

**DECORATING THE ABYSS: CRAFTING A  
POST-HOLOCAUST ETHICS OF THE SELF**

**A dissertation submitted by**

**Geoffrey Parkes**

**For the award of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
2010**

**Faculty of Arts  
University of Southern Queensland**

## ABSTRACT

### **Decorating the Abyss: Crafting a Post-Holocaust Ethics of the Self**

After the collapse of Soviet communism and the ‘triumph’ of neoliberal capitalism, ideas including ‘the end of history’ proliferated, as did notions of the infinite malleability of identity in a post-modern world. But 9/11 and the wars that followed showed that not only was Frances Fukuyama’s thesis wrong but, paradoxically, so was the notion that after 9/11 everything had changed. Instead, we witnessed a return to arguments including ‘you’re either for us or against us’ and ‘they hate us for our freedoms’, from governments purporting to be spreading freedom and democracy while defending civilisation. These arguments were distributed throughout a media-scape where fundamentalist voices increased their furious diatribes, reminding us there was only one true way, one right and righteous path to redemption.

This thesis argues that these fundamentalisms emerge from the encounter of modern life with modernity and modernisation, posing what Anthony Giddens calls threats to ‘ontological security’. Consequently, citizens are interpellated by discourses that provide security and meaning in a world that can only offer the continual destabilisation of personal identity, stability and institutional refuge. The self becomes attached to universalising, totalising narratives that offer inclusion alongside exclusion, stability via a promised process of chaos and, above all, the sense of certainty and surety.

However, the Western European self has been here before: this thesis shows how such threats, arising from the crises in and failure of the European Enlightenment and imperial powers, abetted the rise of fascism and totalitarianism, literally laying the railway pavers for the train track to the death camps. An analysis of the defining features of pre-Holocaust German and French societies details the processes that excluded, exiled and ultimately led to the execution of the Jew – the language of this othering, its impact on social life, the abysmal response of institutions and academics and the distinct ways that French culture embraced anti-Semitism.

If such an analysis shows the danger of fixing the self in an identity explicitly linked to race, nationality and religion, it also provides us with an entry into the thesis’s core argument: that three writers, key participants in French intellectual and literary history, created works that dealt with these ‘fascisms of the self’. Albert Camus, Michel Foucault and Samuel Beckett crafted texts that, when used together, offer an answer to the fascisms that attempt to interpellate ‘we modern subjects’ through binary oppositions. Each of these writers makes possible a questioning the self and its discursive foundations, in the eventual hope of creating the situations that assist us in becoming someone other than ‘us’ or ‘them’.

Whilst critical work on Albert Camus and the Holocaust has focussed primarily on *The Rebel* and *The Plague*, here *The Myth of Sisyphus* is considered Camus’s work par excellence with regard to modernity and its crises. It is nihilism and the false prophets of its conquest that Camus targets. Anticipating Foucault by forty years, Camus’s work presents here an aestheticised ethical self, exemplified both in Camus’s work and life work. By viewing how Camus’s philosophical concept of the absurd and his later novel *The Fall* formed a relationship that spoke to each other as much to the surrounding social, ethical and intellectual currents, the thesis repositions Camus as an interpreter and interrogator of Nietzsche. He is therefore an unrecognised progenitor of the work of Michel Foucault on the ethics of the self.

Foucault’s ethical turn sought to challenge the ‘fascisms of the self’ that reside in every one of us. Foucault would take this distinctive turn, from an archaeology of knowledge towards subjectivity and governance, in the late 1970s, culminating in the final volumes of *The History of Sexuality* in 1984. This was a time when the French government, intellectuals

and the general populace were finally coming to terms with the extent of Vichy wartime collaboration and anti-Semitism. Foucault elucidated a genealogy of the modern confessional self. In the process, he revealed ways in which ancient Greek and Roman techniques of the self had formed an important part in the ethics of the self that influenced later Christian ideas and practices. By reviewing Foucault's work as an intellectual as well as criticisms of his work and contemporary interpretations of it, this thesis shows how the Western self can work on itself, identifying its similarities with other selves as much as the possibilities of becoming other.

