, but this realisation has come too late and Aurispa’s demise is already unavoidable. Like Aschenbach, he compares himself to his ancestors and is left feeling inadequate and defective. They lived as Zarathustra teaches us to live, Aurispa imagines,¹⁷⁸ but he has failed to adopt such a strategy, and must accept the futility of his ‘aspirazioni [...] verso l’ideale “dionisiaco”’¹⁷⁹ (d’Annunzio, 1988, p. 929). Even when he assists with the harvest – in precisely the kind of traditional activity that was idealised by idealising primitivist discourse at the turn of the century – and perceives something resembling the kind of regressive union which he pursued, there is a catch. He experiences ‘una rinnovellata aspirazione verso le fonti della vita, verso le Origini’¹⁸⁰ (p. 921), but interprets this sensation as the last gasp of his youth and vitality, soon to be extinguished: ‘Era forse l’ultimo sussulto della sua giovinezza ferita nell’intimo della

¹⁷⁷ ‘rural Dionysia’.

¹⁷⁸ He recalls the following words of Zarathustra: ‘Quando il cuor vostro palpita nella sua maggior pienezza e sta per traboccare [...], ivi è la fonte della vostra virtù’ (‘When your heart throbs with its greatest fullness and is about to overflow [...], this is the source of your virtue’ [p. 929]). The same words can be found in *Also sprach Zarathustra*: ‘Wenn euer Herz breit und voll wallt, [...] da ist der Ursprung eurer Tugend’ (‘When your heart surges, broad and full, [...] that is the origin of your virtue’ [Nietzsche, *Za-I-Tugend-I*]).

¹⁷⁹ ‘aspirations towards the “Dionysian” ideal’.

¹⁸⁰ ‘a renewed aspiration towards the sources of life, towards its Origins’.

potenza sostanziale'¹⁸¹ (ibid.). This healthy experience of contact with his ancestors appears to have come too late; but perhaps, given his constant psychological turmoil, Aurispa's case has been a hopeless one from the start, which would never have been redeemed by atavistic regression. In the end, it is Aurispa's defective will that ensures his failures, for which the imagery of Casalbordino serves as a graphic illustration.

As well as seeking communion with his ancestors, Aurispa also aspires to identify with the ancient Greeks, and adopt their approach to existence. His reflections on the ways of the ancient Greeks strongly recall Nietzsche's claims regarding their affirmative embrace of existence, and indeed both Nietzsche and Zarathustra are mentioned (and cited) several times in the latter parts of the book. The earlier parts may have already been written by the time d'Annunzio first encountered Nietzsche. Aurispa contemplates the ancient Greeks' joy of life:

il culto profondo della Natura madre eternamente creatrice ed eternamente lieta della sovrabbondanza di sue forze; la venerazione e l'entusiasmo per tutte le energie fecondanti, generative e distruttive; l'affermazione violenta e tenace dell'istinto agonistico, dell'istinto di lotta, di predominio, di sovranità, di potenza egemonica: non erano questi i cardini incrollabili su cui si reggeva l'antico mondo ellenico nel suo periodo ascensionale?¹⁸² (p. 924)

Just as the ancient Greek celebrated the 'perpetuità della vita'¹⁸³ (p. 925) in their Dionysian mysteries, so Aurispa wishes to do the same in his 'aspirazione ad *essere egli medesimo* l'eterna voluttà del Divenire'¹⁸⁴ (ibid.). The strategies of the ancient Greeks, and the influence of their Dionysian energies, can offer a remedy to the dilemma of modern man, who has lost

¹⁸¹ 'Maybe it was the last gasp of his youth, wounded in the depths of its essential power'.

¹⁸² 'the profound cult of Nature, the eternally creative mother, eternally content with the overabundance of her forces; veneration and enthusiasm for all fertilising, generative, and destructive energies; the violent and determined affirmation of the agonistic element, of the instinct towards struggle, towards domination, towards sovereignty, towards hegemonic power: were not these the unshakable principles which held up the ancient Hellenic world during its ascendant period?'

¹⁸³ 'perpetuity of life'.

¹⁸⁴ 'aspiration to *be himself* the eternal joy in Becoming'.

contact with nature and no longer knows how to immerse himself in the essence of things.¹⁸⁵ Aurispa longs, therefore, to ‘regress’ to the ancient Greeks’ way of existence and adopt their affirmative attitude, which would allow him to enter into a harmonious immersion with nature, render his own suffering active instead of passive¹⁸⁶ and overcome his crippling isolation. Aurispa is simply unable to reach the heights to which he strives, however, and he fails to embrace a way of existence that follows the example of the ancient Greeks. He reflects sadly that ‘ogni giorno [...] io perisco segretamente’¹⁸⁷ (p. 716) and that ‘La morte, infatti, m’attira’¹⁸⁸ (p. 717). Instead of receiving the creative impetus he craves in order to become the *superuomo* he commits suicide and murders his lover in a way that utterly contradicts the Greeks’ affirmation of life.

In *Il fuoco*, Stelio Effrena similarly takes the ancient Greeks as a model for his own creativity, for he aspires to inaugurate a tragic tradition for modernity that makes use of their Dionysian energies. He aims to reinvigorate both his own art, and the Italian people, with the Dionysian, and provoke regressive and restorative processes. Atavistic regression must be undergone by the masses if the artistic glory of Italy’s past is to be recaptured, and if a cultural renaissance is to take place. Significantly, however, Effrena’s aim is not *purely* regressive. He does not wish merely to revert to ancient models of creativity, and aims rather to restore aspects of ancient creativity for the sake of the present.¹⁸⁹ His regression is therefore carried out in the name of progress, and is forward-looking. It may be the progressive nature of his regression that renders it artistically beneficial.

¹⁸⁵ The ancient Greek, by contrast, was able to ‘immedesimarsi nella natura della cose’ (‘identify with the nature of things’ [p. 925])

¹⁸⁶ Aurispa knows that if he wishes to follow the teaching of Zarathustra, he must ‘cercare il mezzo di rendere attivo il mio dolore’ (‘search for a means of rendering my pain *active*’ [p. 931]).

¹⁸⁷ ‘every day I die secretly’.

¹⁸⁸ ‘I am drawn to death’.

¹⁸⁹ As Effrena explains: ‘Io non voglio risuscitare una forma antica; voglio inventare una forma nuova, obbedendo soltanto al mio istinto e al genio della mia stirpe, così come fecero i Greci quando crearono quel meraviglioso edificio di bellezza, non imitabile, che è il loro drama’ (‘I do not wish to revive an ancient form; I want to invent a new form, obeying only my instinct and the genius of my descent, as the ancient Greeks did when they created that magnificent edifice of inimitable beauty which is their drama’ [d’Annunzio, 1989, p. 356]).

A communal Dionysian regression is precisely what is triggered by Effrena's climactic speech at the beginning of d'Annunzio's novel, resulting in a creative intoxication that spreads through the Venetian crowds. During his oration, Effrena evokes unparalleled masters of Italy's (and especially Venice's) artistic past, such as Giorgione, Leonardo da Vinci and Paolo Veronese, with the aim of reuniting modern crowds with the artistic legacy of their ancestors. He wishes to reinvigorate a tired cultural landscape and return Venice to her rightful status as 'Città d'arte'¹⁹⁰ (p. 233) as well as 'Città di Vita'¹⁹¹ (p. 254). The Bacchic chorus that arises when he concludes his oration suggests that his words are having the desired effect, and Dionysus is indeed welcomed back to Venice: 'Dioniso liberatore *riappariva* [my emphasis] d'improvviso in conspetto degli uomini su le ali del canto'¹⁹² (p. 262). D'Annunzio is explicit in heralding Dionysus' triumphant *return* to the decaying city, and he couches his descriptions of Effrena's enraptured crowds in terms strongly reminiscent of bacchic worship. Just as Foscarina recovers primitive impulses and ancient Dionysian energies for Effrena's exploitation, so he performs a similar service for his crowds, allowing them to be reunited with a neglected creative drive that was allegedly employed by their artistically renowned ancestors.

The effect of Effrena's speech seems to mirror exactly Nietzsche's apparent intention in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, where the restorative power of the Dionysian is posited as contemporary Germany's best hope for artistic rejuvenation. Just as Nietzsche claims that Wagner's music will allow modern Germans to rediscover their artistic heritage and Dionysian affinities, so Effrena's intoxicating words trigger a Dionysian frenzy that appears to dissolve the distance between his modern audience and their past cultural glories. The ecstatic Dionysian atmosphere engendered by his speech, erases the 'errore del tempo'¹⁹³ (p.

¹⁹⁰ 'City of art'.

¹⁹¹ 'City of Life'.

¹⁹² 'Dionysus the liberator reappeared suddenly in the presence of men, on the wings of song'.

¹⁹³ 'error of time'.

346), allowing a profound connection between modern listeners and ancient Dionysian worshippers to be established: ‘era parso che in quel punto il delirio dionisiaco, memore delle antiche selve arse nelle notti sacre avesse dato il segnale dell’incendio in cui doveva risplendere ultimamente la bellezza di Venezia’,¹⁹⁴ (p. 267). As the gulf of centuries is erased, the crowd vividly perceives the return of their artistic legacy:

Ora, nella magica tregua che le davano le virtù della poesia e del sogno, ella [the crowd] sembrava ritrovare in sè stessa i segni indistruttibili delle primitive generazioni, quasi una vaga effigie dell’ascendenza remota, e riconoscere il suo diritto a un antico retaggio di cui fosse stata dispogliata: a quel retaggio che il messaggero le annunciava essere ancora intatto e recuperabile.¹⁹⁵ (p. 256)

Again, d’Annunzio’s use of words such as ‘ritrovare’ (‘rediscover’) and ‘riconoscere’ (‘rediscover’) emphasises the regressive nature of this Dionysian intoxication. It is also a communal experience that promises a revitalised future for Venice’s cultural landscape.

In *Il fuoco* – in stark contrast to *Der Tod in Venedig* – bacchic crowds are a positive phenomenon, auguring revived creativity and a rediscovery of Venice’s artistic heritage. The exuberance of Effrena’s crowds after his oration causes them to ‘become’ maenads engaged in wild rituals: ‘[l]e Menadi parevano gridar quivi, col capo riverso in dietro, con le chiome effuse, con le vesti discinte, [...] agitando i crotali: – Evoè!’¹⁹⁶ (p. 262). This Dionysian crowd is suffused with health and joy, unlike the morbid hordes of the Vigil described in *Il trionfo della morte*, or those of Aschenbach’s dream. The ‘maenads’ observed here are distinctly

¹⁹⁴ ‘in that moment it seemed that the Dionysian delirium, reminiscent of ancient forests burning in the sacred night, had given the signal of fire in which the beauty of Venice should shine forth again’.

¹⁹⁵ ‘Now, in the magic truce given by the power of poetry and dream, she [the crowd] seemed to rediscover within herself the enduring traces of primitive generations, almost a vague effigy of remote ascendance, and to recognise her [the crowd’s] right to an ancient legacy of which she [the crowd] had been divested: the right to that legacy which the messenger announced was still intact and could be recovered.’ Here d’Annunzio refers to the crowd using the feminine pronoun ‘ella’ (‘she’).

¹⁹⁶ ‘The Maenads seemed to shout yonder, with their heads thrown backwards, their hair billowing, their clothes dishevelled, [...] shaking snakes: – Evoè!’

more ‘civilised’, and are not seen participating in the brutal rituals that Nietzsche abhorred in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. The creative benefits of the regressive Dionysian intoxication that Effrena provokes in his crowds are clear: ‘[e]ra il sommo beneficio della Bellezza rivelata; era la vittoria dell’Arte liberatrice su le miserie e su le inquietudini e sui tedii dei giorni comuni’¹⁹⁷ (p. 243). Through a restoration of ‘primitive’ Dionysian energies, retrieved from the past, Effrena aestheticises his listeners; as Effrena’s companion, the poet Daniele Glauro comments, ‘[a]lmeno per qualche ora dunque, a Venezia, il ritmo dell’arte e il polso della vita han riavuto un medesimo battito’¹⁹⁸ (p. 281).

As noted earlier, internal and atavistic regressions sometimes merge, and this is seen particularly in *Il fuoco*. While Effrena incites his crowds to grasp their artistic heritage, Foscarina, the Dionysian woman, recovers the impulses and energies that render this possible:

[...] ella sembrava ritrovare in sè stessa i segni indistruttibili delle primitive generazioni, quasi una vaga effigie dell’ascendenza remota, e riconoscere il suo diritto a un antico retaggio di cui fosse stata dispogliata: a quel retaggio che il messaggero le annunciava essere ancora intatto e recuperabile.¹⁹⁹ (p. 256)

It is the internal regression undergone by Effrena and Foscarina that allows this process – and the atavistic regression it triggers – to take place: Foscarina must first embrace instinct and primitivism if she is to recuperate the Dionysian energies which Effrena wishes to present to his audience. Through Foscarina internal and atavistic regressions are inherently interwoven; she captures the primitive, primordial side of human nature as well as the ancient Greeks’

¹⁹⁷ ‘the victory of Art the liberator over the mysteries and over the anxieties and over the tediousness of quotidian life’.

¹⁹⁸ ‘At least for an hour, then, in Venice, the rhythm of art and the pulse of life have shared the same heartbeat’.

¹⁹⁹ ‘[...] she seemed to rediscover in herself the indestructible signs of primitive generations, almost a vague effigy of remote ascendance, and to recognise her right to an ancient legacy of which she had been divested: to that legacy that the messenger [Effrena] had announced was intact and redeemable’.

ability to channel such drives into supreme art. She has ‘una potenza risvegliatrice’²⁰⁰ (p. 342) and recuperates ‘il senso dionisiaco della natura naturante, l’antico fervore delle energie istintive e creatrici, l’entusiasmo del dio multiforme emerso dal fermento di tutti i succhi’²⁰¹ (p. 388). She channels these energies into classical tragic figures when she interprets them on the stage. She can thus convey ‘La fedeltà eroica di Antigone, il furore fatidico di Cassandra, la divorante febbre di Fedra, la ferocia di Medea, il sacrificio d’Ifigenia’²⁰² (p. 282). She unites the ‘primitive’ and primordial, the classical and the modern in her acting, and this proves crucial for Effrena’s artistic goals. He hopes to abolish the ‘error of time’ which separates the modern stage from its ‘primitive’, Dionysian origins and from its zenith (Attic tragedy). He appears to pursue a sensation recalling Jung’s *participation mystique*, for Effrena aims to eradicate the temporal distance that divides ancient and modern man, leading to artistic and creative unity. Towards the end of *Il fuoco*, after an episode of ecstatic collaborative creativity between Foscarina and Effrena, we read: ‘Il Passato è in atto. L’illusione del Tempo è caduta. La Vita è una’²⁰³ (p. 467).

In *Il fuoco*, Effrena and Foscarina demonstrate a highly successful way of uniting the ‘primitive’ and the ‘civilised’. Through art, in the manner of the ancient Greeks (as described by Nietzsche), they harness primordial (Dionysian) impulses, allowing these to be communicated to modern audiences in Venice. The process of artistic creation is even likened to archaeology. This is seen in particular when Effrena converses with his friend, the poet Daniele Glauro:

Hai tu mai pensato a quel grosso Schliemann nell’atto di scoprire il più fulgido tesoro che la Morte abbia adunato nell’oscurità della terra da secoli, da millennii? Hai tu mai pensato che

²⁰⁰ ‘a power of reawakening’.

²⁰¹ ‘the Dionysian sense of *natura naturans*, the ancient fervour of instinctive and creative energies, the enthusiasm of the multiform god who emerged from the ferment of all juices’.

²⁰² ‘The heroic faith of Antigone, the fateful fury of Cassandra, the devouring fever of Phaedra, the ferocity of Medea, the sacrifice of Iphigenia’.

²⁰³ ‘The Past is in action. The Illusion of Time has fallen. Life is whole’.

quello spettacolo sovrumano e terribile avrebbe potuto apparire a un altro: a uno spirito giovanile e fervente, a un poeta, a un animatore, a te, a me forse? Allora la febbre, la frenesia, la demenza....Imagina!²⁰⁴ (p. 362)

But archaeology here is not a sober discovery of cold, dead objects. It is instead a vivid, even magical process whereby figures from the (ancient) past are reawakened and breathe the air of the present. Thus Effrena instructs Foscarina to ‘evocare Cassandra dal suo sonno’²⁰⁵ (p. 472) when she inhabits a character from Effrena’s next drama. The drama gestating in Effrena during *Il fuoco* is entitled *La Vittoria dell’Uomo (The Victory of Man)*, and strongly recalls d’Annunzio’s play of 1898, *La città morta (The Dead City)*. In this play, d’Annunzio portrays the archaeological excavation of Mycenae (which d’Annunzio visited in 1895 [Nikopoulos, 2010, p. 155]), through which ‘the original Dionysian spirit of tragedy’ (p. 167) will also be rediscovered.²⁰⁶ Foscarina plays the role of a modern character who bridges the temporal distance between ancient Mycenae and the modern theatre, entering the excavated tombs of Agamemnon and Cassandra to awaken them, thus eradicating the ‘error of time’. Foscarina must not only awaken, but also *become* Cassandra (‘Cassandra è in te e tu sei in lei’²⁰⁷ [d’Annunzio, 1989, p. 472]) in the ultimate process of regressive recuperation, which requires the suspension of her modern identity.

Atavistic regression is not an experience undergone by all of the fictional artists discussed. Nor is it an experience that proves creatively beneficial for all of the artists who undergo it. Indeed, only *Il fuoco*’s Stelio Effrena and Foscarina manage to carry out a

²⁰⁴ ‘Have you ever thought of the great Schliemann in the act of discovering the most glorious treasure that death has ever gathered in the obscurity of the earth for centuries, for millennia? Have you ever thought that that superhuman and terrible spectacle could have appeared to another: to a young and fervent spirit, to a poet, to a creator, to you, to me, maybe? The fever, the frenzy, the madness...Imagine!’

²⁰⁵ ‘reawaken Cassandra from her sleep’.

²⁰⁶ Nikopoulos also notes the significance of Nietzsche and *Die Geburt der Tragödie* in *La città morta*: ‘Nietzsche’s greatest influence on d’Annunzio’s drama can be seen in Anna’s role as the character who bridges the affective gap of the audience and the pathos of the tragedy on display, for it is indebted to the Nietzschean ideal of the spirit of the tragedy, the Dionysian spirit which he writes represents, the shattering of the individual and fusion with the primordial being”’ (p. 168).

²⁰⁷ ‘Cassandra is within you and you are within her’.

successful psychological regression to recuperate the artistic impulses and instincts of the ancient Greeks. For Aschenbach, atavistic regression – seen in his Dionysian dream – proves harmful, but arguably because he has already reverted to such a state of instinctual abandon that further creativity is precluded. Perhaps if Aschenbach had been better equipped to moderate the extent of his return to instinct, he might have been able to effect an identification with (to use Nietzsche’s terms) Dionysian *Greeks*, rather than the Dionysian *barbarians* who overrun his psyche in his dream. It should also be noted that Aschenbach’s earlier interest in Tadzio causes him to become more mythically aware, and to read the events of each day as episodes from Greek mythology.²⁰⁸ His act of writing follows his (arguably regressive) embrace of mythology, but as his interest for Tadzio becomes obsession, allusions to classical mythology cease, as does creativity. In *Il trionfo della morte*, Aurispa consciously attempts atavistic regression but is dismayed to find his isolation reaffirmed by the impossibility of fostering a meaningful connection to his ancestral roots. The hordes at the Vigil, who are also reminiscent of Nietzsche’s Dionysian barbarians, repel him, but the extent of his despair and isolation is such that he is unable to immerse himself even in the wholesome side of the primitive Abruzzo – its harvest festivals. The *superuomo* Effrena, on the other hand, whose internal regression retains artistic focus, successfully recuperates the attitude of the ancient Greeks, and their creative harnessing of the Dionysian.

While this chapter has attempted to situate d’Annunzio’s and Mann’s – and to some extent, Nietzsche’s – portrayals of the Dionysian within the primitivist discourse of the turn of the century, an important difference must be noted. Although some of d’Annunzio’s other works display the derogatory and problematic side of primitivist discourse, which was used, for example, to justify colonial and imperial activities, in none of the texts here can this brand of primitivism be located. D’Annunzio and Mann do not here look to exotic peoples to find a

²⁰⁸ Sunrise, for example, becomes the journey of ‘der Gott mit den hitzigen Wangen’ (‘the god with the fiery cheeks’) who moves with his ‘Viergespann durch die Räume des Himmels’ (‘carriage through the spaces of the heavens’ [Mann, 2004, p. 549]).

stereotypically ‘primitive’ foil to modern, Western, man; instead they show the ‘primitive’ side of human nature that has been repressed by civilisation (as described by Freud), and with which re-established communication can be beneficial (as Jung believed). It is therefore an internal ‘primitive’ that is sought, and there is no talk of ‘savages’, for example. The ‘primitive’ is admittedly located in an external source, the ancient Greeks: but the Dionysian (in its ideal and most creative form) is located *only* in this temporally remote people, rather than posited as a characteristic of all pre-modern peoples. D’Annunzio and Mann do not seem to locate the ‘primitive’ impulses required for Dionysian creativity in an earlier stage of mankind’s evolutionary development, but only in the unrivalled art of the ancient Greeks. Their fictional artists aim to discover their own, internal ‘primitivism’ when they engage with the Dionysian, in the manner of these Greeks. Additionally, both d’Annunzio and Mann bear the impact of an engagement with Nietzsche in their understandings of the ancient Greeks, and arguably romanticise the creativity of ‘Nietzschean’ Greeks, rather than ‘historical’ Greeks.

Throughout this chapter engagement with the Dionysian and its regressive tendencies has been seen to constitute a hazardous process. If regression goes too far, creative focus is lost and the life of the artist is endangered. The impulses and instincts that are associated with the Dionysian are highly powerful and must be tamed if they are to be harnessed creatively. In the next chapter this harnessing will be explored, and the psychological phenomenon of sublimation will be posited as a means of gaining control over the Dionysian. Sigmund Freud has been mentioned in this chapter because of his findings regarding primitivism; the next chapter will explore a different aspect of Freud’s thought, which will provide an illuminating lens through which to regard the experiences of d’Annunzio’s and Mann’s artists in their engagement with the Dionysian.

Chapter Five: Dionysian Creativity and Sublimation

Throughout this thesis the Dionysian has been seen to offer a precarious form of creativity to the fictional artists (and artistic figures) of Mann and d'Annunzio, just as it does for Nietzsche. The previous chapters have demonstrated that the Dionysian can offer creativity and vitality, but also destruction and death. Explanations for the creative success of some artists, such as Stelio Effrena and Tonio Kröger, who engage with the Dionysian, and for the failure of others, such as Gustav von Aschenbach and Giorgio Aurispa, have been hinted at already, and will be more fully illuminated here. These successes and failures will be explored using the tools of Freudian psychoanalysis, and in particular, the unconscious phenomenon of sublimation, which, when successfully achieved by Mann's and d'Annunzio's characters, seems to offer a strategy for dealing with the turbulent impulses of the Dionysian most creatively, and most safely.

This penultimate chapter will argue that both Mann and d'Annunzio portray sublimation as a necessary part of the (Dionysian) creative process, and that their depictions of sublimation can be clarified through the ideas of Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud regarding this psychological phenomenon. In the psychological sense in which it is now understood, the term 'sublimation' was first used by Nietzsche. It was with the psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud, however, that the term gained currency and entered common discourse. While it is arguably inaccurate to refer to Nietzsche's notion of sublimation as a 'theory' (as Assoun [2006, p. 98] does) – Nietzsche is a famously unsystematic thinker – Nietzsche does provide a collection of thoughts regarding the phenomenon's function, effect, and uses. The process of sublimation was subsequently explored and expanded upon more systematically by Freud. It is because of the prominent position of both Nietzsche and Freud in this context that the ideas of both regarding sublimation will be used to clarify the portrayals of creative

sublimation offered by Mann and d'Annunzio. The close ties between Nietzsche, Mann and d'Annunzio make Freud's ideas regarding sublimation doubly relevant.

This chapter will begin by exploring Freud's and Nietzsche's ideas of sublimation, which are compared and contrasted by Gemes (2009). Consideration will be given to the object of sublimation (what is being sublimated), the process itself (how sublimation occurs), as well as to the possible outcomes of this process (what happens when sublimation is successful, and what happens if it fails). Attention will then turn to the texts of Mann and d'Annunzio, where strong affinities regarding sublimation and Dionysian creativity will be uncovered, and where striking echoes of both Nietzsche's and Freud's ideas of sublimation will be highlighted.

While it may be possible to claim that Nietzsche's ideas influenced d'Annunzio's and Mann's understandings of sublimation, and their portrayal of the psychological phenomenon in the texts under discussion, the issue is slightly more complicated in the case of Freud. Of the texts under investigation, *Il trionfo della morte*, *Il fuoco*, *Tonio Kröger* and *Tristan* had all already been published by the time of Freud's *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 1905), in which he speaks of sublimation properly for the first time (after a few passing mentions in earlier texts). It would be impossible, therefore, to claim that Freud's ideas regarding sublimation influenced d'Annunzio during the composition of *Il fuoco*, for example; although it should be noted that other Freudian theories (such as that regarding the unconscious, introduced in *Die Traumdeutung* [*The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1900]) were in the intellectual air from around the start of the twentieth century. This chapter will therefore argue the case for affinities rather than influence, in the cases of both Nietzsche and Freud. Freud's and Nietzsche's understandings of psychology will be used to illuminate the experiences of the fictional artists of d'Annunzio and Mann, and to explain why some of these artists meet with creative success while others do not. Failure to

create ends in death for these characters, and Freud's and Nietzsche's conceptions of sublimation will be used to understand why this occurs. Clarifying the portrayal of sublimation by Mann and d'Annunzio in this way allows us to come close to finding a formula for ideal creativity, and a strategy for engaging in the Dionysian in the most creative and successful way; thus we can reach a conclusion regarding Mann's and d'Annunzio's views on the creative potential of the Dionysian, after much ambiguous treatment in their writings.

i) 'Sublimation' before Freud

Freud may have been the first to offer a comparatively coherent and systematic theory of sublimation of the sexual drive, but he certainly was not the first to discover or invent the phenomenon itself. The term 'sublimation' has its origins in chemistry, and the *Oxford English Dictionary* dates its first use to 1393. Its meaning at this stage is defined thus: 'The action or process of converting a solid substance by heating directly into vapour without liquefaction or decomposition, the vapour resolidifying on cooling.' By the time we find the term used by Freud at the beginning of the twentieth century, it has come to be applied to psychological processes. A brief overview of the history of the idea of sublimation – not always referred to as such – will now be traced, before we examine Freud's own use of the term more closely.

There is a long tradition of viewing achievements of the mind (creativity, philosophical enlightenment and spiritual attainment, for example) as dependent upon abstinence from bodily pleasures, including sexual gratification. This can be seen, for example, in the promotion of celibacy and abstinence (and the accompanying condemnation of sexuality) by many religions, particularly among religious leaders. Celibacy and

abstinence are commonly seen as practices which lead to purification and holiness¹. In Christianity, for example, as Olson explains, ‘the narrative of the virgin birth suggests a mentality that closely linked virginity to the gift of prophecy’ (2008, p. 11). Support for abstinence can also be found in contemporary Christianity: Abbott notes that the ‘True Love Waits’ group (founded in 1993 by the Southern Baptists) uses dance as a means of sublimating sexual desire (2001, p. 151), for example. In religious texts of classical Hinduism, celibacy is affirmed as a means of ‘[attaining] immortality and [acquiring] superhuman powers on earth’ (p. 14), although later Hinduism found greater value in sexual practices. Celibacy is also of great important to Jain ascetics, who hold the belief that ‘celibacy protects the soul from the harm associated with passion connected to sexual activity’ (p. 15). Within eastern European Orthodox Judaism, as Tweed notes, ‘the yeshiva movement and Hasidism shared an emphasis on the sublimation of sexual energies in the service of God’ (1997, p. 51). While by no means all religious thinking has promoted the practice of celibacy and abstinence – some religions, such as Chinese Buddhism, actually finding it to be ‘antireligious and antisocial’ (Olson, 2008, p. 16) – a striking number of religions have called for the denial of bodily pleasures and sexual gratification, in a belief that such practices enrich the mind and lead to greater spiritual achievements. In such beliefs, an opposition between body and mind is affirmed: the fulfilment of one is the impoverishment of the other, and bodily pleasure erodes one’s ability for spirituality. This opposition arguably bases itself upon the mind-body problem (addressed, but not invented by, René Descartes [1596-1650]), which posits the mind and body as separate substances, whose purposes may therefore be different.

¹ Goebel cites a passage from Romans which illustrates this: ‘For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God’ (Romans, 8:6-8, cited by Goebel, 2012, p. 81).

The notion that creative and philosophical achievement can be reached through abstinence from sexual activity arguably begins with Plato, who believed ‘that desire can be withdrawn from the physical appetites [...], and focused upwards’ (Klosko, 2006, p. 99). As will be seen, Freud describes a redirection of the sexual urge which echoes Plato’s belief in the withdrawal and reapplication of physical urges. For Plato, corporeal beauty is not to be shunned as a source of polluting sensuality, but is rather the first step on a path towards philosophical enlightenment. In his *Symposium* (c. 380 BC), Plato has Socrates speak of a ladder upon which one can ascend towards the highest contemplation: ‘a person properly initiated into the mystery of love rises on a ladder or a stairway [...]’ (Shookman, 2004, p. 79) and may eventually glimpse Beauty in its ‘original’, Platonic Form, through a series of abstractions. ‘The love of beauty can thus lead to a love of wisdom and truth – in other words, to philosophy’ (ibid.) – but only if one is able to move beyond physical gratification and progress beyond the lowest rungs of the ladder. Goebel notes that for Marcuse and Adorno, Platonic sublimation, in which ‘the path to understanding the idea of the good leads directly through sensual love’ (2012, p. 83), is seen as ‘an alternative to the Christian model of the condemnation of the flesh’ (ibid.).

This idea can be found again in the revival of Platonism which took place in Italy during the Renaissance. Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), for example, founded an academy in Florence which took inspiration from Plato’s theories, and which has since been referred to as the ‘Accademia Platonica’ (‘Platonic Academy’). As Quiviger explains, ‘in Ficino’s universe, visible beauty is a reflection of the divine shining through the human body and the first step on the Platonic ladder of love leading to the contemplation of the divine’ (2010, p. 100). Here, as in Plato’s original idea, the process by which one approaches ‘philosophy’ or the ‘contemplation of the divine’ seems a form of sublimation: while the subject could remain upon the lowest rung of Plato’s ladder, and remain enslaved to sensual beauty, there is also a

possibility of redirecting one's desires and attentions to more spiritual matters. Robb claims that 'the diffusion of Neoplatonism in the sixteenth century was so enormous that it is not possible to estimate its direct influence on the artists of the age with anything approaching certainty' (1935, p. 212). Quiviger, on the other hand, suggests that Neo-Platonism was a 'marginal rather than mainstream Renaissance philosophical current' (2010, p. 100). Quiviger notes, however, that Ficino's *De Amore (On Love, 1484)* exerted a great influence on sixteenth-century Italian literature and that 'the belief that the sight of beauty, usually feminine beauty, can trigger the ascension of the soul features in classics such as Pietro Bembo's *Asolani*² (1505) and Baldassare Castiglione's *Cortigiano*³ (1528)' (ibid.). While scholars disagree on the prominence of Neoplatonism during the Renaissance, then, elements of Neoplatonism which recall sublimation are nonetheless to be found and are evident in highly influential texts from the period.

Several centuries before the Renaissance, sublimation can also arguably be found in the tradition of courtly love, as Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), among others, argues. This medieval European tradition (Markale names the eleventh to the thirteenth century as the era of courtly love [2000, p. 2]) centred around 'a doctrine of paradoxes, a love at once illicit and morally elevating, passionate and disciplined, humiliating and exalting, human and transcendent' (Newman, 1973, p. vii). Boase (1977), surveying theories on the origin of courtly love, finds elements of Neoplatonism in sources named as possible contributors to the formation of the tradition. Among Hispano-Arabic sources, he names Avicenna's (980-1037) *Risāla fi'-l-'Ishq*⁴ (*Treatise on Love*), for example, a text 'deeply influenced by Neoplatonic doctrines' (p. 65), in which the following passage can be found: 'If a man loves a beautiful form with an animal desire, he deserves reproof, even condemnation [...]. But whenever he

² Quiviger here refers to Bembo's *Gli Asolani (The People of Asolo)*.

³ Quiviger here refers to Castiglione's *Il libro del cortigiano (The Book of the Courtier)*.

⁴ A precise year of publication for this text is unknown; Avicenna is believed to have lived between 980 and 1037 AD (Boase, 1977, p. 65).

loves a pleasing form with an intellectual consideration, [...] then this is to be considered an approximation to nobility and an increase in goodness' (Avicenna, cited by Boase, p. 65). Once again, an opposition between body and mind is asserted, and something resembling a redirection of the sexual urge is posited as a means of attaining spirituality. Recalling Plato, love of a beautiful object is encouraged as long as it conveys the subject to spiritual, rather than physical activity, a notion which will be echoed in Freud's ideas regarding sublimation.

Within the tradition of courtly love we can place Dante's *Vita nuova* (*New Life*, 1295), for example, 'with its story of an entirely sublimated "heavenly" love' (Barolini, 1993, p. 29) and Petrarch's (1304-1374) sonnets. In his *Vita nuova*, Dante speaks of 'his passing from "amor sensitivo" ["sensual love"] aroused by the sight of Beatrice, to "amor intellettivo" ["intellectual love"], and hence to the universalised and depersonalised emotion of "Oltre la sfera [sic] che piu largo [sic] gira"⁵ (Robb, 1935, p. 18). Similarly, Petrarchism, as Scaglione notes, 'deflects the erotic instinct toward the realm of pure poetic imagination' (1997, p. 568). For both Dante and Petrarch, 'sublimation' of the desire provoked by the (female) object of desire (Beatrice and Laura respectively) can lead to a transcendent realm of creativity and philosophy. As Bayliss explains, Dante's Beatrice 'is an intermediary, a means to an end rather than an end unto herself. Desire is sublimated to a purely spiritual plane' (2008, p. 114).

For Lacan, who produced his own theories on sublimation several decades after Freud, sublimation in courtly love is not limited to 'the redirection of instinctual impulses and desires on the part of a creator of courtly verses [...]' (Frelick, 2003, p. 109), but also involves 'a desire to evoke through artistic creation something that lies beyond the realm of representation, something that Lacan terms the Thing' (ibid.). For Lacan, sublimation (which he treats in his seventh seminar, 'L'Éthique de la psychanalyse' ['The Ethics of

⁵ 'Beyond the sphere that turns most widely'.

Psychoanalysis', 1959-1960]) is thus a process which affects the object as much as the subject: Rabaté gives Duchamp's transformation of a urinal into a work of art as an example of raising an object so that it can no longer be reduced to its formal properties (2014, p. 83). While parallels exist between Freud's and Lacan's understandings of sublimation (Lacan 'follows Freud in linking sublimation with creativity and [art]' [Evans, 1996, p. 201]), many divergences are also evident. Moyaert notes, for example, that while Freudian sublimation 'does something to the aim of the instinct', whereby the aim is 'transformed into a new, non-sexual aim' (2004, p. 45), in Lacanian sublimation something also happens to the object of the instinct (ibid.). While it is important to note the relationship between Freud's and Lacan's theories regarding sublimation, an in-depth study of Lacan's understanding of sublimation lies outside the scope of this thesis.

Goebel (2012), locating his study within German philology and beginning with Goethe, offers a partial history of the idea of sublimation. He finds Freudian sublimation to be significantly anticipated in Goethe, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, and looks beyond Freud to those who subsequently engaged with his idea, highlighting Mann, Adorno and Lacan. Goebel finds evidence of sublimation in Goethe's autobiography,⁶ before interrogating the possibility of sublimation in Schopenhauer's thought. He finds that for Schopenhauer 'music [takes] the place of a sublimation that has become impossible' (p. 52); it is Schopenhauer's division of the world between will and representation that makes this impossible, and Schopenhauer can offer only mortification and resignation, not sublimation. Goebel does note, however, that Schopenhauer's 'sublime conception of a wholly objective and thus occasionally beatific worldview liberated from the urging of the will is nearly identical to certain of Freud's descriptions of successful sublimation' (p. 59), and also highlights Freud's

⁶ Goebel cites, for example, Goethe's description of his ability to 'transform whatever gladdened or tormented me, or otherwise occupied my mind, into an image, a poem, and to come to terms with myself by doing this, to that I could both refine my conceptions of external things and calm myself inwardly in regard to them' (Goethe, cited by Goebel, p. 5).

admission that Schopenhauer should be ‘counted among the discoverers of the unconscious’ (p. 50).

Turning to post-Freudian treatments of sublimation, Goebel considers in particular Adorno (especially his posthumous *Ästhetische Theorie* [*Aesthetic Theory*, 1970]) and Lacan (discussed above). Goebel summarises Adorno’s theory of sublimation thus: ‘Artistic beauty is realised as the spiritualisation of the process of civilisation, which is already conceived of as an emancipation, a continued sublimation; nature thereby recurs in the beauty of art’ (p. 207). Like Lacan, Adorno concurs with certain elements of Freudian sublimation (such as its value for art [Paddison, 1997, p. 129]) while rejecting others, such as Freud’s belief in the possibility of ‘[interpreting] art works through a psychoanalysis of the artists’ personal lives’ (p. 128), as can be seen in Freud’s essay on Leonardo da Vinci, which will be discussed below. Adorno also emphasised the precariousness of sublimation, arguing against the notion that sublimation safely neutralises potentially disruptive drives (p. 134). This can be seen in a statement from his *Minima Moralia* (1951) cited by Paddison: ‘Every work of art is an uncommitted crime’ (ibid.).

Sublimation, then, certainly did not begin with Freud, and his theories regarding the uses and function of sublimation constitute a more scientific articulation of existing ideas rather than a discovery or invention. These ideas and theories were to be treated again by later psychoanalysts and thinkers, such as Lacan and Adorno. Some later psychoanalysts were to take issues with certain elements of Freud’s thought, including his understanding of sublimation, while others have defended and supported his ideas. Feminist critics, for example, such as writer and activist Betty Friedan⁷ and psychoanalyst Clara Thompson,⁸ accused Freud of misogyny, while Laplanche attempted to ‘safeguard’ (Roustang, 2012, p.

⁷ See, for example, her chapter ‘The Sexual Solipsism of Sigmund Freud’ in Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London: Penguin Classics, 2010), pp. 79-98.

⁸ See, for example, Thompson’s article ‘Some Effects of the Derogatory Attitude Towards Female Sexuality’, *Psychiatry*, 1 (1950), pp. 349-354.

31) Freud's theories in his lectures. In the past twenty years, interest in Freud has been somewhat renewed thanks to what Burnham refers to as '[the] movement [of] "the New Freud Studies"' (2012, p. 8), which has brought 'a fresh perspective to the history of psychoanalytic ideas and the psychoanalytic movement' (ibid.).

In this chapter, the theories of Freud are employed for several reasons. As Billig notes, Freud is the 'dominating presence in the history of psychoanalysis' (1999, p.5) and subsequent writings 'are either an argument with him or a self-conscious tidying up of loose ends' (ibid.). He was the first to offer an extended treatment of sublimation, and can take much of the credit for the entrance of the term 'sublimation' into popular discourse. W. H. Auden, in his poem entitled 'In Memory of Sigmund Freud' (1976), suggests that while certain of Freud's theories may have been disproved, the immense cultural significance of the figure and his ideas gives him a continued relevance: 'if often he was wrong and, at times, absurd, / to us he is no more a person / now but a whole climate of opinion / under which we conduct our lives' (1976, p. 215). The striking affinities that will be demonstrated between Freud's understanding of sublimation, and the portrayal of the phenomenon by d'Annunzio and Mann render Freud's articulation of sublimation a useful tool for this thesis, and the ease with which Freudian and Nietzschean sublimation can be placed in dialogue (as undertaken by Gemes [2009]) results in a fruitful lens through which to view the literature under discussion, and through which to understand the creative potential of the Dionysian.

ii) Freud and Sublimation

While Freud's treatment of sublimation occurred several decades after Nietzsche's use of the term, it is pertinent to take his (relatively) more systematic theory of sublimation as a starting point. While Freud does not by any means provide a complete theory of sublimation – Laplanche and Pontalis find that Freud left the theory 'in a primitive state' (1983, p. 433) –

he does offer an extensive collection of thoughts on the matter, supported by his own observations of subjects and patients. As Gemes notes (2009), it is ‘more advisable to use Nietzsche to clarify Freud on sublimation’ (p. 54) than vice versa, necessitating an exploration of Freud’s ideas before moving onto those of Nietzsche.

As Stafford-Clark notes, sublimation is ‘Freud’s hope for the creative future of humanity’ (1965, p. 199). His most extensive thoughts regarding the phenomenon are to be found in his *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*. Tyson notes that one of Freud’s ‘most radical insights’ (1999, p. 12) was the notion that humans are ‘motivated, even driven, by desires, fears, needs, and conflicts of which they are unaware – that is, unconscious’ (ibid.). Sublimation takes place within this unconscious and acts upon these drives and motivations. As Freud describes it, sublimation is an unconscious process which allows for creative possibilities, both for the individual as well as for civilisation. Unlike Nietzsche (as will shortly be seen), Freud understood sublimation to occur almost exclusively with the sexual drive,⁹ and to involve its redirection into non-sexual activity.

Sublimation differs from repression, however. As was seen in the previous chapter, when repression occurs, the outward expression of a drive, and not exclusively the sexual drive, is inhibited and the inner idea behind the drive suppressed. Sublimation, on the other hand, is the process by which ‘den überstarken Erregungen aus einzelnen Sexualitätsquellen Abfluß und Verwendung auf andere Gebiete eröffnet wird’¹⁰ (Freud, 1949, p. 140). While repression involves a denial of the ‘ideational portion’ (‘Vorstellungsanteil’ [Freud, 1949, p. 256]) of a drive as well as the energetic component (ibid.) (‘Affektbetrag’ [p. 255]), sublimation denies only the ideational component of the sexual drive, allowing expression to the energetic component – but, crucially, expression in a non-sexual activity. A further

⁹ Although as Laplanche and Pontalis briefly point out, Freud ‘did also mention the possibility of a sublimation of the aggressive instincts’ (1983, p. 433).

¹⁰ ‘excessive excitements originating in particular sources of sexuality are discharged and employed in other areas’.

difference between repression and sublimation is suggested by Smith's claim that sublimation cannot be considered a defence mechanism (while repression can), for 'it is the very relaxation of defences that makes sublimation possible' (2005, p. 89). Whereas repression, in defence of the subject, suppresses (but cannot abolish) a drive that could cause anxiety in the subject, thus rendering its expression impossible, sublimation requires that the drive's energetic component is expressed. As Freud states, adding weight to the idea that sublimation cannot be considered a defence mechanism, 'Eine frühzeitig vorgefallene Verdrängung schließt die Sublimierung des verdrängten Triebes aus; nach Aufhebung der Verdrängung ist der Weg zur Sublimierung wieder frei'¹¹ (1955b, p. 58).