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* offers a final addition to the possibility of a post-Holocaust ethics of the self. The analysis shows how *Waiting for Godot* has been interpreted from a series of positions, including existential, psychoanalytical, post-structuralist and historicist, each in its own way offering a vision of Beckett's vision. This thesis advocates a return to the actuality of the text and its role in interpellating the reader/audience. Consequently, we come to identify with and bear witness to the central characters and their suffering, an action that facilitates a questioning of one's own attitude to the self and its isolation in the abyss. The play is shown to be important in terms of its theatrical and textual effect, its performance and its influence on works that similarly interrogate the role of the self in contemporary modernity.

'Decorating the Abyss' contributes originally to knowledge in two ways. First, it identifies the connections between the works of Camus, Foucault and Beckett against the French social, cultural and political milieu. Second, it uses these works to offer a unique method of analysing and crafting an ethics of the self. Rather than positioning the liberal individual in a battle against fundamentalisms, the thesis argues for a shifting of the self: a resistance to interpellations through constant self-questioning, an understanding of the genealogical connections of oneself to others and the bearing of witness in an age where the effects of modernity seek to cement identities while ignoring their contexts and contingencies.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to:

- my primary supervisor Dr Brian Musgrove whose insight, humour, curiosity and tenacity have probed, provoked and pummelled this thesis into being. I have learnt much while studying with him and it has been a privilege; it will be an honour to carry those lessons on in my professional life.
- my assistant supervisor Dr Laurie Johnson whose sharp intellect, critical encouragement and compassionate criticism have guided my work since my first undergraduate English class. Laurie's professionalism and engagement are models which I hope to emulate, precisely because his work and his words have served so often to remind me why and how I am at university and the importance of sustained questioning and interrogating.
- Professor Chris Lee whose professional and academic ethics have been foundational in my approach to academic life. He has taught me a great lesson during the time of my candidature: there must always be something else, something more.

I would also like to acknowledge the friendship and collegiality of Drs Janet McDonald and Darryl Chalk, whose smiles have illuminated the darkness on numerous occasions. Thanks too must go to fellow postgrads Deb and Daniel – may we one day meet somewhere peaceful, far, far away from the maddening crowd.

An aspiring academic quickly becomes aware that no work would be possible if not for the dedication, patience and skilful efforts of the administrative staff. Helen Janes, Helen Drury, Shirley Clifford and Lesley Astbury have been outstanding and I am indebted to them not just for their work but for their friendship and concern. I am also grateful to various members of the Office of Research and Higher Degrees for their advice and assistance. Thanks are also due to the staff of USQ's Disability Services whose support and understanding throughout my time at USQ cannot be underestimated.

Many of the ideas presented in this thesis were discussed at conferences where I had the honour of engaging in critical discussion with scholars whose collegiality and engagement have shaped the resulting work. In particular, I would like to thank the University of Bucharest, the University of Queensland, Macquarie University and the University of Southern Queensland for these opportunities. Thanks especially to the Public Memory Research Centre and the Faculty of Arts for their assistance which allowed me to attend these conferences.

Though completing a PhD dissertation is solitary work, it is never done in solitude. Sue Musgrove opened her house and her heart to me and her enthusiasm and serenity have served as wise examples. At a dinner eight years ago, Dr Peter Cryle offered astute silence when I asked, during a misguided attempt at studying my Honours degree: 'What's the point of research anyway?' I hope this thesis demonstrates my understanding and my gratitude for being introduced to Michel Foucault's works in Dr Cryle's course. Dr Ericka McWilliams and her partner, though they did not know it at the time, gave me excellent advice when telling me, as an undergraduate, that I needed to find what I was passionate about and learn more. Were it not for them, I would not have completed my first degree, let alone this PhD.

While working on this dissertation, I lived with one disability and, for almost two years, a serious, apparently-undiagnosable illness. Ultimately it was the support of Dr Leslie Dhaniram that allowed me to remain tenacious, persisting in the understanding that he would authorise any referrals and tests that were needed if I produced sufficient evidence and probability of their necessity. He was the only one, out of seven practitioners and specialists,

to apologise for not spotting the cause of my symptoms immediately once I became aware of my condition's cause. To me, that is the exact type of medical assistance I needed and I am alive and healthy because of it. I am equally grateful for the ongoing help of my psychiatrist Dr Ben Steinberg whose hard work, encouragement, clarity and engagement has both saved my life and allowed me to live my life, to become the someone other who crafted this work – the thesis and my self. And Dr Stuart Scherhag is responsible for my being able to smile and grimace with equal pride.