As noted earlier, sublimation is regarded both as a stage in the development of civilisation, as well as a stage of the individual's psychosexual development.¹² Freud considers sublimation to be a natural and normal part of one's development, and claims that 'Die bleibenden Charakterzüge sind entweder unveränderte Fortsetzungen der ursprünglichen Triebe, Sublimierungen derselben oder Reaktionsbildungen gegen dieselben'¹³ (1955a, p. 209). A 'sub-species' ('Unterart' [Freud, 1949, p. 140]) of sublimation, Freud tells us in *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, can be seen in 'die Unterdrückung durch Reaktionsbildung'¹⁴ (ibid.), such as the development of 'Scham, Ekel und Moral'¹⁵ (1949, p. 64), in the infant. These reaction-formations develop between the age of around five years and puberty, and are formed 'auf Kosten dieser von erogenen Zonen gelieferten

¹¹ 'A prematurely occurring repression excludes the possibility of sublimation of the repressed drive; after the suspension of repression the route to sublimation is again open'.

¹² 'Die Kultur ist doch überhaupt auf Triebverzicht aufgebaut, und jedes einzelne Individuum soll auf seinem Wege von der Kindheit zur Reife an seiner Person diese Entwicklung der Menschheit zur verständigen Resignation wiederholen.' ('After all, culture is built entirely upon the renunciation of instinct, and on his journey from childhood to maturity every single individual must repeat, in his own person, this development of humanity to reasonable resignation.' [Freud, 1955c, p. 424]).

¹³ 'The permanent characteristics are either unchanged continuations of the original drives, sublimations of those drives, or reaction-formations against them'.

¹⁴ 'suppression through reaction-formation'.

¹⁵ 'shame, disgust and morality'.

Erregungen’¹⁶ (p. 205), as Freud notes in his essay ‘Charakter und Analerotik’ (‘Character and Anal Eroticism’, 1908).

An example of a non-sexual activity that might result from sublimation’s re-direction of a sexual drive is the creation of art. While Freud did not claim that creativity is only and always born of sublimation, he did find ‘that the highest excursions of the human spirit, in the worlds of creative art and science, gained their impetus at the human level from the reserves of libidinal energy converted to their use’ (Stafford-Clark, 1965, p. 200). Echoing Nietzsche, Freud comments as follows in his essay ‘Die “kulturelle” Sexualmoral und die moderne Nervosität’ (‘“Civilised” Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness’, 1908): ‘Ein abstinenter Künstler ist kaum recht möglich’¹⁷ (1955a, p. 160). Freud notes that artistic achievements may actually be ‘mächtig angeregt’¹⁸ (p. 16) by sexual experience.¹⁹ It is not in the artist’s interests, therefore, to *repress* the sexual drive, and instead this impulse should be harnessed, through sublimation, for creativity. It is the demands of civilisation that render full satisfaction of the sexual drive (in its most basic form) impossible; but this in turn creates the possibility of sublimation. As Freud comments, ‘welches Motiv hätten die Menschen, sexuelle Triebkräfte anderen Verwendungen zuzuführen, wenn sich aus denselben bei irgendeiner Verteilung volle Lustbefriedigung ergeben hätte?’²⁰ (1955b, p. 91). If humans, unimpeded by civilisation’s restrictions, were free to satisfy their sexual drive in sexual activity, their cultural achievements (including art) would be impoverished, Freud finds. Sublimation is therefore a crucial device to the artist, but one that, as will be seen, also involves a degree of precariousness.

¹⁶ ‘at the cost of the excitements supplied from erotogenic zones’.

¹⁷ ‘an abstinent artist is hardly to be conceived’.

¹⁸ ‘powerfully stimulated’.

¹⁹ In his notes Nietzsche writes: ‘ohne eine gewisse Überheizung des geschlechtlichen Systems ist kein Raffael zu denken...’ (‘without a certain overheating of the sexual system, a Raphael would be unthinkable’ [NF-1888, 14 (117)]). His statement that *Rausch*, and ‘vor Allem der Rausch der Geschlechterregung’ (‘above all the *Rausch* of sexual excitement’ [GD-Streifzüge-8]) is required for creativity has already been noted.

²⁰ ‘what motive would men have for putting sexual impetus to other uses if full satisfaction of sexual desire could be achieved through any distribution of these desires?’

Freud also notes, for example, that a character of artistic disposition who undergoes sublimation may display a mixture of ‘Leistungsfähigkeit, Perversion und Neurose’²¹ (1949, p. 140). This seems to be due to the proximity of sublimation and neurosis, for neurosis, like sublimation, denies the ideational component of a drive while allowing expression to the energetic component; indeed, the difficulty in distinguishing between sublimation and neurotic symptoms has long troubled readers of Freud, and it is partly in an attempt to clarify this confusion that Gemes turns to Nietzsche’s version of sublimation (as will shortly be seen). Freud himself seemed to suggest that the outcome of sublimation, as opposed to neurosis, would be socially valued. Sublimation, he explains, in an essay entitled ‘Libidotheorie’ (‘The Libido Theory’, 1923), leads to a ‘sozial oder ethisch höher gewerteten Leistung’²² (Freud, 1955c, p. 231). As Gemes cautions, however, the tendency of social values to change and shift renders this method of differentiation problematic (2009, p. 41). For now it can be noted that the neurotic symptoms which are (technically) the result of a form of sublimation are pathological symptoms, such as obsessive-compulsive thoughts and behaviour.

The extent to which an individual can – or must – engage in sublimation varies, and is further affected by ‘den Einflüssen des Lebens und der intellektuellen Beeinflussung des seelischen Apparates’²³ (Freud, 1955b, p. 151). In Freud’s essay of 1910, ‘Eine Kinderheitserrinerung des Leonardo da Vinci’ (‘A Childhood Memory of Leonardo da Vinci’), Leonardo da Vinci is named as an example of an individual with a high capacity for sublimation:

Einer anderen Person wäre es wahrscheinlich nicht geglückt, den Hauptanteil der Libido der Verdrängung durch die Sublimierung zur Wißbegierde zu entziehen; unter den gleichen

²¹ ‘productivity, perversion and neurosis’.

²² ‘achievement of higher social or ethical value’

²³ ‘the influences of life and the intellectual impact of the mental apparatus’.

Einwirkungen wie Leonardo hätte sie eine dauernde Beeinträchtigung der Denkarbeit oder eine nicht zu bewältigende Disposition zur Zwangsneurose davongetragen²⁴ (1955b, p. 209).

As Gemes explains, Leonardo da Vinci was able to redirect his homosexual drive towards ‘possession of idealised representations of the male body, as opposed to actual sexual possession of male bodies’ (2009, p. 48). In the danger Freud highlights in da Vinci’s considerable sublimations (if attempted by a lesser man), as well as in the proximity between sublimation and neurotic symptoms, we see something of the precariousness of sublimation. Indeed, Freud notes, in several places, that failed or exaggerated sublimation can have pernicious effects on the subject. The first danger to consider lies in the inability to sublimate; most individuals who are unable to sublimate their sexual drive, Freud notes, ‘werden neurotisch oder kommen sonst zu Schaden’²⁵ (1955a, p. 156). As noted earlier, if the sexual drive is neither repressed nor sublimated and its energetic component is allowed expression, neurotic symptoms will result. An example of an individual who may be unable to achieve sublimation is one of ‘ungünstiger Sexualkonstitution’²⁶ (1955a, p. 424) or one who has sustained ‘gestörter Entwicklung an ihrer Sexualität’²⁷ (ibid.). Such individuals will have recourse to ‘Hemmungen und Ersatzbildungen’²⁸ (ibid.), rather than achieving complete sublimation.

Even some individuals who do achieve sublimation court danger, because sublimation which goes too far, and attempts to go beyond the particular capacity of the individual, can result in harm. As Freud puts it:

²⁴ ‘A different person would probably not have succeeded in withdrawing the majority of the libido from repression by sublimating it into a desire for knowledge; under the same influences as Leonardo he would have suffered lasting damage to his intellectual activity or developed an overwhelming disposition towards obsessional neurosis’

²⁵ ‘become neurotic or come to some kind of harm’.

²⁶ ‘adverse sexual constitution’.

²⁷ ‘disrupted sexual development’.

²⁸ ‘inhibitions or substitutes’.

Aber so wenig wir darauf rechnen, bei unseren Maschinen mehr als einen gewissen Bruchteil der aufgewendeten Wärme in nutzbare mechanische Arbeit zu verwandeln, so wenig sollten wir es anstreben, den Sexualtrieb in seinem ganzen Energieausmaß seinen eigentlichen Zwecken zu entfremden. Es kann nicht gelingen, und wenn die Einschränkung der Sexualität zu weit getrieben werden soll, muß es alle Schädigungen eines Raubbaues mit sich bringen²⁹ (1955b, p. 59).

Here Freud offers an opposite warning to the one given by Nietzsche, who cautioned the artist against squandering all of his energies in the sexual act, leaving none for artistic creation (cited on page 136). If the opposite is attempted, Freud explains, and the individual (including the artist) attempts to divert *all* of his sexual energy into non-sexual activity, he may become exhausted. Illness and fatigue will often be the reward of the individual who attempts immoderate sublimation, and who overstretches himself in this way. It seems that the process, for Freud, requires equilibrium in order to optimise it. The phenomenon of sublimation, then, is one which requires careful, but unconscious, negotiation, and failed or ineffective sublimation can prove harmful both to creative goals and to the individual who aspires to them. Some of these dangers will be seen in Mann's and d'Annunzio's portrayals of sublimation later on in this chapter, which also appear to posit equilibrium as a crucial part of this delicate process.

So far, references to the subject of Freudian sublimation have all suggested a male participant, and not without reason. Freud's scepticism regarding the possibility of sublimation in women is made explicit in several places. In *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, for example, he notes that women are 'little capable'³⁰ (1955d, p. 463) of sublimation,

²⁹ 'But just as we do not expect our machines to transform more than a certain fraction of the heat consumed into useful mechanical work, so we should not seek to alienate the whole of the sexual drive from its actual aims. It cannot succeed, and if the constraints upon sexuality should be too extreme, it would lead to all of the damages of exhaustive cultivation'

³⁰ 'wenig gewachsen'.

civilisation having become ‘immer mehr Sache der Männer’³¹ (ibid.). Here Freud claims that men, able to achieve sublimation and participate in cultural matters, must hold back a certain amount of energy from sexual (and family) pursuits, which are evidently the realm of women. The resulting distance that develops between man and family creates hostility in women, whom civilisation has forced ‘in den Hintergrund’³² (ibid.). Levine traces the alleged incapacity for sublimation in women to Freud’s notion of castration anxiety in male infants, and the lack thereof in female infants:³³ because there is ‘no threat of castration’ (2002, p. 266) for girls, they ‘fail to internalise the authority of their father, and consequently fail to fully develop a super-ego and a capacity for sublimation’ (ibid.). In addition, Levine notes, ‘shame at their “inferior” genitals causes repression rather than sublimation of woman’s sexuality’³⁴ (ibid.). While these ideas and claims have been challenged and discredited (ibid.), they arguably draw on notions and prejudices prevalent at the time, and may be relevant to Mann’s and (especially) d’Annunzio’s contemporary depictions of sublimation.

As will shortly be seen, while there may not be a complete correspondence between Freud’s version of sublimation, and the portrayals of this phenomenon in the texts of Mann and d’Annunzio, there are striking affinities nevertheless. Freud’s location of the origins of psychological particularities in childhood occurrences is arguably not as strongly reflected by d’Annunzio and Mann, for example, but there is still a strong case for interpreting the experiences of Mann’s and d’Annunzio’s artistic characters in terms of Freudian sublimation.

³¹ ‘increasingly the concern of men’.

³² ‘into the background’.

³³ Freud gives a definition of castration complex and penis envy in the second of his *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, which is entitled ‘Die infantile Sexualität’ (‘Infantile Sexuality’). He discusses his idea of penis envy more at length in ‘Einige psychische Folgen des anatomischen Geschlechtsunterschiedes’ (‘Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Differences Between the Sexes’, 1925).

³⁴ In ‘Einige psychische Folgen des anatomischen Geschlechtsunterschiedes’, Freud claims that female infants go through a ‘phallic’ period, ‘bald nach den Anzeichen des Penisneides’ (‘soon after the manifestation of penis-envy’ [1955d, p. 27]), which is followed by ‘eine intensive Gegenströmung gegen die Onanie’ (‘an intense countercurrent against masturbation’ [ibid]). He attributes this occurrence to ‘jenes Verdrängungsschubes, der zur Zeit der Pubertät ein großes Stück der männlichen Sexualität beseitigen wird, um Raum für die Entwicklung der Weiblichkeit zu schaffen’ (‘that phase of repression which, at the time of puberty, eradicates a large part of the girl’s masculine sexuality in order to make room for the development of her femininity’ [ibid]).

The close connection between Freud's ideas regarding sublimation and literary texts is illustrated by Richard Sterba's report (1985, p. 118; Sterba was a colleague of Freud's) that Freud claimed to have arrived at the idea after reading Heinrich Heine's *Die Harzreise* (*The Harz Journey*, 1826). After establishing Nietzsche's understanding of this psychological phenomenon, an exploration of Mann's and d'Annunzio's texts will reveal these substantial affinities.

iii) Nietzsche and Sublimation

While sublimation is arguably less extensively and comprehensively treated by Nietzsche than by Freud, Nietzsche's understanding of this psychological process foreshadows Freud's conception to a considerable degree, and is highly relevant to an understanding of Mann's and d'Annunzio's portrayals of Dionysian creativity. While it is possible, even likely in the case of Mann, that the two writers came across the idea of sublimation in Nietzsche's writings, the fragmentary and often implicit nature of Nietzsche's treatment of the psychological phenomenon means that it will not be argued here that Nietzsche was a direct influence on Mann's and d'Annunzio's understandings of sublimation. Instead, while it is acknowledged that this *may* have been the case, Nietzsche's idea of sublimation will be used instead as a tool to illuminate and analyse the sublimation we see portrayed in the literary texts under discussion. Striking affinities will be uncovered, rendering Nietzsche's understanding of sublimation a useful explanatory device that complements the clarification offered by Freud. Modern usage of the term 'sublimation' owes much to Nietzsche: Kaufmann notes that the term 'sublimation' had already been used 'in modern times [by] Goethe, Novalis, and Schopenhauer' (1974, p. 219), but that 'the specific connotation it has today' (ibid.) is due to Nietzsche. While Nietzsche refers to sublimation ('Sublimierung')

explicitly only 37 times in his writings, passages describing a process strongly resembling sublimation have been noted by several commentators.

It is important to note, firstly, that Nietzsche, like Freud, saw humans as ‘collections of drives’³⁵ (Gemes, 2009, p. 46). This can be seen in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, for example, where Nietzsche talks of interactions between ‘die Grundtriebe des Menschen’³⁶ (JGB-6). Some of these drives, according to Nietzsche, work towards similar ends, while others are completely opposite in their aims. Although Nietzsche appears not to have used the term ‘repression’ (‘Verdrängung’) in the context of these drives, the term ‘sublimated’ (‘sublimirt’) is used in connection with them. When these passages are examined, striking parallels between Freud’s and Nietzsche’s ideas of sublimation emerge. As Schacht, who finds that Nietzsche’s interest in sublimation increased around the time of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, notes, Nietzsche found that ‘different sorts of social and cultural conditions’ (2006, p. 119) have the ability to modify our affects and thoughts, echoing the role played by civilisation in the development of Freudian sublimation. Elsewhere he argues convincingly that Nietzsche employs the term ‘spiritualisation’ (given in English, which Gemes translates as ‘Vergeistigung’ [2009, p. 56]) in the sense of ‘sublimation’ (Schacht, 1992, p. 323). Assoun notes that sublimation, for Nietzsche, is ‘a way of perfecting the instinct and rendering it useful’ (2006, p. 98), which is consonant with Freud’s view of sublimation as a creative and productive process. Some of these affinities will now be explained in greater detail.

In *Götzen-Dämmerung*, Nietzsche describes how ‘Alle Passionen haben eine Zeit, wo sie bloss verhängnissvoll sind, wo sie mit der Schwere der Dummheit ihr Opfer hinunterziehen — und eine spätere, sehr viel spätere, wo sie sich mit dem Geist verheirathen,

³⁵ For an investigation of Nietzsche’s use of the term ‘drive’, see Paul Katsafanas, ‘Nietzsche’s Philosophical Psychology’, in *The Oxford Handbook to Nietzsche*, ed. by Ken Gemes and John Richardson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 727-756.

³⁶ ‘the basic drives of humans’.

sich “vergeistigen”³⁷ (GD-Moral-1). Here he suggests that human beings are capable (eventually) of ‘spiritualising’ passions, which Schach equates with ‘sublimation’. Nietzsche implies that the earlier expression of these passions had disastrous and harmful results and that spiritualisation therefore renders them more valuable. Crucially, Nietzsche appears to believe that in such processes the original passion, impulse, instinct or drive will not be abolished. These passions can be said to have been redirected into a more ‘spiritual’ form of expression, which anticipates Freud’s notion of sublimation.

Further affinities can be seen in section 16 of the second essay of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (*On the Genealogy of Morality*, 1887), where Nietzsche explains the formation of ‘bad conscience’. Schacht (2006, p. 127) argues that this phenomenon can be seen as a case of sublimation, and Goebel finds Nietzsche to understand it as ‘the most subtle instrument of false sublimation’³⁸ (2012, p. 82). The development of ‘bad conscience’, Nietzsche tells us, coincided with the emergence of societies, and with the recategorising of instincts which had previously been advantageous for survival (such as cruelty) as undesirable and hostile to society. The advent of society, Nietzsche claims, constituted a change no less tumultuous than the evolution of sea animals into land animals (GM-II-16). A frustration of the old instincts (now deemed undesirable) was effected through ‘Jene furchtbaren Bollwerke, mit denen sich die staatliche Organisation gegen die alten Instinkte der Freiheit schützte — die Strafen gehören vor Allem zu diesen Bollwerken’³⁹ (GM-II-16). These frustrated instincts then turned inwards: ‘Die Feindschaft, die Grausamkeit, die Lust an der Verfolgung, am Überfall, am Wechsel, an der Zerstörung — Alles das gegen die Inhaber solcher Instinkte

³⁷ ‘All passions have a time when they are merely disastrous, where they suck their victim down with the weight of their stupidity – and a later, much later, time, where they become wedded to the spirit, where they are “spiritualised”’.

³⁸ For Nietzsche, a ‘false sublimation’, Goebel explains, is one that involves ‘the weakening of the drives’ (p. xi).

³⁹ ‘Those terrible bullwarks, with which state organisations protected freedom from the old instincts – above all, punishments belong to these bullwarks’.

sich wendend: das ist der Ursprung des “schlechten Gewissens”⁴⁰ (GM-II-16). As Schacht argues, in his account of the origin of ‘bad conscience’ Nietzsche ‘introduced a theory of drive or instinct inhibition, internalisation, and sublimation that is one of the hallmarks and central features of his philosophical psychology and anthropology’ (2006, p. 127). Here Nietzsche demonstrates the ability of sublimation to alter the psychology of civilisation as a whole, as well as that of the individuals who make up this social group, reflecting Freud’s own concerns. While Nietzsche may not consider ‘bad conscience’ to be a positive outcome of sublimation, the process by which this takes place reveals much about Nietzsche’s understanding of the psychological phenomenon.

That the process of redirection can be, for Nietzsche, negative is echoed again in a note from 1881 which speaks of the possible consequences of a refinement (‘[Verfeinerung]’) of the sexual drive. Nietzsche lists ‘Menschenliebe, Anbetung von Maria und Heiligen, künstlerische Schwärmerei’⁴¹ (NF-1881, 11 [24]) as potential outcomes of this sublimation. On several occasions Nietzsche criticises Christianity for bringing about a sublimation of the sexual drive and causing the original drive to be viewed as unclean and undesirable. Nietzsche finds Schopenhauer to have advocated a similar kind of ‘false sublimation’ (Goebel, 2012, p. 82), leading Nietzsche to label him ‘der Erbe der christlichen Interpretation’⁴² (GD-Streifzuege-21). As noted earlier, and as Goebel argued (2012, p. 5), Schopenhauer saw no possibility for a life-affirming form of sublimation, and instead argued for mortification of the flesh and withdrawal from the world.

Elsewhere Nietzsche appears to find sublimation a useful process to be endorsed. In a note from 1885, for example, he declares, ‘Ich wünsche mir selber und allen denen, welche ohne die Ängste eines Puritaner-Gewissens leben — leben dürfen —, eine immer größere

⁴⁰ ‘Animosity, cruelty, pleasure in pursuing, in attacking, in changing and in destroying – all this turned against he who had such instincts: that is the origin of “bad conscience”’.

⁴¹ ‘human love, worship of Mary and the saints, artistic ecstasy’.

⁴² ‘the heir of the Christian interpretation’.

Vergeistigung und Vervielfältigung der Sinne'⁴³ (NF-1885, 37 [12]). Sublimation (or 'spiritualisation') must not necessarily work against the senses, as it does in the practices of the Church. It can be a way of embracing and maximising the senses. Following this declaration, Nietzsche states that we must value the senses for their 'Feinheit, Fülle und Kraft'⁴⁴ (ibid.) and honour them with our spirituality ('Geist'). Sublimation for Nietzsche is not limited to the 'spiritualisation' of sexual and sensual impulses and it can act upon drives like aggression and revenge. In two separate notes from 1883 he claims that 'Alle Tugenden sind eigentlich verfeinerte Leidenschaften und erhöhte Zustände'⁴⁵ (NF-1883, 24 [1]) and posits 'Gerechtigkeit als Entwicklung des Rachetriebes'⁴⁶ (NF-1883, 23 [31]). Whether Nietzsche intends 'Tugenden' ('virtues') in a positive or negative sense is unclear, but this brief note nevertheless illustrates Nietzsche's understanding of the process by which certain drives and instincts can be refined and redirected.

Anticipating Freud's claims that sublimation can fuel creativity (of various kinds), Nietzsche speaks of the artistic value of sublimation (or 'spiritualisation'). Just as Freud would posit sublimation (and repression) as key factors in the creation of civilisation, Nietzsche claims that 'Fast Alles, was wir "höhere Cultur" nennen, beruht auf der Vergeistigung und Vertiefung der Grausamkeit'⁴⁷ (JGB-229). Again he emphasises that the original drive or impulse will not be destroyed by such processes, but merely harnessed: the "'wildes Thier'"⁴⁸ (ibid.) which he posits as the source of cruelty behind higher culture, and which recalls the 'wilde Bestie'⁴⁹ (1955d, p. 471) that Freud found at the depths of modern man, hidden by layers of repression, is not slain but merely rendered spiritual and deified ('vergöttlicht'). In a later note Nietzsche also highlights the sexual undercurrents of art,

⁴³ 'I wish for myself and for all those, who live – who may live – without the fear of a puritanical conscience-, an ever greater spiritualisation and duplication of the senses'.

⁴⁴ 'subtlety, abundance and power'.

⁴⁵ 'All virtues are actually refined passions and heightened states'.

⁴⁶ 'Justice as a development of the drive for revenge'.

⁴⁷ 'Almost everything that we call "high culture" rests upon the spiritualisation and absorption of cruelty'.

⁴⁸ "'wild animal"'.
⁴⁹ 'wild beast'.

which comes about through sublimation. He finds art to constitute a ‘disguised’ version of sensuality, ‘Die Sinnlichkeit in ihren Verkleidungen’⁵⁰ (NF-1887, 8 [1]). Another note from the same year reaffirms the interrelatedness of sexuality and creativity: ‘Das Verlangen nach Kunst und Schönheit ist ein indirektes Verlangen nach den Entzückungen des Geschlechtstriebes’⁵¹ (NF-1887, 8 [1]). The word ‘indirekt’ here even suggests a drive which has undergone redirection, and the statement recalls Freud’s own findings that the artist benefits from sexual arousal, and should not forgo it completely.

Sublimation in a different creative context can be seen in a passage from *Ecce homo*, which is highlighted by Gemes (2009, p. 47). In this passage, Nietzsche explains how one achieves the self-creative and affirmative goal of becoming what one is (‘[wie] man wird, *was man ist*’⁵² [EH-Klug-9]):

Inzwischen wächst und wächst die organisierende, die zur Herrschaft berufne “Idee” in der Tiefe, — sie beginnt zu befehlen, sie leitet langsam aus Nebenwegen und Abwegen zurück, sie bereitet einzelne Qualitäten und Tüchtigkeiten vor, die einmal als Mittel zum Ganzen sich unentbehrlich erweisen werden, — sie bildet der Reihe nach alle dienenden Vermögen aus, bevor sie irgend Etwas von der dominierenden Aufgabe, von “Ziel”, “Zweck”, “Sinn” verlauten lässt.⁵³ (EH-Klug-9)

Here, one drive – the dominating drive – redirects subservient drives and trains them towards its (the dominant drive’s) own ends. In this way, weaker and stronger drives are united in their goals, allowing the individual to become what he is. The importance to Nietzsche of

⁵⁰ ‘The senses in their disguises’. This motto is the subtitle of *Ecce homo*.

⁵¹ ‘The desire for art and beauty is an indirect desire for the delights of the sexual drive’.

⁵² ‘[how] one becomes *what one is*’.

⁵³ ‘In the meantime the organising “idea”, which is appointed as the dominating “idea”, grows deep down, – it begins to command, it slowly leads us back out of byroads and detours, it prepares single qualities and capabilities that will, one day, will prove themselves essential as a medium towards the whole, – it trains, in sequence, all serving faculties, before it allows anything of the dominating task, of the “aim”, “purpose”, “meaning”, to be sounded.’

united drives is highlighted by Gemes, who cites another passage by way of illustration, this time from Nietzsche's *Nachlaß*:

Die Vielheit und Disgregation der Antriebe, der Mangel an System unter ihnen resultirt als "schwacher Wille"; die Koordination derselben unter der Vorherrschaft eines einzelnen resultirt als "starker Wille"; – im erstern Falle ist es das Oscilliren und der Mangel an Schwergewicht; im letztern die Präcision und Klarheit der Richtung.⁵⁴ (NF-1888, 14 [219])

For Nietzsche, then, unification of drives leads to a 'strong will', while disparate and fragmented drives result in a 'weak will'. Gemes summarises Nietzsche's understanding of sublimation thus: '*sublimations involve integration or unification, while pathological symptoms involve splitting off or disintegration*' (2009, p. 48). The subject must not attempt to abolish a drive completely, if he is to put it to creative use, for this would lead to *Ressentiment* (as seen in Christianity, which sublimated the hostility of individuals towards one another and turned it into love [JGB-189]); it must instead be trained and redirected.

It is in this stipulation that Gemes finds a way of resolving the potential problem, alluded to earlier, that may arise from Freud's understanding of sublimation, namely, that it can be difficult to distinguish between sublimation and neurosis. In Freud's version of events, neurotic symptoms can result if the ideational component of the sexual drive is suppressed while its energetic component is allowed to manifest itself, but in an activity that civilisation judges negatively (such as compulsive behaviour). In Nietzschean terms, these neurotic symptoms represent a non-unified collection of drives, for the drive which brings about the neurotic symptoms has not been trained to act towards the goal of the dominant drive. In the converse case, Freud's subject sublimates his sexual drive through a socially valued activity, such as the creation of art, which, in Nietzsche's terms, occurs in accordance with the

⁵⁴ 'The multiplicity and disgregation of urges, and the lack of system amongst them, results in a "weak will; the coordination of the same [urges] under the dominance of one [urge] results in a "strong will"; – in the first case there is oscillation and a lack of gravity; in the second case a precision and clarity of direction'

subject's dominant drive, thus avoiding fragmentation and neurotic symptoms. What Nietzsche refers to as a lack of gravity and unity, resulting in a weak will, would thus constitute an equivalent to Freud's notion of neurosis, while what Nietzsche refers to as the cooperation of drives, resulting in a strong will, demonstrates successful sublimation.

Schacht explores how Nietzschean sublimation (or 'spiritualisation') takes place, and claims that, for Nietzsche, 'all [...] spiritualisations of the affects have as their general precondition the learning of restraint' (1992, p. 325). This can be seen especially in a passage Schacht highlights from *Götzen-Dämmerung*, in which Nietzsche explains this first precondition for reaching spirituality: 'auf einen Reiz nicht sofort reagieren, sondern die hemmenden, die abschliessenden Instinkte in die Hand bekommen'⁵⁵ (GD-Deutschen-6). A failure to achieve this, and a tendency to react instantly to all stimulants, leads (Nietzsche claims) to 'Krankhaftigkeit, Niedergang, Symptom der Erschöpfung'⁵⁶ (ibid.). Here Nietzsche explains that spirituality, or sublimation, requires one to take control over one's various instincts, echoing the idea that sublimation involves the unification of disparate drives. A note from 1886 offers a similar warning to this passage from *Götzen-Dämmerung*, by explaining the implications of failing to unify and sublimate various and opposing drives, and of attempting to satisfy them all (in the sense of reacting to all stimulants): 'wo sie alle Befriedigung wollen, [ist] ein Mensch von tiefer Mittelmäßigkeit zu denken'⁵⁷ (NF-1886, 7 [3]). Sublimation, then, appears to be a means of escaping mediocrity, and of achieving greatness, maybe even creative greatness.

For both Freud and Nietzsche, sublimation is a psychological phenomenon which involves the redirection of certain drives, which can be harnessed for creative activity. Both seem to find an element of danger or precariousness in the process. Freud cautions against attempting over-extreme sublimation beyond the capacity of the subject, as well as explaining

⁵⁵ 'not to react immediately to a stimulus, but to take control of the debilitating, isolating instincts'.

⁵⁶ 'morbidly, decline, symptom of exhaustion'.

⁵⁷ 'where they all demand satisfaction, a being of profound mediocrity will result'.

the harmful implications of failed sublimation. Nietzsche, too, gives a warning regarding failed sublimation – which results in fragmentation and disparate drives. A warning may also lie in Nietzsche’s claims that sublimation does not actually destroy the “‘wildes Thier’”⁵⁸ that lurks beneath culture and civilisation. While neither speaks of the Dionysian in the context of sublimation, it is a drive to which the theories of both could be applied. For Nietzsche, sublimation is not a phenomenon that acts exclusively upon the sexual drive, and aspects of the Dionysian (such as its impetus towards reckless abandon, which may result in cruelty) arguably resemble those drives which Nietzsche describes as undergoing a process of sublimation into ‘bad conscience’, opening up the possibility of applying his understanding of sublimation to the Dionysian, too. While Freud more or less insists that sublimation only affects the sexual drive, the strong affinities that will be seen between Mann’s and d’Annunzio’s portrayals of Dionysian sublimation, and Freud’s notion of sublimation, invite application of this psychological idea to the literary texts under discussion. It is to these portrayals that we will now turn our attention, after presenting a brief overview of the writers’ relationships with Freud.

iv) The Artist and Sublimation of the Dionysian

While this thesis will not attempt to establish the extent to which Freud’s ideas regarding sublimation – or, indeed, Nietzsche’s – may have ‘influenced’ Mann or d’Annunzio, this overview will help to illustrate the relevance of Freud’s psychoanalytical theories to Mann and d’Annunzio. Brief consideration will therefore be given to any knowledge Mann and d’Annunzio may have had of Freud and to the critical history linking the two writers with Freud.

⁵⁸ “‘wild animal’”.

While it is difficult to establish whether Mann and d'Annunzio were familiar with Nietzsche's idea of sublimation, it has been established, both in this thesis and elsewhere, that both Mann and d'Annunzio read (at least some of) Nietzsche's works and were familiar with many of his ideas, through both first- and second-hand discoveries. Mann at least, whose acquaintance with Nietzsche's writings was intimate, is likely to have encountered references, including implicit ones, to sublimation in Nietzsche's writings before Freud's more famous use of the term. Nietzsche's views regarding sublimation may well have helped to shape Mann's own reflections upon the psychological process, although this chapter will argue the case for affinities rather than influence. In the case of d'Annunzio, citations from *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* – the first of Nietzsche's texts to be translated into Italian, in 1899 – at the beginning of *Il trionfo della morte* suggest that d'Annunzio had read at least part of Nietzsche's text, in which references to, for example, man's drives and to the sublimations in the form of Christianity can be found, although it is impossible to establish this with absolute certainty.

While d'Annunzio, Mann and Freud were near contemporaries, most of d'Annunzio's novels were written before or during the earliest stages of Freud's writing career. It is only in the case of Mann's fictional texts, therefore, that it would be possible to speak of a reception of Freud, or of Freud's ideas having an impact. Indeed, as Spackman points out, referring to d'Annunzio's novel of 1892, *L'innocente*, it could even be argued that d'Annunzio to some extent anticipated some of Freud's ideas. Spackman notes the affinities between d'Annunzio's novel, in which a man murders the baby of his wife by another man, and Freud's famous Oedipus complex. She comments: 'The mythical subtexts are too many, the variations on the family romance too obsessive, the rhetorical mechanisms too similar not to suspect that d'Annunzio here is discovering Freud's terrain before Freud has even set foot on it' (1989, p. 150). The words 'sublimation' ('sublimazione') and 'sublimate' ('sublimare')

can be found several times in various configurations in d'Annunzio's writings, and commentators have found incidences of sublimation in d'Annunzio's novels. Caburlotto, for example, talks about the sublimation of Venice that takes place in *Il fuoco*: 'Venezia, l'emblema dell'arte, immersa nella melodia, si evolve fino a giungere alla sublimazione in musica'⁵⁹ (2014, p. 85). Borelli (2012) refers to sublimation as the achievement of the protagonist in *Forse che sì forse che no* (*Maybe Yes Maybe No*, 1910) to describe aviator Paolo Tarsis' escape from his debilitating sexual attraction for Isabella, whose base, fleshy body is juxtaposed with the lightness and freedom of flight. While sublimation of the sexual drive has been noted in *Il fuoco*,⁶⁰ no detailed study of this phenomenon in d'Annunzio's novels seems to exist, and links between the Dionysian and sublimation remain unexplored.

Bonadeo notes that 'without any knowledge of psychology, d'Annunzio understood the meaning of sublimation' (1995, p. 93) and he points to one of d'Annunzio's later short stories, *La leda senza cigna* (*Leda Without Swan*, 1916), where sublimation is defined thus: 'Sublimare è d'una cosa bassa e corrotta farla alta, e grande, cioè pura'⁶¹ (d'Annunzio, 1989, p. 1062). This definition posits the object of sublimation as a something negative, which must be improved; this chapter will argue, however, that d'Annunzio does not always see sublimation in this way, and that in *Il fuoco* he portrays the successful sublimation of drives (the Dionysian, and its impulse to sexual abandon) which are not inherently negative. While the sexual drive, for example, can certainly be base and impure for d'Annunzio, especially in *Il trionfo della morte*, it can also be creatively inspiring and transcendent, most notably in *Il fuoco*.

⁵⁹ 'Venice, the emblem of art, immersed in melody, evolves until it is sublimated in music'.

⁶⁰ Boccali, for example, talks of the sublimation effected by the fire of Effrena's words during his oration: 'Il fuoco alchemico prodotto dalle parole dell'oratore, dalla sua arte divine, avvampa in tutta la città, consuma tutti gli elementi funerei e putridi er far nascere altre parole e altre immagini attraverso un'azione di sublimazione e di decontaminazione' ('The alchemic flame produced by the words of the orator and by his divine art, burns throughout the city, consumes all of its funereal and putrid elements and provokes the birth of other words and other images, through an action of sublimation and of decontamination' [2011, p. 109]).

⁶¹ 'Sublimation is where a base and corrupt thing is elevated, and made great, that is, pure'.

In the case of Thomas Mann, a reception of Freud's ideas is more visible, thanks, in part, to Mann's two essays concerning Freud: 'Die Stellung Freuds in der modernen Geistesgeschichte' ('Freud's Place in the History of Modern Thought', 1929) and 'Freud und die Zukunft' ('Freud and the Future', 1936). While Mann praises Freud in both essays, he also betrays an element of (personal) ambiguity regarding psychoanalysis itself. In an interview with *La Stampa* in 1928 Mann calls psychoanalysis 'una specie di attacco generale contro il subcosciente'⁶² (Sorani, 1925, p. 3) and likens Freud's analysis of the artist to an X-ray image that could even harm creativity.⁶³ The possibility of a Freudian influence on Mann's literature has received much critical attention. Michael (1950), for example, investigates Mann's claims about when he actually read Freud, mindful of the apparent affinities with Freud in *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*, 1924), concluding that in 1924 Mann knew only 'das Allgemeinste von dem Werk Freuds'⁶⁴ (p. 169). As Mann himself noted in 1944, in a quotation cited by Michael, 'One could be influenced in this sphere without any direct contact with his work, because for a long time the air had been filled with the thoughts and results of the psychoanalytic school' (ibid. [original text in English]). Mann himself claimed not to have read Freud before writing *Der Zauberberg*, leaving a window of five years in which he must have become more directly acquainted with Freud's ideas before his 1929 essay. With this in mind, Mann's statement, made in the 1928 *La Stampa* interview, that *Der Tod in Venedig* – the latest publication of the texts under consideration in this thesis – came about under the influence of Freud,⁶⁵ must refer to a second-hand reception of Freud's

⁶² 'a kind of general offensive against the subconscious'.

⁶³ To Sorani Mann states: 'come artista, io devo convenire di non essere del tutto soddisfatto e consolato dall'idea freudiana, e dalla sua fortuna. Infatti, come artista, io mi sento turbato e diminuito da Freud, perché dall'idea di Freud l'artista resta penetrato come da un fascio di raggi Roentgen, troppo penetrato, penetrato sino alla violenza del mistero dell'azione' ('as an artist I must agree that I am not wholly satisfied and comforted by the idea of Freud, and by its reception. In fact, as an artist, I feel agitated and diminished by Freud, because his idea penetrates the artist like an X-ray – it penetrates too deep and violates the mystery of artistic activity' [p. 3]).

⁶⁴ 'the most general aspects of Freud's works'.

⁶⁵ 'Quanto a me, è certo che almeno un mio romanzo, *La morte a Venezia*, ha risentito dell'influsso freudiano. Senza aver conosciuto Freud, io non sarei stato portato a trattare questo soggetto erotico, un soggetto erotico

ideas, which, as Mann noted, had entered into the common intellectual consciousness of the time.

With regards to the idea of sublimation, Goebel finds that ‘One could with relative ease develop the hypothesis that Thomas Mann’s work delivers a far-reaching phenomenology of sublimation and inhibition’ (2012, p. 156). Goebel also suggests that Mann’s literature which portrayed sublimation, was, itself produced as an act of sublimation, allowing Mann to manage ‘frustrated instinctual desires’ (p. 158). Many commentators have found that sublimation plays a significant role in Mann’s fiction, including *Doktor Faustus* (Bridges, 1999) and, more commonly, *Der Tod in Venedig*. Kohut, for example, psychoanalyses Aschenbach, as part of his psychoanalysis of Mann, and finds that ‘the waxing and waning of artistic productivity in Aschenbach seems to run parallel with the predominance of either sublimated or unsublimated homosexual strivings’ (2011, p. 127). For Kohut – as for most commentators – it is exclusively the homosexual drive which Aschenbach must sublimate, contrary to the argument advanced in this thesis. Similarly, while Wieler suggests that Tonio Kröger’s ‘Arbeitswut’ (‘work-mania’ [1996, p. 386]) serves ‘der Sublimation eines unbefriedigten Daseins’⁶⁶ (ibid.), sublimation is only mentioned in passing and there is no mention of the Dionysian.

While sublimation has been noted in the literature of Mann and d’Annunzio, therefore, very few comprehensive studies of their portrayal of sublimation exist, and sublimation of the Dionysian into artistic activity has not yet been critically explored. Attention will now turn to Mann’s and d’Annunzio’s fictional artists, and their experiences of sublimation – both successful and unsuccessful. Those artists who achieve sublimation,

così particolare e morboso, o almeno non avrei concepito così il racconto della [...] fine del mio eroe’ (‘As far as I am concerned, it is certain that at least one of my novels, *Death in Venice*, was affected by the influence of Freud. Had I not know Freud, I would not have been moved to treat this erotic subject, an erotic subject so peculiar and morbid, or at least I would not have conceived of the end of my hero in the same way’ [Sorani, 1925, p. 3]).

⁶⁶ ‘the sublimation of an unsatisfied existence’.

leading to creativity, will be examined first, before moving on to consider those artists who fail to achieve, or even to attempt, sublimation. Consideration will also be given throughout to the nature of the sublimation processes presented, and whether, when Mann and d'Annunzio depict their failure, they do so as criticism of the processes themselves or of the object of the (attempted) sublimation.

Tonio Kröger and Stelio Effrena have, throughout this thesis, been posited as the most successful and 'healthy' of the artists under consideration. Both artists experience an intensification of the sexual drive when they engage with the Dionysian (Kröger in his carnal adventures in the south, Effrena in his relationship with Foscarina, the 'Dionysian' woman), along with impulses of abandon and wildness. In the case of Kröger, especially, this wildness and hedonism constitutes a stark contrast to the principles of discipline and self-control that have been instilled in him throughout childhood and adolescence. Kröger's experience of the Dionysian is far milder than Effrena's, perhaps because, for Mann, this is the only way in which the Dionysian can be safely negotiated.

No sooner has Kröger indulged in Dionysian excesses in the south, than his conscience protests and voices its disapproval of such wild behaviour. This conscience is the source of Kröger's 'Ekel und Haß gegen die Sinne'⁶⁷ (Mann, 2004, p. 265), and could be termed a 'reaction formation', recalling Freud's explanation of the development of disgust and shame in infants in his *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*. Just as the infant (in Freud's theory) makes use of these sensations to avoid anxiety, which occurs when the infant receives disapproval for following drives and instincts considered inappropriate by parental figures and society in general, Kröger's sensations of distaste draw him away from the promiscuities of the south, relieving him of guilt ('heiße Schuld'⁶⁸ [p. 264]). As noted earlier, Freud considers such 'reaction formations' to constitute a 'sub-species' of sublimation, and

⁶⁷ 'disgust and hatred of the senses'.

⁶⁸ 'hot guilt'.

Kröger's reaction of shame could be regarded as a sublimation of guilt. This seems to be a 'paternally inherited' reaction, and opposes the maternal influence of the south,⁶⁹ preventing it from becoming Kröger's dominant side. The result is equilibrium between these various psychological influences.

Here, the object of sublimation is without doubt the Dionysian. It is the impulses of the south that most threaten Kröger, and for Mann the south is commonly associated with Dionysus (as a realm of 'Sammetblauer Himmel, heißer Wein und süße Sinnlichkeit'⁷⁰ [p. 282], as Tonio Kröger describes Italy); Mann also likens the atmosphere of the south to an eternal spring ('eines beständigen Frühlings'⁷¹ [p. 265]) – spring is season of Dionysus.⁷² The kind of impulses that Kröger obeys in the south, at least initially, before his burgherly conscience protests, strongly resemble those of the Dionysian, as described by Nietzsche and as portrayed by Mann elsewhere: abandon, recklessness, suspension of identity and licentiousness all characterise Kröger's southern adventures. Additionally, Kröger's adventures in the south recall to some extent those of Aschenbach, where the Dionysian is all but named. As has already been noted, however, affinities between Aschenbach and Kröger do not extend to the outcome of their engagement with the Dionysian.