Karen Pickering suggested the combination of the three key writers in this dissertation; for that, for her support and friendship *par excellence*, for her struggle and for her reaching out as much as for being there to reach out to - this thesis owes its life, its sustenance, its vigour to her. Troy Sherry, who has transformed himself, has been inspirational in my own transformation. It has been my great fortune to maintain and grow our friendship. Matan – I stand in awe of your inner strength; I also stand because of having you as a friend. Anthony Easton's own self-reflexive journey has been astounding to watch, and amazing to be a part of. Lindsay Tuggle's sharp intellect and thoughtful correspondence have given me a sense of creative and intellectual possibilities for the road ahead. Itai, Tyler, Skye, Travis, Angela and Matthew, Tahnya, David, Josh, John and Chen have helped me survive just by being who they are and sharing that with me. Rainer, Chris and Matthew – you may never read this, but thank you.

This thesis was also made possible by Lou and Rachel and the kids of PS 192, Marcel, John C, Jean-Luc, Derek, Rainer, Rube and George, Nina, Hedwig, Leonard, Laura, Patti, Tina and Liza, and given respite and meaning by the works of Mssrs Baldwin, Chabon, Holleran, O'Hara and Joan Didion. Their relevance and importance testifies to the lesson I have learnt from Willoughby – we can never be fully aware at the time of our actions the influence they may have on others.

Not a word of my academic work would have been written were it not for my parents. I thank them for being who they are and how they are, and for how those two have changed. Despite my often-monosyllabic responses, I also thank them for asking 'How's the thesis going?' They each have their own abyss to decorate; how they do that has been instructional and formative in how I approach my own. Equally important are my brother Todd and my sister-in-law Heidi – I am thankful and proud of what we have built together.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to the possibilities of my nephews and niece – Shelby, Jet and Brielle. Their being and becoming has inspired me. The meaning of this work and its possibilities ultimately reside in how they too come to see themselves and their life works. I hope it also provides a satisfactory answer, for the moment, to their question 'Geoff, what do you do?'

## CONTENTS

Introduction: Once More Into The Abyss	1
Chapter One: The Language And Logic Of Fundamentalisms	23
Chapter Two: Modernity, The Self And The Holocaust	52
Chapter Three: Emotion And Lucidity: Camus, Sisyphus And The Self	84
Chapter Four: Foucault, Critique And The Possibilities Of The Self	119
Chapter Five: 'The Other, Pig': What Happens While Waiting For Godot	176
Conclusion: 'I Is An Other'	198
Works Cited	202

## INTRODUCTION

### ONCE MORE INTO THE ABYSS

We need a multidirectional mapping of the process of Othering: one that moves in many directions, drawing lines of relation among seemingly disparate events and practices.

– Vivian Patraka, *Spectacular Suffering: Theatre, Fascism and the Holocaust*

What's effectively needed is a ramified, penetrative perception of the present, one that makes it possible to locate lines of weakness, strong points, positions where the instances of power have secured and implanted themselves by a system of organisation dating back over 150 years. In other words, a topological and geological survey of the battlefield – that is the intellectual's role. But as for saying, 'Here is what you must do!', certainly not.

– Michel Foucault

Stuart Sim opens his study of resurgent fundamentalisms with an almost elegiac observation: that Jean-François Lyotard's pronouncement of the death of 'grand narratives' was tragically premature. Instead of inhabiting a world where grand narratives, totalising systems and fundamentalisms 'ceased to merit our support... a brave new postmodern world where institutional authority would no longer hold us under its spell', we find ourselves in 'a new dark age of dogma' (1). As Sim's invocation of postmodernism suggests, the 'new world' was promised as the result of a rupture with the past – a transcendence of the

ideological struggles and crises of modernity. The same promise and concept of rupture is evident in Francis Fukuyama's famous declaration of 'the end of history' after the Cold War: the vision of an epoch built upon economic and social progress and the global triumph of democracy. But we inhabit a 'fundamentalist world' in which resurgent fundamentalisms, in their various forms, are the unfinished business of modernity itself. Contemporary fundamentalisms have a history.