To use Nietzsche's language of sublimation, Kröger arguably achieves unity of his various drives. Crucially, however, this happens in such a way that the two sides of Kröger's character triumph together. There is no repression of the Dionysian, and both sides of Kröger's nature cooperate, resulting in the non-sexual activity of artistic creation. A balance between these two sides appears to offer the most fruitful formula for creativity. Kröger

⁶⁹ Mann writes, 'vielleicht war es das Blut seiner Mutter, welches ihn dorthin zog' ('maybe it was the blood of his mother that drew him there' [p. 264]).

⁷⁰ 'velvet blue sky, hot wine and sweet sensuality'.

⁷¹ 'a constant spring'.

⁷² In *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Nietzsche writes: 'bei dem gewaltigen, die ganze Natur lustvoll durchdringenden Nahen des Frühlings erwachen jene dionysischen Regungen, in deren Steigerung das Subjective zu völliger Selbstvergessenheit hinschwindet' ('with the violent approach of spring, which lustfully penetrates the whole of nature, that Dionysian excitement awakes, at whose climax the subject fades into complete self-forgetfulness' [GT-2]).

successfully brings his (Dionysian) impulse towards licentiousness and hedonism in line with his drive towards artistic productivity, largely through his reaction of shame and disgust. His desire, or compulsion, to create art harnesses both his more sensual, bohemian side, as well as his burgherly, productive side. At this point in Mann's novella, however, Kröger still appears uncertain of his inner conflicts and remains 'haltlos zwischen krassen Extremen, zwischen eisiger Geistigkeit und verzehrender Sinnenglut hin und her geworfen'⁷³ (Mann, 2004, p. 265).

Yet in this cooperation between northern, paternal drives and southern, maternal drives, we arguably find an anticipation of the state of self-security and unity that Kröger achieves by the end of Mann's novella, when he affirms the two sides of his character, and profits from their fruitful tension. Here he declares that it is precisely his burgherly love of mankind, in all its banality, that makes him a *Dichter*, rather than a *Literat* (p. 318),⁷⁴ affirming the unity of his position. Art now appears to bridge the two sides of Kröger's character and has become his dominant drive, subjugating both his (Dionysian) impetus towards intoxication and hedonism, and his burgherly impetus towards productivity and respectability. He writes to Lisaweta, 'Ich schaue in eine ungeborene und schemenhafte Welt hinein, die geordnet und gebildet sein will'⁷⁵ (p. 318), suggesting an impetus towards inner harmony and organisation that echoes Nietzsche's idea of sublimation, in which organised and unified drives result in 'die Präcision und Klarheit'.⁷⁶ Indeed, Kröger's final letter to Lisaweta, with which Mann's novella closes, exudes clarity and control, and he confidently

⁷³ 'adrift between stark extremes, thrown back and forth between icy intellect and consuming sensual ardour'.

⁷⁴ In an abandoned essay entitled 'Geist und Kunst' ('Intellect and Art') Mann explains the difference between the *Dichter* (commonly translated as 'poet') and the *Schriftsteller* (synonymous with the *Literat*, and usually translated as 'writer'), as cited by Reed: 'Der Dichter geht von der Idee aus und setzt sie in Plastik, Gestaltung und Leben um. Der reine (absolute) Schriftsteller geht vom Leben, Erlebnis, dem Sinnlichen aus und setzt es in Ideen, in Geist um, "verwandelt alles in Licht und Flammen", wie Nietzsche sagt' ('The *Dichter* departs from the idea and translates it into sculpture, form and life. The pure (absolute) *Schriftsteller* departs from life, experience, the sensual, and translates it into ideas, into intellect, "transforms everything into light and flame", as Nietzsche says' [1996, p. 76]).

⁷⁵ 'I gaze into an unborn and hazy world that wishes to be ordered and refined'.

⁷⁶ 'precision and clarity'.

announces his imminent creativity, which will allow him to surpass anything he has yet produced. The extent of Kröger's hard-fought achievement is rendered even clearer by the experiences of Aschenbach, whose failed sublimation will be considered shortly.

Tonio Kröger's sublimation of the Dionysian, which allows him to channel the various impulses of the potent drive into artistic creation, rather than hedonism, appears to be a relatively smooth process. At no point does Mann suggest that Kröger, or his creativity, are endangered, and the subtlety of Kröger's Dionysian experience gives the impression that he is likely to harness this creative – but dangerous – drive. The fact that his conscience reacts so swiftly with disgust and shame when he experiences the wild (and more dangerous) side of the Dionysian seems crucial. An artist who shares Kröger's success in sublimating the Dionysian, but who arguably encounters greater obstacles in the process, is *Il fuoco*'s Stelio Effrena.

In *Il fuoco*, the Dionysian unleashes a sexual urge which appears more turbulent and rebellious than the one explored in *Tonio Kröger*. The most prominent aspect of the Dionysian in *Il fuoco* is probably its promotion of sexual arousal. The Dionysian overtones of the sexual arousal depicted in this novel have been seen in previous chapters. Sexuality is seen here as an aid to, even as a precondition of, creativity, but it can also threaten the artist's task (in both cases echoing Nietzsche and Freud). While Effrena is no burgher and is not possessed of a *Leistungsethik* that reproaches him for his excesses (as happens to Kröger and Aschenbach), the sexual drive in *Il fuoco* is shown to constitute a considerable distraction to creative productivity. Nietzsche's warning that the artist must not squander all of his energies in sexual gratification, for fear of leaving none for artistic creation, seems pertinent to d'Annunzio's novel. As in *Tonio Kröger*, however, the impulses of the Dionysian must not be repressed or suppressed, but instead be embraced by the artist and channelled into

creativity. Alone among the texts under consideration, *Il fuoco* depicts sublimation as the goal of the primary artist (Effrena), as well as his lover, muse, and artistic tool (Foscarina).

Sexual possession of the Dionysian woman is a crucial stage of Effrena's creativity. As has been seen, she allows him to exploit ancient creative energies that she has rediscovered and employ them in his art. The sexual foundation of their creativity is made clear. During an ecstatic episode of collaborative creativity, for example, Effrena, creatively and sexually charged, seems about to rape Foscarina: 'L'animatore andò verso di lei con impeto come se volesse percuoterla per trarne scintille'⁷⁷ (d'Annunzio, 1989, p. 472). When Effrena instructs Foscarina as an artist directing an actor (notably a female actor), her submissiveness seems sexual as well as creative: her body becomes 'concavo' ('concave' [p. 211] and receptive. Such episodes demonstrate the inseparable relationship between creativity and sexuality. Sexuality is crucial to the kind of (Dionysian) creativity for which Effrena strives. But elsewhere in *Il fuoco*, we see sexuality undermining creativity and presenting an obstacle to the artist's goal. It is in these instances that the necessity of sublimation is seen.

At times in *Il fuoco*, the effects of the Dionysian remain anchored in the body and its gratifications, and they are not allowed to reach and enrich the mind of the artist. At these times Dionysian abandon is expressed in purely carnal excesses, and energy that could fuel creativity is instead dissipated throughout the aroused body. Here Effrena appears to lack the discipline that Nietzsche urges when he recommends that the individual should not act immediately upon his desires and impulses. Instead Effrena responds instantly to the stimulation offered by his lover. This was seen in the previous chapter, where unrestrained Dionysian regression was shown to threaten civilisation with its promotion of near-bestial wildness. On the evening chosen by Effrena and Foscarina to consummate their relationship,

⁷⁷ 'the creator moved towards her with force, as if he wanted to strike sparks from her'.

Effrena's sexual desire for Foscarina becomes extreme, verging on madness: 'Il suo desiderio fu insano e smisurato'⁷⁸ (p. 304). While the Dionysian is present in this scene (Foscarina is, after all, the 'donna dionisiaca'⁷⁹ [p. 282], and is likened in this scene to a maenad), it is expressed here primarily as erotic, rather than artistic intoxication.

When sublimation succeeds in *Il fuoco*, it shifts the focus of the artist (and his muse) from the body to the mind. When this takes place, Foscarina's body is no longer the tool of the lover, employed for physical pleasure, but the tool of the artist, put to creative use. It is in such moments that Foscarina's body becomes a stimulant to the mind rather than the body of the artist.⁸⁰ When creative intoxication reaches its zenith, and Foscarina is transfigured before Effrena's eyes into the characters of his imminent drama, we read: 'La Tragica palpitava come se di nuovo il soffio del dio l'invadesse. Ella era divenuta una materia ardente e duttile, soggetta a tutte le animazioni del poeta'⁸¹ (p. 472). Here, Foscarina, inspired by the breath of Dionysus, is now subject to the direction of the poet, where once she was subject to the instruction of her lover. The Dionysian, which is strongly associated (traditionally and also by d'Annunzio) with the body, bypasses the sexual organs and stimulates the creative mind instead, resulting in non-sexual activity. This is also seen towards the end of *Il fuoco*, when Foscarina expresses her ardent desire to serve Effrena as an artist, which is contrasted with the night following Effrena's oration, when she had served him as a lover: 'Come nella lontana ora del delirio notturno, la donna ripeteva: "Servire, servire!"'⁸² (p. 499) In Foscarina's progression from carnal lover to artistic muse we see a reflection of Effrena's own sublimation, for he eventually reaches a situation in which he sees neither Foscarina nor the singer Donatella Arvale (who had also exerted a sexual attraction over him) as sexual

⁷⁸ 'His desire become insane and excessive'.

⁷⁹ 'Dionysian woman'.

⁸⁰ 'Si stupì che le linee d'un volto, le movenze d'un corpo umano potessero toccare e fecondare così fortemente l'intelletto' ('He was shocked that the lines of a face, the movements of a human body, could touch and fertilise the intellect so strongly' [p. 470]).

⁸¹ 'The Tragic one palpitated as if the breath of the god had once again invaded her. She had become an ardent and pliant material, subject to the animations of the poet'.

⁸² 'As in the far off hour of nocturnal delirium, the woman repeated: "Let me serve, let me serve!"

objects, but solely as artistic tools.⁸³ As Effrena reaches this successful resolution, he recalls the earlier precariousness of his position, caught between the drives of the libidinous lover and those of the aspiring artist. During the Dionysian ecstasy that followed his oration, he recalls, he had issued a call to Foscarina, ‘non per l’amore soltanto ma per la gloria, non per una sete sola ma per due seti; e non sapevo quale fosse la più ardente’⁸⁴ (p. 494). The ‘two thirsts’ of which Effrena speaks are clearly that of the lover’s body and that of the artist’s mind, and at the end of *Il fuoco* the ‘most ardent’ is doubtless that of the artist.

In this shift from sexual to creative desire, however, the erotic origins of the impulses in play are clear. The likening of Foscarina and Donatella to bows ready to be drawn, for example, indicates a clear sexual undercurrent, placing the malleable bodies of the women in the hands of a powerful male. Similarly, when Foscarina becomes ‘una materia ardente e duttile’⁸⁵ (p. 472), she seems simultaneously creatively and sexually submissive, especially given the virility of the artistic-*superuomo*. The crucial difference between this episode and earlier episodes is the outcome, which is a creativity ready to produce great works. The trace of sexuality often seen in creative sublimation in *Il fuoco* arguably tallies with Freud’s notion of sublimation, for the sexual drive has not been stifled, merely channelled into culturally valued activity. While hints at the sexual origins of Effrena’s creativity may, in Freudian terms, betray the ideational component of the sexual drive, d’Annunzio’s is an artistic depiction of the process, one in which the reader arguably gains a deeper, and more revealing, insight into the protagonist than the psychoanalyst with a patient.

Again, Nietzsche’s explanation of sublimation can be applied. While Effrena once felt himself to be fragmented and torn, at times a lover and at times an artist, now his drives are

⁸³ ‘Sentì che in quell’ora egli non amava nessuno: non lei, non Donatella: ma che le considerava entrambe come puri strumenti dell’arte, come forze da adoprare, “archi da tendere”’ (‘She felt that in that hour he loved nobody – not her, not Donatella – but that he considered both as pure instruments of art, as forces to be employed, “bows to draw”’ [p. 478]).

⁸⁴ ‘not just for love but also for glory, not for one thirst only but for two thirsts; and I did not know which was the most ardent’.

⁸⁵ ‘an ardent and pliant material’.

unified, and aspire towards the same goal – that of artistic production. This is also mirrored in his relationship with Foscarina, for the novel ends with both prioritising art and subjugating their own carnal desires to work towards (Effrena’s) artistic goals. Just as Effrena unites his own drives and places them in the service of art, the (at times) conflictual drives of Foscarina and Effrena eventually cooperate towards a shared goal. Effrena could certainly be said to possess the ‘[starke] Wille’⁸⁶ (Nietzsche, NF-1888, 14 [219]) that characterises the individual in whom disparate drives are united and sublimated, and, like Kröger’s, Effrena’s story finishes with ‘die Präcision und Klarheit der Richtung’⁸⁷ (ibid.). It is notable, however, that the union of Effrena’s and Foscarina’s drives involves submission on her part. She frequently expresses her desire to serve his art (‘Servire, servire!’⁸⁸ [d’Annunzio, 1989, p. 499]) and declares that all should be subjugated to Effrena’s art (‘Che tutto, sempre, sia propizio al tuo lavoro!’⁸⁹ [p. 512]) While Foscarina also appears to unify her individual drives, therefore, it would arguably be inaccurate to speak of her attaining the ‘[starke] Wille’ that Effrena achieves, for her will (however unified) is always subject to his.

Additionally, Effrena can be said to have developed the ability to resist responding immediately to a stimulant, posited by Nietzsche as a means towards spiritualisation, and to defer pleasure. He is now able to channel physical arousal, stimulated by Foscarina’s sensuality, into artistic output. Nietzsche describes how the individual must resist immediate action and learn how to ‘see’: ‘Man hat sehen zu lernen, man hat denken zu lernen, man hat sprechen und schreiben zu lernen’⁹⁰ (GD-Deutsche-6). Interestingly, when Effrena begins to experience optimal creativity, he uses the stimulation provided by Foscarina in order to ‘see’ his future work of art (eschewing sexual pleasure) and the characters he will create, after which he will be able to ‘write’ the drama that is gestating within him. This is seen in

⁸⁶ ‘strong will’.

⁸⁷ ‘precision and clarity of direction’.

⁸⁸ ‘Let me serve, let me serve!’

⁸⁹ ‘May everything, always, be favourable to your work!’

⁹⁰ ‘One must learn to see, one must learn to think, one must learn to speak and write’.

particular during the climactic episode of collaborative creativity between Foscarina and Effrena, when vivid visions of Effrena's imminent work of art are described (d'Annunzio, 1989, p. 473).

A description of Dürer's *Melencolia I* symbolises the productivity that will result from Effrena's sublimation, as well as highlighting the alchemical origin of the term 'sublimation'; for the angel, on the verge of productivity, sits before a crucible, 'ove dalla materia sublimata doveva generarsi qualche virtù nuova per vincere un male o per conoscere una legge'⁹¹ (p. 514). As noted earlier, Effrena's sublimation is unique in that it appears to require that Foscarina similarly sublimate the Dionysian drives towards promiscuity, carnality, and abandon that are acting upon her. While Effrena can overcome his erotic desire for Foscarina, he can only make use of her as a creative tool if she can place art above carnality and love (including the burdensome jealousies and insecurities which result from this love) which she eventually succeeds in doing. Foscarina's willingness to subjugate herself to Effrena's art contrasts sharply with Ippolita's apparently ceaseless will to keep Aurispa enslaved to her in *Il trionfo della morte*; but Aurispa is no *superuomo*, and his failure to become one is secured, as we shall see, largely by his own weak will and fragmented drives.

Foscarina has also achieved sublimation of the tragic impulses that render her such a talented actor – and such a useful artistic medium for Effrena's words. She has, we are told, suffered agonies and anguishes, which have drawn her into abysses of melancholy and despair. But Foscarina has escaped from the desolation of her sufferings by sublimating them: 'Da quali abissi di melanconia aveva ella tratto le sublimazioni della sua virtù tragica?'⁹² (p. 284) Thus Foscarina has overcome her sufferings while affirming them, and drawing artistic inspiration from them. That Foscarina has achieved sublimation, admittedly of a non-sexual

⁹¹ 'where a new virtue was to be generated from the sublimated material, to defeat evil or to produce a law'.

⁹² 'From what abysses of melancholy had she drawn the sublimations of her tragic virtue?'

drive, clashes with Freud's declaration that women are less able to sublimate; but when Foscarina completes her most significant and challenging (and, arguably, her most Freudian) sublimation, that of harnessing erotic desire and love for art, she becomes notably more masculine. We read of her desire to become 'un buono e fedele istrumento al servizio di una potenza geniale, una compagna virile e volenterosa.'⁹³ (p. 512) Here it is her ability to resist her sexual (and romantic) urge that marks her as 'virile'. For d'Annunzio, too, it seems, the ability to sublimate is one which requires masculinity, and only a female who takes on masculine qualities is capable of taking charge of her own drives in this way; thus bringing d'Annunzio's understanding and portrayal of sublimation in line with Freud's contentious theory.

Der Tod in Venedig's Aschenbach presents a more complicated case than Tonio Kröger or Stelio Effrena, for he appears to achieve sublimation when he writes a short treatise on the beach, in view of and evidently inspired by Tadzio. As will be seen, however, Mann gives us reason to believe that this is *not* an act of sublimation, and is rather a form of substitution, which does not lead to prolonged successful creativity. Accordingly, the case of Aschenbach will be considered alongside *Tristan's* Gabriele Klöterjahn and *Il trionfo della morte's* Giorgio Aurispa, for these are the characters who fail to achieve sublimation, unlike the successful artists seen above.

v) **The Artist and Failed Sublimation of the Dionysian**

The hazards of sublimation in both Freud's and Nietzsche's understandings were noted earlier. In the texts of Mann and d'Annunzio precisely these perils can be seen in portrayals of artists who fail to achieve sublimation of the Dionysian. Indeed, these literary depictions of sublimation arguably present the psychological phenomenon as something even more

⁹³ 'a good and faithful instrument in the service of a brilliant power, [to become] a virile and willing companion'.

perilous than it appears in the writings of Freud and Nietzsche, and failed sublimation (for Mann and d'Annunzio) ends in death. This may be because the object of sublimation here is the Dionysian, which is in itself a potentially lethal drive. As has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, while both Mann and d'Annunzio see creative potential in the Dionysian, they also acknowledge its darker side. This was conceded by Nietzsche, who employed *Tristan und Isolde* by way of illustration⁹⁴ (GT-21). Cases of failed sublimation in Mann's and d'Annunzio's texts will now be discussed. Reasons for these failures will be identified, and consideration given to any possible criticisms made of the process of sublimation itself, or of the Dionysian (upon which it acts).

Giorgio Aurispa attempts sublimation as part of his ambition to become (or father) the *superuomo*. The objects of his hoped-for sublimation are both the sexual drive, inflamed by erotic desire for Ippolita and incited by her seductions, and the Dionysian, which are, of course, linked. As Aurispa notes when reflecting on the philosophy of Nietzsche and the teachings of his Zarathustra, it was under the aegis of the Dionysian that the ancient Greeks embraced the mysteries of sexuality.⁹⁵ Aurispa aspires to this life-affirming sexuality, but instead finds his vitality and creativity drained.

That Aurispa must achieve sublimation seems clear. D'Annunzio's narrator, for example, commenting upon the protagonist's disparate drives, asks, 'Ma perché dunque, volendo conservare la vita, non diverrebbe egli, a forza di metodo, così valido e così agile da abituarsi a rimanere in equilibrio pur tra quelle diverse impulsioni e a danzare pur su l'orlo

⁹⁴ See page 63.

⁹⁵ 'Come nelle Dionisie egli celebrava la perpetuità della vita, il ritorno perpetuo delle forze trasformate, e venerava con sentimento religioso dinanzi al simbolo del Sesso il gran misero genitale – così nella Tragedia, che è appunto di origine dionisiaca e collegata a quelle feste, non aspirava se non ad *essere egli medesimo* l'eterna voluttà del Divenire...' ('Just as he [the ancient Greek] celebrated the perpetuity of life and the perpetual return of transformed forces in the Dionisia, and just as he venerated the great genital mystery, with a religious feeling, before the symbol of Sexuality – thus he aspired, in the Tragedy, which is of Dionysian origin and linked to these festivals, to *be himself* the eternal joy of Becoming...' [d'Annunzio, 1988, p. 925]).

del precipizio liberamente e arditamente?’⁹⁶ (d’Annunzio, 1988, p. 892) The image used here to symbolise Aurispa’s goal, that of dancing on the edge of a precipice, recalls Nietzsche’s *Also sprach Zarathustra*, where dance is a sign of the affirmative attitude of the *Übermensch*.⁹⁷ Aurispa also reflects upon other individuals who appear to have achieved sublimation: he considers, for example, the ancient Indian king Vishvamitra, ‘il quale nelle volontarie torture durate per mille anni acquistò una tal sicurtà nel suo potere, una sì gran fidanza in sé medesimo, che imprese a costruire *un nuovo cielo*’⁹⁸ (d’Annunzio, 1988, p. 931). Vishvamitra is also named in Nietzsche’s *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (GM-III-10) and *Morgenröthe* (*Dawn*, 1881 [M-113]), and d’Annunzio’s description of the king is a direct translation of Nietzsche’s epithet. Legend has it that King Vishvamitra practised extreme sexual abstinence and self-control, which gave him the strength to construct the new heaven described by Nietzsche (and d’Annunzio). Vishvamitra’s achievements (as recounted by Nietzsche and d’Annunzio) could be seen as a form of sublimation, for his strength is described as a product of his (willingly accepted) sufferings. Vishvamitra’s sexual abstinence, which is possibly a form of conscious repression, is not alluded to by Nietzsche or d’Annunzio, and it is rather his ability to channel resilience into creative strength which is praised. This resembles Freud’s description of the redirection of drives, and it exhibits even stronger affinities with Nietzsche’s calls for united drives, which lead to a strong will.