The return of fundamentalisms has defined the first decade of the twenty-first century. At their core, these fundamentalisms function by a process of identifying and excluding an 'other'. This other is abstracted, allowing fundamentalisms to blame it for the crises which threaten the imaginary stability and certainty which fundamentalists desire and advertise. Responding to the processes of globalisation and rationalisation, contemporary fundamentalisms recapitulate central and unresolved tensions and problems of modernity: authority, governance, the issues of equity and privilege, access to resources and the nature and limits of individual freedom. Paradoxically, if today's fundamentalisms are catalysed by a reaction to modernity they are empowered by its technologies. A proliferating global mass media and the internet enable the propagation of fundamentalist dogma on an unprecedented scale.

Given that contemporary fundamentalisms are a symptomatic continuation of modernity's inner contradictions, the term 'postmodern' is an inadequate descriptor of our time. This thesis deploys the term 'post-Holocaust' for significant reasons. It has an historical dimension as well as a crucially conceptual one: in Berel Lang's estimation, 'post-Holocaust' means both 'the period of sixty years since the end of the Holocaust' (xi) and the emotional, intellectual and ethical dilemmas which we still live – whether we are directly connected to the Holocaust or not, whether we like it or not. Carolyn Dean supplements this with the observation that 'post-Holocaust' also refers to the on-going inquisition into the rhetoric,



taxonomies and operations of othering ‘that now shape discussions and debates about the extermination of European Jewry and its aftermath’ (276). ‘Post-Holocaust’ functions to remind us that many scholars have critically identified the event as a crisis of ethics: how and why did so many ordinary, morally-educated people become ‘Hitler’s willing executioners’, and what are the consequences of this for the present? ‘Post-Holocaust’, then, implies an unanswered set of questions which bear directly on the possibilities of crafting a twenty-first-century ethical practice that responds to the problems of resurgent fundamentalisms. The post-Holocaust inquisition supplies us with tools to explore the logical and linguistic architecture of contemporary fundamentalisms, setting a ‘negative limit’ against which an ethics of the self must be measured.

In 2005, John K. Roth asked ‘Why study the Holocaust?’. He did so against a backdrop of ‘the terrorist attacks launched against the United States on September 11, 2001... almost daily bloodshed in the Middle East.... the awareness that the infliction of torture has called the nation’s moral integrity into question, and the destruction inflicted by Hurricane Katrina’ (*Ethics During* 25). Roth concludes his study of ethics during and after the Holocaust by quoting a William Stafford poem: ‘How you stand here is important’ (186). This thesis argues in parallel with and concurs with Roth’s conclusion: ‘Whatever else it may be, ethics after the Holocaust is about those things: what we hear as we listen for what is happening, how we breathe, *how we stand*. Nothing could be more important’ (187 italics mine).

The ‘ethics group’ that emerged from the 1996 Goldner Holocaust Symposium has asserted that after ‘Auschwitz, the simple reaffirmation of pre-Holocaust ethics will not do anymore, because the Western religious, philosophical, and ethical traditions have shown themselves to be problematic. Far from preventing the Holocaust, they may have been seriously implicated in that catastrophe’ (Roth ‘Introduction’ xv). For Roth and his

Symposium fellows, the Holocaust was ‘proof that ethics can be misused and even perverted into pseudo-ethics. Auschwitz shows the vulnerability of ethics – not only then, but also now; not only in the Nazis’ hands but also in ours’ (xv).

Michel Foucault drew the same line. As James Miller observes, ‘the fate of the Jews in World War II preoccupied Foucault... he said so on more than one occasion.’ From this preoccupation Foucault formulated his efforts ‘to comprehend and ferret out the lust for power and “fascism,” wherever it occurred’. Miller rightly reminds us that Foucault did not simply mean ‘historical fascism, the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini’ but also the multiple fascisms – ‘fascisms of the self’ – which circulate and threaten to dominate the subject in its everyday behaviours and experiences (369). Consequently, Foucault’s position suggests that we require a re-conceptualisation of an ethics of the self to contest the idea that the self of modernity is in any way inevitable or fixed.