Aurispa, by contrast, struggles to unite ‘quelle diverse impulsioni’⁹⁹ (d’Annunzio, 1988, p. 892) and suffers from their conflict. His aspiration towards the *superuomo* should become his dominant drive – in Nietzsche’s terms, ‘[die] organisierende, die zur Herrschaft

⁹⁶ ‘But why, then, wishing to preserve life, could he not become, by force of method, strong and agile enough to accustom himself to remaining in equilibrium even amongst those diverse impulses, and dance upon the edge of the precipice, freely and ardently?’

⁹⁷ For an extended treatment of both Nietzsche’s treatment of dance, and of his impact upon the world of dance, see Kimerer L. LaMothe, *Nietzsche’s Dancers: Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, and the Revaluation of Christian Values* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁹⁸ ‘who, in the course of a thousand years of voluntarily-suffered tortures, achieved such surety in his power, such a faith in himself, that he embarked upon the construction of a *new heaven*’.

⁹⁹ ‘those diverse impulses’.

berufne “Idee”¹⁰⁰ EH-Klug-9) – but Aurispa’s sexual drive threatens, and often manages, to usurp this impulse. In *Il trionfo della morte*, the sexual drive is posited as a form of activity that drains the subject’s energy, and may distract him from other activities. This is seen, for example, towards the end of the novel, when Aurispa finally feels he has the energy to complete the suicide (and murder) to which he has long aspired. As Ippolita begins to act seductively, Aurispa notes the necessity of not wasting his energies in the sexual act: ‘sentiva bene l’assoluta necessità di non disperdere nell’amplesso quella sua momentanea energia nervosa su cui doveva fare assegnamento per la prossima azione’¹⁰¹ (d’Annunzio, 1988, p. 1011). Aurispa’s desire to resist sexual arousal here echoes Nietzsche’s statement that spiritualisation requires the ability not to react immediately to stimulants (GD-Deutsche-6). The power of Aurispa’s sexual drive and its ability to wreak destruction, is seen when Aurispa visits his father, who has abandoned his family for the sake of a concubine. Aurispa is dismayed to note parallels between the sordid relationship of his father with his concubine and his own relationship with Ippolita. Aurispa feels that he has inherited an overwhelming impulse towards sexual gratification from his father, which he notes with regret: ‘Lo sviluppo ereditario del centro preposto a ricevere gli stimoli che ricerca l’appetito sessuale, appunto, teneva tutto l’organismo sotto il predominio d’una tendenza particolare’¹⁰² (d’Annunzio, 1988, p. 789). The mechanism that should redirect Aurispa’s carnal desires into non-sexual activity is apparently defective, leaving him defencelessly enslaved to a dominating sexual drive – one that is far more tyrannical than that which was affirmed by the ancient Greeks in their experience and understanding of Dionysian.

In *Il trionfo della morte*, the only successful sublimation is arguably one which is not Aurispa’s achievement. Shortly before the Vigil at Casalbordino, as Aurispa reflects upon the

¹⁰⁰ ‘the organising “idea”, which is appointed as the dominating “idea”’.

¹⁰¹ ‘he knew well the absolute necessity of not allowing that momentary nervous energy, upon which the completion of his next action depended, to be wasted in the sexual act’.

¹⁰² ‘The hereditary development of the centre responsible for receiving those stimulations which controls the sexual appetite, held the whole organism under the predominance of a particular tendency’.

possibility of recovery, he notes the three aspects of Ippolita which are her most attractive features. Her brow, eyes, and mouth are described as divinely attractive (d'Annunzio, 1988, p. 653). During this brief moment of optimism, Aurispa finds that Ippolita has become an ideal of beauty, as opposed to a fleshy incarnation of sexual attraction: 'Pareva che la notte serena favorisse quella sublimazione della forma sprigionando da lei la vera essenza ideale e permettendo all'amante di percepirla intieramente con l'acuità non della pupilla ma del pensiero.'¹⁰³ (p. 849) Here, Ippolita no longer appears as a trigger for base eroticism, but rather as a symbol of ideal and lofty beauty, a stimulant to the mind rather than the (aroused) eye; in short, a sublimation has taken place which, for a time at least, neutralises the danger that Ippolita often presents. It is notable, however, that this sublimation is not described as an action completed by Aurispa. This sublimation has been 'favoured by the serene night', and seems an anomalous occurrence – not to be repeated. Aurispa's morbid pessimism soon returns, and he reflects, sadly, that even here a 'mortale odio'¹⁰⁴ (p. 850) lurks beneath Ippolita's pleasing exterior. Despite this sublimation, Ippolita remains the 'Nemica' ('Enemy' [p. 850]). Aurispa will not succeed in viewing her as an ideal again, and she will remain 'uno strumento di bassa lascivia'¹⁰⁵ (p. 990).

It is for this reason that Aurispa proves so unable to resist the seductive appeal of Ippolita. When he imagines the intimacy that will follow her arrival at the hermitage, his desire is referred to as 'quel terribile fenomeno fisico delle cui tirannie egli era vittima senza difesa'¹⁰⁶ (p. 795). At such times, the sexual drive becomes overwhelming and depletes Aurispa's energies. His (fragile) drive towards creativity suffers as a result, and he finds himself unable to realise his creative dream of becoming (or generating) the *superuomo*. But Aurispa oscillates between accepting responsibility for his own untameable sexual drive and

¹⁰³ 'The serene night seemed to favour that sublimation, liberating her true ideal essence, and allowing her lover to perceive her entirely – not with the sharpness of his eye but with the sharpness of his thought.'

¹⁰⁴ 'mortal hatred'.

¹⁰⁵ 'an instrument of base lasciviousness'.

¹⁰⁶ 'that terrible physical phenomenon under whose tyranny he was a victim without defence'.

weak will, and projecting his failures onto Ippolita, who becomes a scapegoat. While Ippolita is certainly a highly sexualised and seductive figure and does impede Aurispa on several occasions,¹⁰⁷ Aurispa's own inability to resist sexual temptation seems more prominent. He reflects: 'io anche non potrò mai sottrarmi al desiderio ch'ella ha acceso in me. Non potrò mai estirparla dalla mia carne'¹⁰⁸ (p. 990). Here Aurispa's desire becomes Ippolita's sin. Comparison with *Il fuoco* highlights Aurispa's own failure, however, for Foscarina, too, can be a burdensome and distracting lover (both because of her insecurities and her erotic appeal) – but Effrena, as the *superuomo*, is able to liberate himself from purely carnal desire, and she, too, acknowledges Effrena's need for distance. Where Effrena and Foscarina triumph, Aurispa and Ippolita fail.

The psychological situation which arises in Aurispa as a result of his inability to sublimate his sexual desire strongly recalls Nietzsche's description of the individual who fails to unite his disparate drives, and the 'Krankhaftigkeit, Niedergang, [und] Erschöpfung'¹⁰⁹ (GD-Deutschen-6) that will result if one must always react immediately to stimulation. Just as Nietzsche notes that this individual experiences 'das Oscilliren und der Mangel an Schwergewicht'¹¹⁰ (NF-1888, 14 [219]), Aurispa laments that he is not in possession of himself: 'Il senso ch'io ho del mio essere è simile a quello che può avere un uomo il quale, condannato a restare su un piano di continuo ondeggiante e pericolante, senta di continuo mancargli l'appoggio, dovunque egli posi il piede'¹¹¹ (d'Annunzio, 1988, p. 716). Similarly, just as Nietzsche describes 'Die Vielheit und Disgregation der Antriebe, der Mangel an System'¹¹² (NF-1888, 14 [219]) regarding this individual's drives, Aurispa experiences a

¹⁰⁷ She tries to prevent him from crossing a perilous bridge that she herself is too afraid to attempt, for example, and almost causes him to drown when swimming across a channel, for he is forced to turn back to rescue her.

¹⁰⁸ 'I will never be able to free myself from the desire that she has ignited in me. I will never be able to eradicate her from my flesh'.

¹⁰⁹ 'morbidly, decline and exhaustion'.

¹¹⁰ 'oscillation and a lack of gravity'.

¹¹¹ 'The sense that I have of my own being is similar to that of a man who, condemned to remain upon a dangerous and continually undulating foundation, feels an eternal lack of support, wherever he places his foot'.

¹¹² 'The multiplicity and disgregation of urges, and the lack of system amongst them'.

‘contrasto bizzarro fra la lucidità del pensiero e la cecità del sentimento, tra la debolezza della volontà e la forza degli istinti, tra la realtà e il sogno’¹¹³ (d’Annunzio, 1988, p. 792). And finally, the ‘schwacher Wille’¹¹⁴ that Nietzsche diagnoses in the individual who fails to sublimate is echoed when Aurispa laments, ‘il dubbio corrode la mia volontà’¹¹⁵ (p. 931) and finds himself plagued by ‘quell’abolizione assoluta della volontà attiva’¹¹⁶ (p. 941). Aurispa’s conflicting drives, aspirations and instincts result in a psychological discord that exhausts his willpower, and leaves him increasingly vulnerable to melancholy, apathy and inertia. On the other hand, Aurispa’s hopes also recall the ideal of sublimation that Nietzsche describes, whereby the individual unifies his disparate, conflicting drives. In *Il trionfo della morte*, we read that ‘Il segreto dell’equilibrio per l’uomo d’intelletto sta nel saper trasportare gli istinti, i bisogni, le tendenze, i sentimenti fondamentali della propria razza in un ordine superiore’¹¹⁷ (p. 848). For both d’Annunzio and Nietzsche, then, the individual should aim at placing his various drives and instincts into an ordered harmony, thus avoiding fragmentation and inner conflict.

Another side effect of Aurispa’s disparate drives and his inability to sublimate is arguably an array of neurotic symptoms, such as those diagnosed by Freud as typical of failed sublimation. Aurispa suffers from ‘congestioni, di varia durata, nei plessi cerebrali’¹¹⁸ (p. 790), and is described as a ‘soggetto estremamente nervoso’¹¹⁹ (ibid.), for example. Like many other contemporary writers, d’Annunzio follows the *fin-de-siècle* trend for pseudo-science,¹²⁰ seen also when he describes a loss of ‘contrattilità’ (‘contractibility’ [ibid.]) in

¹¹³ ‘bizarre contrast between lucidity of thought and blindness of feeling, between weakness of will and strength of instinct, between reality and dream’.

¹¹⁴ ‘weak will’.

¹¹⁵ ‘doubt corrodes my will’.

¹¹⁶ ‘that absolute abolition of every active will’.

¹¹⁷ ‘The secret of equilibrium for the man of intellect lies in knowing how to transport the instincts, needs, tendencies, and fundamental sentiments of his own race into a superior order’.

¹¹⁸ ‘congestions, of varying duration, of the cerebral plexuses’.

¹¹⁹ ‘eternally nervous subject’.

¹²⁰ Max Nordau’s best-selling *Entartung* (itself informed by Bénédict Augustin Morel’s *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l’espèce humaine et des causes qui produisent ces*

Aurispa's 'vasi sanguigni encefalici'¹²¹ (ibid.). Aurispa's obsessive nature is seen in his frequent fixations,¹²² especially with death.¹²³ In this, Aurispa resembles one of Freud's case studies, Dr Daniel Paul Schreber (referred to by Gemes as a paradigmatic case of pathological repression, as opposed to sublimation [2009, p. 42]), who is plagued by 'krankhaft bedingten Vorstellungen'¹²⁴ (1955b, p. 246). At times, a single thought comes to dominate Aurispa's mind, 'contro ogni virtù della volontà'¹²⁵ (d'Annunzio, 1988, p. 790), creating a state of 'follia temporanea parziale'¹²⁶ (ibid.). The turmoil of Aurispa's mind is even likened to the effects of opium and hashish, which trigger a state of hallucination (ibid.). The pathological symptoms of Aurispa's failed sublimation arguably go beyond those suggested by Freud, however, for Aurispa finds himself propelled unavoidably towards death.

This can be seen, for example, in Aurispa's letters, written to Ippolita during a period of separation, which can possibly be seen as an attempt at sublimation. The letters, written before the period contained in *Il trionfo della morte*, and which Aurispa and Ippolita nostalgically read together during the novel, contain declarations of love, but also reveal the debilitating lethargy and inertia that overwhelms Aurispa when he is parted from Ippolita. He writes, for example, 'Passo le ore nell'inerzia, pensando'¹²⁷ (p. 688) and describes imagining himself dead: 'Talvolta io *mi vedo* disteso in una bara; io *mi contemplo* nella immobilità della

variétés malades [*Treatise on the Physical, Intellectual and Moral Degeneracy of the Human Race* 1857]) is one of the most significant examples of this trend. Nordau employs pseudo-scientific terms such as 'der Entartete' ('the degenerate') to diagnose the cultural sickness he perceived at the end of the nineteenth century. Cesare Lombroso also contributed to the pseudo-scientific trend; for example, with his (long since discredited) claims regarding innate criminality in *L'uomo delinquente* (*The Criminal Man*, 1876) or his tenuous attempt to link genius and 'degeneration' in *Genio e degenerazione* (*Genius and Degeneration*, 1897).

¹²¹ 'encephalitic blood vessels'.

¹²² '[...] avveniva che un pensiero e un'immagine occupassero la coscienza per un tempo indefinito, ad onta di tutti gli sforzi fatti per cacciarli' ('[...] a thought and an image would occupy his consciousness for an indefinite time, to the shame of all of his efforts to banish them' [p. 790]).

¹²³ 'Talvolta, un pensiero l'occupava, unico, assiduo: il pensiero della morte' ('At times, a thought occupied him, singularly, assiduously: the thought of death' [p. 784]).

¹²⁴ 'morbidly conditioned ideas'.

¹²⁵ 'against every virtue of will'.

¹²⁶ 'temporary partial madness'.

¹²⁷ 'I pass the hours in a state of inertia, thinking'.

morte, con una lucidezza imperturbabile'¹²⁸ (ibid.). Aurispa is dismayed to find that his letters are characterised principally by a sense of morbidity and depression, and he notes that they resemble 'epitaffi in un cimitero'¹²⁹ (p. 690). That the writing of these letters is intended to replace sexual gratification is suggested when Aurispa notes that the act of writing can actually resemble orgasm: 'Egli conosceva bene lo straordinario orgasmo che invade l'amante nell'atto di scrivere una lettere d'amore'¹³⁰ (p. 690). Writing a letter to the object of desire, then, appears to offer a substitute for sexual intercourse, but when attempted by Aurispa it results only in depression and neurotic symptoms, not successful sublimation. Aurispa appears unable to find strength in separation from the object of his desire (as Effrena eventually does), possibly because he is tethered too closely to this object of desire. Attempting to extricate himself does not endow him with vitality and strength, only with melancholy and weakness. Aurispa's letters even reveal an intensification of desire, rather than its dissipation: 'Di pagina in pagina l'ardore cresceva'¹³¹ (p. 694). If these letters can be considered as an attempt at sublimation, they certainly constitute a failed one, which leaves the subject even more enslaved to sexual desire. Parallels between Aurispa's experience here and Aschenbach's in *Der Tod in Venedig* are clear.

Aurispa's obsession with death reaches its zenith – or nadir – following the recital of *Tristan und Isolde*, which takes place at the hermitage. As Ippolita plays the music upon a slightly inadequate piano (as Gabriele Klöterjahn does in *Tristan*), Aurispa remembers seeing the drama performed in Bayreuth. The memory of the music seduces Aurispa and he becomes intoxicated with the idea of death, in particular with the idea of re-enacting the *Liebestod* of Wagner's drama. It is at this point that Aurispa's drive towards death becomes his master drive, which now dominates all his other impulses and instincts. Henceforth, Aurispa is no

¹²⁸ 'Sometimes I see myself laid out in a coffin; I contemplate myself in the stillness of death with a disturbing clarity'.

¹²⁹ 'epitaphs in a cemetery'.

¹³⁰ 'He knew well the extraordinary orgasm that invades the author in the act of writing a letter of love'.

¹³¹ 'From page to page the ardour grew'.

longer able to pursue an alternative aspiration. In Nietzschean terms, Aurispa possibly achieves unity of his drives here (recalling Nietzsche's 'Koordination' ['coordination', NF-1888, 14 (219)]), but the overwhelming drive is significantly that which drives him towards death rather than life. It is with good reason that Aurispa refers to the day upon which Ippolita plays Wagner's deathly music as 'l'Epifania della Morte'¹³² (d'Annunzio, 1988, p. 991), and the deaths of Aurispa and Ippolita follow a few days later.

After the performance of *Tristan und Isolde*, sublimation looks decidedly unlikely. Aurispa is now 'interamente posseduto dall'idea fissa'¹³³ (ibid.): the idea which possesses him is, of course, that of dying with Ippolita, in imitation of Wagner's doomed lovers. In his state of pathological fixation with death, Aurispa appears to find a 'momentanea energia nervosa'¹³⁴ (p. 1011) which finally allows him to actively pursue his aim, whereas previous thoughts of suicide have been thwarted by a paralysing inertia. He knows that he must guard against this reserve of energy being dissipated in sexual activity, which fills him with a revulsion for Ippolita's attempts to seduce him as he tries to put his suicidal plan into action. Again, there is no sublimation here, for Aurispa must fight to suppress his sexual urge, in order to follow his impulse towards death. His experience of the Dionysian, given a final potency by the music of *Tristan und Isolde*, has not shown him how to sublimate potentially destructive impulses (such as those towards death, abandon, and sexual arousal), and has left him instead in a state of devastating psychological conflict. Yet in the final pages of *Il trionfo della morte* Aurispa displays 'una straordinaria chiarezza'¹³⁵ (p. 1007), and feels 'più forte e più lucido'¹³⁶ (p. 1010). This clarity arguably resembles that which Nietzsche describes as a result of unified drives, for in the very final pages of d'Annunzio's novel Aurispa's drives *are* unified, by an overarching, overpowering desire for death. The death drive becomes

¹³² 'The Epiphany of Death'.

¹³³ 'wholly possessed by the fixed idea'.

¹³⁴ 'momentary nervous energy'.

¹³⁵ 'an extraordinary clarity'.

¹³⁶ 'stronger and more lucid'.

Aurispa's master drive, seen in his fixation, on the night designated for his suicide, with an image of his dead uncle, Demetrio (who committed suicide): 'un'immagine, fissa, dominava su tutte le altre; a poco a poco oscurava e fugava tutte le altre, rioccupando il centro dell'anima'¹³⁷ (p. 1009). Even this apparent state of psychological harmony is fragile, however, for Aurispa knows that if he allows his sexual urges free reign, they will erode his impetus towards death. For once, however, Aurispa achieves this, and experiences no erotic pleasure in Ippolita's touch; indeed, physical contact with her in their final moments actually disgusts him, and he is dismayed to think that he will have to touch her body in order to drag her from the clifftop as he leaps to his death. He nevertheless overcomes this revulsion and succeeds in killing both himself and his lover.

Failed sublimation in *Der Tod in Venedig* proves just as harmful as in *Il trionfo della morte*. Almost in the manner of a psychoanalytical report – or obituary – Mann gives a detailed biography of his protagonist at the beginning of the novella, which offers many clues as to Aschenbach's psychology. This biography hints strongly at repression, as seen in the previous chapter, and at obsessive neurotic symptoms, seen particularly in Aschenbach's compulsive adherence to a rigid routine. Every day is characterised by the same (ascetic) activities in the same sequence, until we meet Aschenbach and he is forced to abandon this routine due to overstimulation from his morning's work, which hints at a resurgence of his Dionysian impulses. The exhaustion that Mann describes as the result of Aschenbach's compulsive routine recalls the 'exhaustive cultivation' ('[Raubbau]' [1955b, p. 59]) to which Freud likens the outcome of excessive sexual abstinence (here a symptom of repression of the Dionysian) and suggests that Aschenbach's current state of mind is highly precarious. Aschenbach's fatigue is, we read, a condition that has developed fairly recently, but which seems to be intensifying. Sublimation would allow Aschenbach to find a way out of his

¹³⁷ 'one image, fixed, dominated over all others; gradually it obscured and eradicated the others, reoccupying the centre of his soul'.

current psychological crisis, providing a means of dealing with his repressed drives and impulses (and those which are returning from the depths of repression to influence him) more creatively, and more safely.

While sublimation has commonly been noted by commentators in *Der Tod in Venedig*, the object of this unconscious process is almost exclusively identified as a homosexual drive, which commentators claim constitutes a shared trait between Aschenbach and his author, and occasionally as paedophilic desire. Kohut, for example, posits that ‘unsublimated homosexual desire in the ageing writer’ (2011, p. 125) is the ‘decisive threat to Aschenbach’s defensive system’ (ibid.), and does not mention the Dionysian in his psychoanalysis of Aschenbach. Similarly, Gullette (1984) argues that Aschenbach’s experiences in Venice centre on his paedophilic desire for Tadzio, which she likens to Humbert Humbert’s desire for an under-age girl in Nabokov’s *Lolita* (1955). In this thesis it is argued, however, that Aschenbach’s homosexual and paedophilic desires are merely a symptom of a darker and more dangerous drive – the Dionysian – and that homoeroticism and pederasty symbolise the deviant behaviour of the Dionysian initiate, and especially one rendered so vulnerable through repression and exhaustion. Mann’s frequent hints at the presence of Dionysus in his novella (for example: his reference to ‘*der fremde Gott*’¹³⁸ [Mann, 2004, p. 582]) indicate that this is the drive that is reawakening in his protagonist’s psyche. Transgressive (homosexual and paedophilic) desire is arguably a manifestation of the Dionysian, for this is a drive which gives impetus to promiscuity, licentiousness, abandon and aberration. In focusing upon the homosexual nature of Aschenbach’s desire, commentators neglect its paedophilic nature, which is perhaps its most prominent aspect. For what reason should we view Aschenbach’s repression as acting solely upon homosexual desire if it is expressed in paedophilic desire once it returns? While there is not room here to carry out a

¹³⁸ ‘the foreign god’.

full investigation into Aschenbach's alleged (repressed) homosexuality,¹³⁹ it will be argued that the Dionysian is the ultimate object of Aschenbach's repression, as it is for the other artistic characters under consideration in this thesis.

Some commentators have found that Mann's novella does contain an episode of sublimation, but one which is an anomalous occurrence and not destined to be repeated by Aschenbach. This is the act of writing upon the beach, when Aschenbach composes a short treatise in the presence of Tadzio. Widmaier-Haag (1999, p. 188), for example, has suggested that this act of creativity constitutes a sublimation of the sexual drive that afflicts Aschenbach as a symptom of his resurgent Dionysian side, for Mann's protagonist resists any carnal desires and instead produces a work of art. The most astute examinations of this episode, however, challenge the notion of this creativity as sublimation, and note the clear signs of eroticism in the act of writing. Goebel, for example, posits this creative act as a 'surrogate' (2012, p. 159) activity, rather than a sublimation. As was noted earlier, Freud found that 'Hemmungen und Ersatzbildungen'¹⁴⁰ (1955a, p. 424) indicate failed sublimation in individuals whose psychosexual development has been disturbed. Given the events which follow Aschenbach's act of writing, this seems very much an example of substitution. It is only a few hours later, for example, that Aschenbach attempts to touch Tadzio, indicating the intensification, rather than the dissipation, of his desire for contact with that body; and just a couple of pages later Aschenbach utters 'Ich liebe dich!'¹⁴¹ (Mann, 2004, p. 563). Additionally, during the composition of the treatise, Aschenbach perceives, more sharply than ever, the presence of Eros.¹⁴² While the act of writing may initially appear to be a non-sexual activity, indicating successful sublimation, closer inspection reveals that this creativity

¹³⁹ See Heinz Kohut, 'Death in Venice by Thomas Mann: A Story about the Disintegration of Artistic Sublimation' in *Search for the Self*, Vol. I (London: Karmac, 2011), pp. 107-130.

¹⁴⁰ 'inhibitions or substitutes'.

¹⁴¹ 'I love you!'

¹⁴² 'Nie hatte er die Lust des Wortes süßer empfunden, nie so gewußt, daß Eros im Worte sei' ('Never before had he felt such sweet delight in the word, never had he been so aware that Eros is in the word' [p. 556]).

is not only fuelled by erotic desire, but that this desire is also not redirected into the act of creation and instead inflames the underlying desire to a new intensity.

It is the heightening of sexual desire following Aschenbach's act of creativity that differentiates it from the creativity of *Il fuoco*, for example, where the creative act also displays carnal undercurrents. In d'Annunzio's novel, successful sublimation results in unmatched creativity that still betrays an aspect of sexuality. The collaborative creativity of Effrena and Foscarina still recalls sexual intercourse and reveals the erotic undercurrents of their artistic actions – which are not dissimilar to those underlying Aschenbach's act of writing. In *Il fuoco*, however, erotic creativity is not followed by an inflammation of the sexual drive as it is in *Der Tod in Venedig*, and artistic creation itself, for d'Annunzio's lovers, satisfies the sexual urge. It is Aschenbach's ever-increasing sexual drive that renders his creativity a failed sublimation, for it leaves him ever more enslaved to Dionysian erotic desire. When he awakes from his Dionysian dream, Mann's narrator describes Aschenbach as 'entnervt, zerrüttet und kraftlos dem Dämon verfallen'¹⁴³ (p. 584). For Aschenbach, writing does not appear to satisfy any erotic impulses, but instead attempts to replace them, and to divert the artist's attention from unpalatable desires. This recalls Aurispa's failed attempts to sublimate his sexual drive through the writing of letters in *Il trionfo della morte*. Aurispa similarly found that his impetus towards intercourse was heightened instead of calmed, and his activity would seem to be another case of 'substitution'. For both Aschenbach and Aurispa, the act of writing (for the former, literature, for the latter, love letters) fails to quell carnal desire, indicating a failed attempt to redirect the sexual drive. While art *can* satisfy this sexual drive, for the protagonists of *Der Tod in Venedig* and *Il trionfo della morte*, it does not.

¹⁴³ 'unnerved, shattered, and powerlessly enslaved to the demon'.

Another sign of Aschenbach's failed sublimation is the increase in guilt that he experiences in the final stages of Mann's novella, following the act of writing. Recalling his respectable ancestors, for example, Aschenbach reflects – with 'Bestürzung' ('dismay' [p. 568]) – 'Auf welchen Wegen!'¹⁴⁴ (ibid.). According to the theory of creativity of Hanns Sachs (a friend and colleague of Freud's), guilt is a side-effect of the asocial activity of daydreaming, which is a precursor to creativity (Sachs, 1942, p. 12). While daydreams themselves are isolating and formless, when the artist translates these daydreams into art – a public and socially valued activity – his guilt is lifted: 'This getting rid of the isolation [of the daydream] means a great alleviation of their guilt-feeling' (p. 36). Aschenbach's increased guilt suggests that he is no longer channelling sensations and impulses into sociable activity and is becoming increasingly *asocial*. Anticipation of this is seen in his first hallucination, or day-dream, in which he sees a primordial wilderness, devoid of civilisation. Here, primitive instincts are not captured in form, and remain 'asocial'. The guilt that Aschenbach feels directly after his act of writing upon the beach¹⁴⁵ suggests that this is not an incident of healthy – and socially acceptable¹⁴⁶ – creativity (and sublimation).

In the very last days of Aschenbach's life, however, following his Dionysian dream, his guilt begins to fade.¹⁴⁷ At this point, Aschenbach's conscience, or superego, has been stifled by his id, which has become more powerful. This id, whose purpose is to ensure the satisfaction of the most basic (and base) instincts and urges, becomes all-powerful. The reduction of Aschenbach's guilt is due to the abolition of the mechanism of guilt itself, rather than the avoidance of that which causes guilt. Aschenbach's dream is also surely another sign that the (renascent) Dionysian is the ultimate cause of his psychological turmoil. There is

¹⁴⁴ 'What a path I have taken!'

¹⁴⁵ 'ihm war, als ob sein Gewissen wie nach einer Ausschweifung Klage führe' ('it felt to him as if his conscience were reproaching him after a debauchery' [Mann, 2004, p. 556]).

¹⁴⁶ That this act of creation would receive society's disapproval is implied when Mann's narrator comments, 'Es ist sicher gut, daß die Welt nur das schöne Werk, nicht auch seine Ursprünge, nicht seine Entstehungsbedingungen kennt' ('it is surely a good thing that the world knows only the beautiful work of art, and not its origins, or the conditions under which it came into being' [Mann, 2004, p. 556]).

¹⁴⁷ Moral law now seems 'hinfällig' ('invalid' [p. 584]).

little doubt that the scenes of this dream, conjured up by Aschenbach's own psyche, depict bacchic revellers, and that Aschenbach's identification with these bacchantes demonstrates his psychological seduction by the Dionysian.

Mann's portrayal of (failed) sublimation in *Der Tod in Venedig* has been interpreted by some commentators as a criticism of the notion of sublimation itself, and as proof that Mann believes there is little possibility of successful sublimation. Goebel, for example, claims that 'Freud's sublimation is both staged and critically reflected upon' (2012, p. 159) in *Der Tod in Venedig*. Here it is argued, however, that it is specifically Aschenbach, and not the process of sublimation itself, that is the target of Mann's criticism and that Mann does indeed see a possibility for sublimation.

If it were the case that Mann looks to undermine the idea of sublimation in *Der Tod in Venedig*, then Aschenbach's demise should be seen as inevitable, and we should conclude that, for Mann, there can be no way of engaging creatively with the Dionysian. Many commentators find evidence for this reading in the final chapter of Mann's novella, where Aschenbach, who has collapsed in an exhausted fever at the foot of a well, reflects upon the inherently transgressive – and erotic¹⁴⁸ – nature of art and upon the falsity of the artist's aloof position. Reed, for example, highlights the striking likeness between this passage and a passage from Lukács' essay 'Sehnsucht und Form'¹⁴⁹ ('On Longing and Form', 1911). In this passage, Lukács notes 'how precarious and rare was Socrates' achievement when he shaped men's longings into philosophy' (cited in Reed, 1974, p. 165) and claims that in general, 'efforts at sublimation are almost bound to fail, because of the earthliness of the objects which first stimulate them' (ibid.).

¹⁴⁸ As Aschenbach notes, imaging himself as Socrates in dialogue with Phaedrus (Tadzio), 'wir Dichter [können] den Weg der Schönheit nicht gehen [...], ohne daß Eros sich zugesellt und sich zum Führer aufwirft' ('we poets [cannot] walk on the path of beauty, unless Eros accompanies us and becomes our guide' [Mann, 2004, p. 588]).

¹⁴⁹ This was published in *Die Seele und die Formen* (*The Soul and Forms*, 1911).

Yet how is Mann's alleged pessimism regarding the possibility of sublimation in *Der Tod in Venedig* to be reconciled with Tonio Kröger's apparently successful sublimation? In fact, here it is suggested that Mann does *not* portray Aschenbach's demise as an inevitable event and that there are particularities in Aschenbach's case that render him particularly vulnerable to the destructive side of the Dionysian. In the first two chapters of *Der Tod in Venedig*, Mann gives several hints at the downfall of his protagonist: he notes, for example, that Aschenbach's extreme discipline has led to 'eine Verwöhntheit, Überfeinerung, Müdigkeit und Neugier der Nerven, wie ein Leben voll ausschweifendster Leidenschaften und Genüsse sie kaum hervorzubringen vermag'¹⁵⁰ (Mann, 2004, p. 516). Here Mann implies that it is Aschenbach's over-extreme repression (of the Dionysian) that is the ultimate cause of his demise, and that if Aschenbach had not practised such rigid and inflexible repression, he might not later have found himself so inept at dealing with the Dionysian when it re-emerged (the return of the repressed). Rather than the Dionysian itself being a drive that *always* results in death and destruction, Mann gives us reason to believe that Aschenbach's method of dealing with this drive is the crux of his demise. It is unfamiliarity which renders the Dionysian so dangerous, and which leaves Aschenbach unable to sublimate it successfully – unlike Tonio Kröger, who has practised a less extreme form of repression, allowing the various aspects of his character to develop healthily. On this reading, Aschenbach's downfall should *not* be considered inevitable, and nor should we claim that Mann sees no possibility for successful sublimation.

Aschenbach's failed sublimation results in behaviour that recalls the neurotic symptoms described by Freud as a consequence of failed sublimation. The most striking of Aschenbach's symptoms is his increasing obsession with Tadzio, whom he follows

¹⁵⁰ 'an overfastidiousness, over-refinement, tiredness and curiosity of the nerves, which can hardly result from a life full of excessive passions and enjoyment'.

compulsively. He experiences anxiety when he cannot be sure of Tadzio's whereabouts¹⁵¹ and keeps a constant eye on Tadzio on the beach. His pursuit of the adolescent becomes ever more extreme – until Aschenbach collapses in a deserted *piazza*, ostensibly because of a fever (a symptom of the cholera he has contracted), but largely because of his psychological turmoil. The intensification of Aschenbach's obsession for Tadzio accompanies the abolition of the writer's creativity, for after writing that brief treatise on the beach, which has been posited as a substitution for, rather than a sublimation of, Dionysian erotic desire, Aschenbach produces nothing else. His obsessive-compulsive behaviour could therefore be considered a side-effect of the domination of those impulses associated with the Dionysian, which Aschenbach fails to sublimate. His compulsive behaviour at the start of Mann's novella betrayed over-extreme repression, but his increasingly obsessive fixation with Tadzio in Venice shows the failure of his attempted sublimation. Like Giorgio Aurispa, Aschenbach fails to attain a state of inner harmony and cannot organise his drives in the way that Nietzsche recommends. Impetus towards creative production should become the dominant drive to which all other impulses are subjugated, but it is instead stifled by resurgent Dionysian drives – towards abandon, recklessness, lethargy and licentiousness. Oscillation (recalling Nietzsche's 'das Oscilliren' ['oscillation', NF-1888, 14 (219)]) certainly characterises Aschenbach's time in Venice as he fluctuates between Dionysian abandon and burgherly concern for decorum, before finally being overwhelmed by the former, which seals his demise.

Mann also depicts failed sublimation in *Tristan*, in which the result of Gabriele Klöterjahn's encounter with the Dionysian resembles Aschenbach's to some extent. Gabriele encounters the Dionysian when she performs Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* on the piano, an act whose regressive aspects were examined in the previous chapter. This is the first time

¹⁵¹ 'Die polnischen Geschwister hatten nebst ihrer Gouvernante bei der Hauptmahlzeit im großen Saale gefehlt,—mit Besorgnis hatte Aschenbach es wahrgenommen' ('The Polish siblings, along with their governess, had been missing during the evening meal in the great hall' [p. 561]).

Gabriele has played the piano since becoming ill, and it is probably her first artistic experience since marrying the bourgeois Herr Klöterjahn, the antithesis to the dilettante Spinell.

Recalling the experiences of Aschenbach and Aurispa, substitution (as opposed to sublimation) of the drives of the Dionysian is arguably also evident in *Tristan*. While Gabriele had enjoyed artistic pursuits as an adolescent and played music with her father, the only ‘creative’ activity in which she has participated since her marriage is the procreation of a child, who is ‘von einer exzessiven Gesundheit’¹⁵² (p. 356). While this could be interpreted as sublimation, as one drive (the creative drive) is re-directed into an alternative (and socially valued) activity, the return of Gabriele’s artistic drive – the return of the repressed – in the Einfried sanatorium indicates its persistence. Had Gabriele sublimated her artistic drive, it would have been satisfied by the birth of her son, but she clearly still retains a desire to perform music, which is only finally – and fatally – satisfied in her performance of *Tristan und Isolde*. This is arguably the first incidence of failed sublimation in *Tristan*, and it may render the Dionysian return of Gabriele’s artistic drive more harmful, for she has forgotten the hazardous side of this drive.

The second incidence occurs when Gabriele plays *Tristan und Isolde*. This incident both illustrates Gabriele’s original failure to sublimate her artistic drive (through procreation), and unleashes Dionysian impulses which she – again – fails to sublimate. During Gabriele’s playing of Wagner’s music, Mann’s text is filled with impulses towards death, final union and abandon:

Der Überschwang einer ungeheuren Lösung und Erfüllung brach herein, wiederholte sich, ein betäubendes Brausen maßloser Befriedigung, unersättlich wieder und wieder, formte sich

¹⁵² ‘excessively healthy’.

zurückflutend um, schien verhauchen zu wollen, wob noch einmal das Sehnsuchtsmotiv in seine Harmonie, atmete aus, erstarb, verklang, entschwebte'¹⁵³ (p. 354).

Of course, this description is not without its irony, and gently mocks Wagner's music. As has already been noted, only the music of *Tristan und Isolde* – the Dionysian aspect of the drama – is performed here, and it is not tempered or balanced by its Apollonian aspects (such as the actors on stage) and any spectator runs the risk of being overwhelmed by the music's tumultuous impulses. It may be, therefore, that the lack of sublimation in this scene is inevitable, and that the Dionysian aspects of this dangerous work of art, if encountered in isolation, are simply not to be sublimated.

While Mann arguably shows the possibility of sublimation in *Tonio Kröger* and *Der Tod in Venedig*, in *Tristan* the chances of sublimation seem slim. The vehicle for those Dionysian impulses which (as elsewhere in Mann's texts) must be sublimated in order to be survived is Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, which Mann views with suspicion. As noted earlier, he names it an 'unzüchtiges Werk'¹⁵⁴ (Mann, 1961, p. 182), and in *Tristan* demonstrates (again, slightly ironically) how the music can impact upon one's health, through the figure of Rätin Spatz: 'diese Art von Musik [wirkte] auf ihre Magennerven'¹⁵⁵ (Mann, 2004, p. 351). According to Mann, *Tristan und Isolde* is a questionable work that worships death and erupts into orgasmic climaxes, threatening to overpower all who hear it. Mann exposes this danger by borrowing (and slightly adapting) a line from Wagner's libretto,¹⁵⁶ which in turn recalls a

¹⁵³ 'The exuberance of a tremendous release and fulfilment descended, was repeated; a deafening roar of boundless pleasure, insatiable, was heard again and again, reshaped itself flooding back, seemed to desire extinguishment, wove the *Sehnsucht*-motif once more into its harmony, exhaled, died down, subsided, dissipated'.

¹⁵⁴ 'indecent work'.

¹⁵⁵ 'this kind of music affected her stomach nerves'.

¹⁵⁶ Wagner's verses are: 'Wer des Todes Nacht liebend erschau't, / wem sie ihr tief / Geheimniß vertraut: / des Tages Lügen, / Ruhm und Ehr', / Macht und Gewinn / so schimmernd hehr, / wie eitler Staub der Sonnen / sind sie vor dem zersponnen! / In des Tages eitlen Wähnen / bleibt ihm ein einzig Sehnen, / das Sehnen hin / zur heil'gen Nacht, / wo ur-ewig, / einzig wahr / Liebes-Wohhe ihm lacht.' ('The lies, fame, honour, power and rewards of day are as but paltry dust shining in a sunbeam to him who has glanced lovingly into the night of death and puts his trust in its deep secrets. Amidst day's empty fancies, one single longing remains for him: the

line from Platen's poem *Tristan*:¹⁵⁷ Mann warns, 'Wer liebend des Todes Nacht und ihr süßes Geheimnis erschaute, dem blieb im Wahn des Lichtes ein einzig Sehnen, die Sehnsucht hin zur heiligen Nacht, der ewigen, wahren, der einsmachenden ...'¹⁵⁸ (Mann, 2004, p. 352). The ambiguity of Mann's scene means that we cannot tell whether this is a warning intended solely for Wagner's lovers, or whether it also bears relevance for those who glimpse death as they play this music; that Mann changes the wording of the line suggests the latter.

Copious references to 'eternity' and 'forever' in Mann's description of the music expose its fatality, and caution that it can cause permanent, irreversible damage: we read of the 'Ewige Liebesnacht!'¹⁵⁹ (p. 353) for example, and an 'überschwenglicher und unersättlicher Jubel der Vereinigung im ewigen Jenseits der Dinge!'¹⁶⁰ (p. 352). Again, Mann's ambiguity invites us to read the experiences of Tristan and Isolde in those of Gabriele, and we suspect that she, too, glimpses the 'ewigen Jenseits der Dinge'.¹⁶¹ If so, then there really is little hope for Gabriele, for such sensations cannot be kept in check. Wagner's potent music inflames a drive in Gabriele which strives towards a world beyond this one. This drive is not satiated by the music and it outlasts Gabriele's performance. Her experience of the Dionysian here goes far beyond that of Tonio Kröger, for example, – who is never remotely seduced by death – and has more in common with that of Aschenbach. Indeed, *Tristan und Isolde* – much of which was composed in Venice, where Wagner also died in 1883 – provides a link between the two texts. Whereas Aschenbach, who has practised extreme repression resulting in neurotic symptoms, seems unlikely to achieve sublimation (as

longing for holy night where, everlasting, uniquely true, the bliss of love smiles upon him' [Wagner, cited and translated by Bassett, 2006, p. 109]).

¹⁵⁷ Platen's lines are: 'Wer die Schönheit angeschaut mit Augen, / Ist dem Tode schon anheimgegeben, Wird für keinen Dienst auf Erden taugen, / Und doch wird er vor dem Tode beben, Wer die Schönheit angeschaut mit Augen!' ('The man who has looked upon beauty with his eyes / Is already handed over to death; / He will be no good for any earthly duties, / And yet he will tremble in the face of death, / The man who has looked upon beauty with his eyes!' [Platen, cited and translated by Appelbaum, 1995, p. 124]).

¹⁵⁸ 'To he who has seen the love night and glimpsed her sweet secret, a single longing remains in the mania of the light, the longing towards holy night, towards the eternal, the true, the unifying'.

¹⁵⁹ 'Eternal Love-night!'

¹⁶⁰ 'exuberant and insatiable joy of union in the eternal beyond of things!'

¹⁶¹ 'eternal beyond of things'.

explored above) from the first pages of Mann's novella, Gabriele is not depicted in such a precarious psychological position until she plays Wagner's music. She may have abstained from artistic pleasure, but she shows no neurotic symptoms. This implies that Wagner's music is inherently dangerous and triggers Dionysian impulses so strong that they defy sublimation. Of course, Gabriele's unfamiliarity with such impulses, forgotten since her musical adolescence, may also be a factor in her demise, but it is notably when she plays Wagner's music (as opposed to the nocturnes of Chopin, which she initially plays) that the Dionysian descends in full-force, and that obvious signs of her illness begin to manifest themselves.