In arguing for the possibilities of crafting a post-Holocaust ethics of the self, this thesis will not engage with Emmanuel Levinas’s ethical project and ideas of alterity and the Other. There is already a considerable critical archive that analyses the ‘ethical turn’. In *Giving an Account of Oneself* and *The Psychic Life of Power*, Judith Butler attempts to interrogate and, to an extent, reconcile Foucault’s and Levinas’s projects, as well as incorporating post-Freudian and post-Lacanian insights concerning the formation of the self. However, as Butler writes, ‘Foucault’s difference from... Levinas is obvious. For Levinas, “self-recurrence” is infinite, can never be accomplished, and takes place at an an-archic level, permanently prior to conscious reflection.’ In contrast, Butler considers that for Foucault, self-care ‘is an open-ended task, one that can have no final form. He thus disputes notions of progress or rational development that would take hold of the reflexive relation and guide it toward a clear conclusion.... There is no infancy here, no primacy of the imprint of the Other’ (129).

This is not to suggest that Levinas's work is insignificant. Rather, given the role of fundamentalisms in shaping the way the Western self has been conceptualised in modernity, this thesis favours an approach that employs the tools of liberal individualism – scepticism and freedom – to do work on itself. These self-practices disintegrate the notion of a unitary self and allow the self the opportunity to practice its freedoms. The thesis is not so much concerned with an originary explanation of the self as it is with employing a genealogical view of the self as product and producer. Such a view enables the contingent, never-absolutely-autonomous agency of the self to do work upon itself.

In this thesis, the *telos* or goal of the ethics is clear: to destabilise any notion of a pure, fixed and singular self and to elucidate the fragmentation that constitutes contemporary identity. But this does not reduce the opportunity for, or the possibility of, collective action. It anticipates possibilities and new relationships that are self-reflexive and questioning – that understand their internal dynamics, are open to flux and are prepared to dissolve rather than to promote a dogmatic 'fascism of the self' that unthinkingly subordinates itself to collectivised power. It is also a deliberate move away from what has been termed 'postmodern ethics' (exemplified by Richard Rorty and, to a lesser extent, some of Jacques Derrida's later works), and insists on the historical importance of the Holocaust.

Zygmunt Bauman rejected the idea that the Holocaust was purely an event in Jewish history or 'an extreme case of a wide and familiar category of social phenomena; a category surely loathsome and repellent, yet one we can (and must) live with' (1-2). For Bauman, 'our collective memory of the Holocaust' was permeated by a terror:

That the Holocaust could be more than an aberration, more than a deviation from an otherwise straight path of progress, more than a cancerous growth on the otherwise healthy body of the civilised society... the Holocaust was not an antithesis of modern civilization and everything... it stands for. We suspect

(even if we refuse to admit it) that the Holocaust could merely have uncovered another face of the same modern society whose other, more familiar, face we so admire. And that the two faces are perfectly comfortably attached to the same body. What we perhaps fear most, is that each of the two faces can no more exist without the other than can the two sides of a coin. (7)

Bauman writes that ‘Richard L. Rubenstein has drawn what seems to me the ultimate lesson of the Holocaust: “It bears... witness to the *advance of civilization*”’ (9). Bauman’s position was clear: he considered ‘*the Holocaust as a rare, yet significant and reliable, test of the hidden possibilities of modern society*’ (12). For Bauman, the Holocaust reminds us how fragile ‘our civilisation’ is ‘when confronted with the matter-of-fact efficiency of the most cherished among the products of civilization; its technology, its rational criteria of choice, its tendency to subordinate thought and action to the pragmatics of economy and effectiveness’ (Bauman 13).

This prompts Bauman to discuss the ‘terrifying’ quality that haunts modernity – the group violence that erases and abstracts the other. This quality pre-dates Hitler and Stalin and the concentration camps. Bauman refers to Friedrich Nietzsche’s sense of horror:

The same men who are held so sternly in check *inter pares* by custom, respect, usage, gratitude, and even more by mutual suspicion and jealousy, and who on the other hand in their relations with one another show themselves so resourceful in consideration, self-control, delicacy, loyalty, pride, and friendship – once they go outside, where the strange, the *stranger* is found... [they] emerge from a disgusting procession of murder, arson, rape, and torture, exhilarated and undisturbed of soul, as if it were no more than a student’s prank. (226)

Bauman concludes that abstraction 'is one of the modern mind's principal powers'. He writes that the 'overall effect of abstraction is that rules routinely followed in personal interaction, ethical rules most prominent among them, do not interfere where the handling of a category is concerned, including every entity classified into that category just on account of having been so classified' (227). Bauman continues, in words that seem eerily prescient in regard to the twenty-first century's world of fundamentalisms: '*The pernicious legacy of the Holocaust is that today's persecutors may inflict new pains and create new generations of victims eagerly awaiting their chance to do the same, while acting under the conviction that they are avenging yesterday's pain and warding off the pains of tomorrow; while being convinced, in other words, that ethics is on their side*' (237).