Any unification of drives seen in *Tristan's* musical episode can hardly be considered as a sign of Nietzsche's '[starke] Wille'¹⁶² (NF-1888, 14 [219]). The drive which comes to dominate, in both Wagner's music and Mann's scene, is the death drive, which commands and subjugates all other impulses. In Wagner's lovers all disparate drives strive together, but towards a decadent union-in-death, rather than a healthy outcome. Gabriele appears to be overwhelmed by the same drive, as demonstrated by the fact that she experiences sudden tubercular symptoms while humming (a sign that the music has lured her towards death). Gabriele's abandonment of an opposing drive – towards procreation – is possibly hinted at in the brief appearance of Pastorin Höhlenrauch during Gabriele's performance (p. 354). Pastorin Höhlenrauch has given birth to nineteen children and been left mentally incapacitated. She could therefore act as a warning to Gabriele, who may be similarly debilitated if she sides with a life of burgherly procreation. Pastorin Höhlenrauch may also suggest Gabriele's departure from this burgherly world, for the Pastorin disappears moments after her arrival, allowing the music to continue.

¹⁶² 'strong will'.

The outcome of Gabriele's failed sublimation is her death, just days after she plays *Tristan und Isolde*. Like Aschenbach and Aurispa, she is seduced by the deathly side of the Dionysian, and fails to achieve psychological or creative equilibrium. In the texts under consideration, sublimation of the Dionysian is posited as a crucial part of the artist's engagement with this dangerous drive. An unsublimated experience of the Dionysian results in obliterated creativity, even death, for this is a precarious drive that must be correctly harnessed. While the Dionysian can promote creativity through its abolition of inhibition and individuation, and its stimulation of intoxication abandon, it can (as has been seen throughout this thesis) also lead to oblivion, annihilation and barbarity. If the Dionysian is not sublimated, these pernicious latter effects appear to dominate, because the individual experiences this drive without moderation or restraint. As seen in the previous chapter, while the Dionysian can trigger a creatively inspiring brand of regression, it can also trigger a form of regression that renders a return to civilisation impossible. Sublimation appears to offer a way of taking part in such experiences safely.

For Mann and d'Annunzio, sublimation seems to offer the artist a strategy for engaging with the Dionysian in a creative, healthy manner. It allows the artist to make use of impulses and instincts that may otherwise be harmful: the sexual urge, for example, which is a symptom of the Dionysian, can be sublimated and harnessed in the service of artistic creativity, disarming it of its destructive and distracting potential. The artist who sublimates such sexual desires is not forced to attempt extreme repression, which, as seen, can lead to exhaustion and degeneration, and merely deflects (a certain portion of) his sexual desires into artistic activity. Nietzsche's and Freud's understandings of sublimation have been seen to offer complementary illumination of the fictional portrayals of the psychological process seen here: Freud's notion of the redirection of the sexual urge (which remains, and is not abolished) has been deployed to clarify the actions of the fictional artists who, having once

been distracted by carnal pleasures, appear to eschew them in favour of artistic pursuits. Freud's understanding of sublimation can also explain why certain artists fail to create, for they attempt either to repress or to satisfy the sexual urge in its original form. Nietzsche's understanding of sublimation has provided supplementary clarification regarding the experiences of Mann's and d'Annunzio's protagonists: 'spiritualisation' of instincts (including the Dionysian sexual instinct) has been seen, and Nietzsche's notion of fragmentary versus unified drives has been successfully applied to the fictional artists discussed. Those who achieve unification of their drives, sublimating potentially discordant drives towards the singular goal of creativity (both of art and of the self), meet with great artistic success; those who fail to unify their drives remain impeded in their creative endeavours by a sense of fragmentation and weakness. Both Freud and Nietzsche also provide useful aids to understanding the precariousness of Dionysian creativity. For if the Dionysian – itself a highly hazardous drive – is not successfully sublimated according to their descriptions, the artist's life as well as his creativity is endangered.

Used in conjunction, Freud's and Nietzsche's ideas regarding sublimation have allowed for a more profound insight into the artistic characters in Mann's and d'Annunzio's texts, and into their understanding of ideal creativity. This ideal of creativity will now be discussed in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This thesis has established a previously overlooked affinity between Gabriele d'Annunzio and Thomas Mann, two contemporary writers who are seldom considered together. The affinity investigated concerns the portrayal of creativity in selected works by the two writers. As has been demonstrated, the thread which ties together their views regarding creativity, and indeed each chapter of this thesis, is the use of the psychological and artistic drive known as the Dionysian, creatively and critically appropriated from Nietzsche. The Dionysian appears in the works of d'Annunzio and Mann as a drive that can promote but also hinder creativity, and offers a highly precarious form of artistic inspiration. This conclusion will draw together the various yet connected arguments made in support of this claim, briefly summarising the findings of each chapter. After an overview of these findings, the numerous aspects of creativity examined throughout this thesis will be synthetised, in order to determine an ideal of Dionysian creativity as suggested by d'Annunzio and Mann.

The first chapter of this thesis established that d'Annunzio and Mann each gained an early knowledge of Nietzsche and his ideas, whether through their own readings or through secondary sources. Mann claims to have begun reading Nietzsche himself from around 1894; while no precise dates can be offered for d'Annunzio's first-hand acquaintance with Nietzsche, annotated volumes of the philosopher's works in d'Annunzio's library confirm that he did acquire first-hand knowledge of (at least some of) Nietzsche's texts at some point. D'Annunzio was writing about Nietzsche as early as 1892, and articles written by Mann for a school newspaper during the 1890s display possible traces of his encounter with Nietzsche.

Both d'Annunzio and Mann were profoundly interested in the role of art and the artist, and frequently reflect upon creativity, artistic production and aesthetic values in their literature. Both often portray artists (in Mann's case, sometimes under the guise of other

occupations) in their fiction, or characters who are deeply moved by art and whose existences revolve around artistic concerns. Mann also offers an insight into his artistic values and principles in texts such as his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, revealing what he considers to be an appropriate role for the artist – although his views on this role alter over the course of his life. D’Annunzio’s ideas regarding the artist’s role must be gleaned largely from his fiction and from his own actions.

The first aspect of the creative process to be examined was the liminality of the artist’s experience, common to both d’Annunzio and Mann’s texts. For both, it was argued, the artist is seen as an isolated figure, who struggles to integrate himself fully into society. The alienation of these fictional artists was illuminated using Turner’s theory of liminality. The fictional artists considered were seen to display a striking resemblance to Turner’s ‘liminal personae’ (Turner, 1991, p. 95), who inhabit a space ‘betwixt and between’ (ibid.) the structures of society. These ‘threshold people’ (ibid.), of whom Turner gives hippies as an example, are permanent occupiers of the liminal space, as opposed to individuals who temporarily undergo a liminal experience (for example, in a rite of passage) before returning to society’s structures. The artists under discussion display a similar liminality: Tonio Kröger feels caught ‘zwischen krassen Extremen’¹ (Mann, 2004, p. 265), for example, and Stelio Effrena stands alone opposite his crowds and in his artistic mission.

D’Annunzio and Mann invariably depict their artists as isolated: Aschenbach is a solitary resident in the Venetian hotel and passes his days alone (watching Tadzio); and Tonio Kröger travels by himself, his solitariness broken only by his friendship with the painter Lisaweta. While d’Annunzio’s artists may have lovers, for both Effrena and Aurispa the companionship of the woman is illusory. In *Il trionfo della morte* especially, where the lover becomes the ‘Nemica’ (‘Enemy’), Aurispa’s isolation is not effectively combated by

¹ ‘between stark extremes’.

Ippolita, and he pursues his own secret plans to kill her and himself, thereby widening the ‘distacco’ (‘distance’ [d’Annunzio, 1988, p. 651]) that segregates him. In *Il fuoco* Foscarina’s artistic talents admittedly render her a useful creative partner; but the distracting nature of her love means that she must become a distant companion, and leave Effrena unfettered and free to achieve his artistic goals. The artist seems condemned to his alienation, although Spinell, the dilettante in Mann’s *Tristan*, appears rather to position himself self-consciously and deliberately apart from the crowd in an attempt to act out the role of the aesthete.

Turner’s theories were also deployed to show how the artist can combat the isolation and alienation of liminality, and experience a profound sense of communion that is – or can be, under the right conditions – creatively inspiring. It was argued that Turner’s idea of ‘communitas’ (Turner, 1991, p. 97), whereby individuals experience profound communion, can be seen exemplified in the effects of the Dionysian as described by Nietzsche, and in the respective interpretations of these effects by d’Annunzio and Mann. For Nietzsche, the experience of primal unity that the Dionysian brings when it abolishes the (Apollonian) illusion of individuation provides a useful and creatively inspiring contrast to the restrictions and limits of individuation, just as communitas does for Turner. When they engage with the Dionysian, Mann’s and d’Annunzio’s artist-figures enter such a state of communitas, where they often find their creativity stimulated. Crucially, however, the suspension of identity that the Dionysian triggers must remain temporary, and not utterly annihilate the individual’s existence so that return to civilisation and society’s structures is impossible. Furthermore, it is the tension between liminality and communitas that proves the most creative: the artist who experiences only isolation or integration will know nothing of the Dionysian creativity that results from passage between the two. The Dionysian only provides creativity when communitas acts as a foil to isolating liminality. This is one of the reasons why Giorgio Aurispa is unable to create: while he longs for the kind of transcendent and primordial union

that he sees in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (which constitutes an excessive and pathological form of union), he is unable to achieve it himself.

It has also been seen (in Chapter Four) that the Dionysian creative experience involves regression, aligning it with Nietzsche's own version of the Dionysian, which promotes a more primal mode of existence.² In some cases the regression portrayed by d'Annunzio and Mann is an internal one (of which Aschenbach's return to a pre-repressive state is an example); in other cases it is atavistic, involving a return to an earlier form of civilisation. Some artists experience both forms of regression: as well as a regressive reversal of his personal repression Aschenbach also returns to a more primitive form of civilisation in his Dionysian dream, for example. Regression (of both varieties) was seen to promote creativity: regression leads to a more instinctual and impulsive state, acting as a foil to the restrictions and constraints of modern civilisation, allowing neglected energies to be retrieved. Reverting to a pre-repressive state of erotic awareness, for example, Aschenbach is able to compose an elegant treatise while observing Tadzio, and in *Il fuoco* Effrena taps primal creative energies when he enters a more impulsive and instinctual form of existence with Foscarina. Additionally, his creative process is likened to excavation, whereby he must awaken ancient figures from their sleep. But when regression goes too far, and leaves the individual unable to return to civilisation's structures and inhibitions, creativity is extinguished: hence Aschenbach's demise when he regresses mentally to the state of the Dionysian barbarians described by Nietzsche, and Aurispa's inability to find creativity in the animal carnality that he experiences in the land of his ancient ancestors.

A final aspect of creativity, discussed in the penultimate chapter of this thesis, is the need for sublimation. It was argued that d'Annunzio and Mann portray the Dionysian as a drive with immense creative potential, but one which must be harnessed into artistic

² Nietzsche frequently speaks of the 'Ur-Ein' ('primordial unity' [GT-4]) to which the Dionysian conveys the individual.

production if it is to be most fruitfully (and safely) engaged with; sublimation offers a way of achieving this. The sexual drive in particular, must be sublimated: sexual arousal and abandon have been seen as a symptom of the Dionysian (for d'Annunzio and Mann, as well as, to a certain extent and especially later in his career, Nietzsche) and a feature of the ancient worship of Dionysus, and can threaten creative focus for d'Annunzio's and Mann's artists. Freud's and Nietzsche's ideas regarding sublimation were used to explain how the Dionysian can be most effectively negotiated. Put simply, those who successfully sublimate the destructive power of the Dionysian, redirecting the sexual drive in the manner Freud describes, and unifying their various drives as Nietzsche recommends (so that the creative drive becomes the 'master' drive), will survive their encounter with the Dionysian and reap artistic rewards. Those who fail to achieve sublimation, on the other hand, are overwhelmed by the potent drive, and will likely perish.

Several reasons for failed sublimation were seen: in the case of Aschenbach, extreme repression of the Dionysian and its associated impulses had rendered the drive unfamiliar and dangerous. As Freud himself notes, sublimation of a drive can only take place if the drive is not being repressed; while Aschenbach's repression of the Dionysian has ceased by the time we first encounter him in Mann's novella, theoretically opening up the possibility of its sublimation into creative productivity, Aschenbach's lifelong avoidance of the drive has left him unable to handle or channel it, and he is soon overpowered. While Gabriele Klöterjahn does not have a history of extreme, paternally imposed repression like Aschenbach, she has nonetheless been alienated from the drive since her marriage, from which time she has been denied artistic (in her case, musical) activity; she is arguably as unprepared as Aschenbach, therefore, when she experiences the force of the Dionysian in her rediscovery of (Wagner's) music.

Cases of substitution, representing a failed attempt at sublimation were also seen. Here the artist engages in a creative activity merely as a means of replacing the sexual impulse, and sublimation fails. Aschenbach's act of creation on the beach in Venice exemplifies this, for it is followed by an intensification of, rather than relief from, erotic desire. A true sublimation, whereby the sexual drive is channelled into creative activity, would have had the opposite effect. In *Il trionfo della morte* a similar situation of substitution, instead of sublimation, was seen in Aurispa's attempts to channel his sexual desire for Ippolita into the writing of love-letters. As with Aschenbach, however, the act of writing only inflamed Aurispa's desire, signalling the failure of sublimation. It was also suggested, in Chapter Five, that Gabriele Klöterjahn's production of a child could be seen as an attempt at sublimation, whereby healthy and burgherly procreation seeks to satisfy the impetus towards artistic creation. When she plays the piano in the Einfried sanatorium, Gabriele reveals the failure of her original attempt at sublimation (which was actually a substitution), and unleashes a Dionysian drive that she again fails to sublimate, and which overpowers her.

A further condition of successful creativity in the case of d'Annunzio might be that the artist is male: while he concedes that the male who strives towards creative goals will not always be successful, as demonstrated in *Il trionfo della morte*, he does not appear to acknowledge even the possibility of female creativity. In both *Il fuoco* and *Il trionfo della morte* the female companion is expected to aid the male artist in his creative goals; in the latter novel, this companion is also blamed for the artist's creative failures. While *Il fuoco*'s Foscarina is admittedly a renowned and acclaimed artist, she readily subjugates herself to Effrena's artistic mission, and her artistic talent is notably one which requires direction and instruction. As Duncan notes, the relationship between Foscarina (as female actor) and Effrena (as writer and playwright) is one of 'ventriloquism' (1997, p. 137). This can be seen,

for example, shortly before Effrena's oration, when he speak to Foscarina and senses her spirit become 'concavo come un calice per ricevere quell'onda'³ (1989, p. 211). The actor is not permitted true creativity or originality, and instead only repeats the words of the (more creative) male artist. The female's reception of the male's words also bears sexual overtones, resembling a process of artistic fertilisation – but one which will result in the male artist bearing the fruit of the conception. Elsewhere in d'Annunzio's literature the maleness of the artist is echoed: the aesthete-poet of *Il piacere* is Andrea Sperelli, for example, and Claudio Cantelmo of *Le vergini delle rocce* pursues the creative goal of becoming the *superuomo*.

For Mann the insistence upon the maleness of the artist does not appear to be as absolute. While the overwhelming majority of his artistic characters (both in the texts under discussion and in his literature generally) are male, notable exceptions include *Tristan's* Lisaweta Iwanowna and *Tonio Kröger's* Gabriele Klöterjahn. Although Gabriele Klöterjahn does not survive her encounter with the Dionysian, and although she does not technically experience 'creativity' (reproducing Chopin's and Wagner's works rather than composing her own), it was argued in Chapter Four that her ultimately fatal encounter with the Dionysian was nonetheless a 'creative' one. In *Tristan* Mann deliberately juxtaposes Gabriele and Detlev Spinell, resulting in a comparison that exposes the hollow dilettantism of the latter and highlights the more genuine artistic experience of the other; only Gabriele can play the music that Spinell professes to love. While Gabriele would probably have been no more than a muse or secondary artist in d'Annunzio's world, in Mann's novella she displays artistic talent which far surpasses that of the male imposter, and which emphasises his absurdity. As noted, she is not a typical artist – she claims that she cannot understand the meaning of Wagner's music, for example – but she is the only character in Mann's novella to undergo a profound and transformative experience of art, albeit one that overpowers and destroys her.

³ 'concave like a chalice, ready to be filled by that wave'.

In *Tonio Kröger* the female artist is a more conventional one: the Russian Lisaweta Iwanowna is a painter (by trade, it seems), ‘an intelligent, emancipated, and independent woman in her early forties [...], who appears to be an abstract, modern painter living a single, bohemian lifestyle’ (Mundt, 2004, p. 63). Although Lisaweta alone constitutes too small a sample size to reach any firm conclusions about Mann’s understanding of professional female artists, it may be significant that she is unmarried and that she is a painter, not a writer (as Mann’s artists more commonly are). Lisaweta appears stable and comfortable in her position as an artist, and does not suffer the same psychological turmoil as Kröger; but there is no suggestion that lack of intelligence or thoughtfulness bar her from such crises. Indeed, Whiting finds Lisaweta to function ‘as an inspiring catalyst’ (2010, p. 32) for Kröger, and to aid to his intellectual and artistic development. Locating striking affinities between Mann’s novella and two texts by the Russian-born psychologist and writer Lou Andreas-Salomé⁴ (*Fenitschka* and *Eine Ausschweifung* [*A Debauchery*], both 1898) which both treat the development of artistic figures, Whiting suggests that Mann casts Andrea-Salomé in *Tonio Kröger* as Lisaweta, and that ‘With Lisaweta’s effect on Tonio in the fourth chapter, the text signals the inspiration it has drawn from Andrea-Salomé’s own literary treatment of the outsider problem’ (ibid.). Just as Mann himself appears to have benefited from his encounter with Andreas-Salomé, Kröger profits from his relationship with Lisaweta, Whiting’s reading claims. Far from a secondary artist whose principal purpose is to nurture the true (male) artist in his more important goals, in this interpretation Lisaweta appears as the intellectual leader and guide, offering Kröger wisdom and insight.

Lisaweta and Gabriele Klöterjahn may offer notable examples of female artists, but they are anomalous characters in Mann’s primarily male world. Although Schneck overlooks

⁴ Lou Andreas-Salomé and her partner Paul Rée spent a summer with Nietzsche, traveling through Europe and planning to establish an academic commune where the three would live. In autumn, however, the relationship between Nietzsche and the couple broke down, largely because of Nietzsche’s romantic feelings for Andreas-Salomé. In 1894 Andreas-Salomé published one of the earliest studies on Nietzsche, entitled *Friedrich Nietzsche in seinen Werken* (*Friedrich Nietzsche in his Works*).

Lisaweta's independence, he is largely correct in noting that Mann's female characters 'are all dependent upon a man for support' (1940, p. 148). While there is not scope here to undertake a full discussion of the gendered representation of creativity and the artist in the literature of d'Annunzio and Mann, it is interesting to note that gender does indeed appear to be a relevant concern, and some divergences have been noted. Of course, neither d'Annunzio nor Mann are alone in insisting upon the maleness of the artist, and largely reflect contemporary beliefs and trends.⁵ For d'Annunzio the greatest artist will be male, but will make use of the Dionysian creativity offered by woman (seen in Effrena's artistic intercourse with Foscarina); Mann acknowledges female artists, but they are still heavily outnumbered by their male counterparts. It may also be significant that Gabriele, who does encounter the Dionysian in her rediscovery of music, fails to cope successfully with this volatile drive.

The Dionysian, then, for d'Annunzio and Mann, offers creativity through its promotion of profound and primordial unity and its incitement of impulses towards (sexual) abandon and excess. It acts as a 'primitive' foil to the restrictions and inhibitions of civilisation and its structures and enables the subject to regress to a more primal and instinctual form of existence, which stimulates creativity. But the Dionysian has been seen to offer a precarious form of creativity, and to be a volatile and potentially fatal drive. Successful creative engagement with the Dionysian therefore requires that several conditions are met: firstly, that the artist (a necessarily liminal, and usually male figure) experiences a mixture of isolation and communion, and that his experience of deindividuation and community should constitute only a temporary suspension, and not a permanent loss, of identity; secondly, the regression triggered by the Dionysian must be restrained and not be allowed to reach an extreme point from which return is impossible; and thirdly the artist must successfully sublimate the Dionysian and its associated impulses, and channel them into

⁵ For a discussion of the gendered use of the term 'genius' (including artistic 'genius'), see Christine Battersby, *Gender and Genius* (London: The Woman's Press, 1989).

creative productivity. On the evidence of the texts by d'Annunzio and Mann investigated in this thesis, if these conditions are met then the artist who engages with the Dionysian will find his creativity stimulated. If they are not met, any initial creativity triggered by the Dionysian will be temporary, and the artist may even perish.

This thesis has uncovered previously overlooked affinities between Gabriele d'Annunzio and Thomas Mann, and posited Nietzsche's Dionysian as a crucial aspect of the creative process portrayed by these contemporaries in their literature. It has argued that d'Annunzio and Mann find similar creative value, as well as danger, in the Dionysian, and that they offer similar statements regarding successful engagement with this powerful drive. As well as establishing significant common ground between these two writers, and challenging previous views that held them as entirely antithetical, this thesis has also worked towards a more refined understanding of their respective treatments and portrayals of artistic creativity and of the value of (Nietzsche's) Dionysian. For both, the Dionysian has been seen to offer a precarious brand of creativity which places the artist on a path beside a precipice: successful navigation of this perilous path brings creative rewards, and the artist often finds himself reinvigorated with enthusiasm for life; but to stumble on this path, or to approach it blindly and without caution, is to risk plunging into the abyss of annihilation, oblivion and death.

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