Ultimately, Bauman sees 'the most important lesson of the Holocaust' summed up in the understanding 'that in our modern society people who are neither morally corrupt nor prejudiced may also still partake with vigour and dedication in the destruction of targeted categories of human beings; and that their participation, far from calling for the mobilization of their moral or any other convictions, demands on the contrary their suspension, obliteration and irrelevance'. This thesis argues that a post-Holocaust ethics of the self is required to challenge the propensity to moral suspension, the fascisms within us and our predilection to be summonsed by 'those who control the present' and those who 'manipulate the past in a fashion likely to render the future inhospitable' (250).

In its consideration of the Holocaust, this thesis is not interested in the detail of the 'resettlements', the construction of the railways, the policing of the deportations, the death camps or gas chambers. Its principal concern is the conceptualisation of the 'other' that led to the gates of Auschwitz. It examines the general climate in which these events took place, foregrounding the circumstances and discourses that led to the denunciation of neighbours, assault, dispossession and finally genocide. After a brief investigation of the bureaucratic

mechanisms which spawned and powered Nazi Germany, the thesis details conditions in France during the Occupation. It discusses pre-war France where a particular type of anti-Semitism was already flourishing. The thesis then offers an analysis of why issues of the self – its construction, its modes of identification and the means by which it existed in society – shaped the socio-cultural milieu in which, against which and by which Albert Camus, Michel Foucault and Samuel Beckett produced their work.

This thesis contends that Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Foucault's *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* and Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* form a strategic framework for the crafting of an ethics of the self that helps the modern, Western self reject fundamentalisms and totalising belief systems. Each of the works alone is not enough to support this enterprise – they have faults, absences, omissions. This thesis reclaims the work of all three and insists on their relevance to contemporary practices of the self.

The common relegation of Camus to a position of second-rate existentialist ignores his contribution to an understanding of the self in modernity. This relegation misrecognises the importance of Camus's understanding of Nietzsche and his connection of Greco-Roman practices to those of the Christian and modern selves. The diminishment of Camus also fails to recognise the clear links between Camus's and Foucault's life work – their shared interest in an aestheticised ethics of the self.

Likewise, viewing Foucault as a postmodern philosopher of 'rupture' does no justice to his genealogies of the modern self and the possibilities made apparent by his histories. Foucault's work was a continuation of a long tradition in Western – and particularly French – philosophy. It regarded philosophy as a personal, lived collection of knowledge, requiring reflexive thinking and scepticism of both that knowledge and one's approaches to it. By minimising the significance of Foucault's ethical concerns and focussing on the relation of his work to identity politics we misread a collection of texts that interrogate the processes by

which we form ourselves. Foucault is now, more than ever, relevant to an understanding of the construction of the Western self in contemporary, everyday life: the role of religious, nationalist, racial and cultural discourses in the formation of our selves and, consequently, the possibility of changing those selves. This is crucial if we are to avoid the traps of fundamentalist, totalising belief systems.

*Waiting for Godot* can still inform an engagement with contemporary life. Uncertain economic times, the pressures of globalisation and the ever-present tendency to desire nostalgically-imagined pasts create a state of perpetual crisis. In this crisis, self-absorption – a preoccupation with our own positions at the expense of those of others – can dominate. This interiorisation can tempt us to traduce the sufferings of others to reassure ourselves of our own superiority. *Waiting for Godot* reminds us that we too are tramps on the path to our own death. The play also affirms that we are not silent viewers of a complex reality television show but rather participants who must contribute – who do contribute, through action and inaction alike. There is no ‘us’, no audience separated neatly from a stage where actors entertain a detached crowd. When we read *Waiting for Godot*, when we watch a performance, we become, as with life itself, participants in its production. Our freedoms may be limited, just as our salvation is non-existent. But the possibilities of our own transformation and our role in the transformation of others are, however contingent, however temporal, nevertheless real and possible.

Camus, Foucault and Beckett looked to the pre-Holocaust years as a resource to help them comprehend the enormity of the event. These were the years in which Camus’s concept of the absurd was developed; the years that Beckett spent in France and travelling through Germany; the years in which humanity was declodded of its ‘optimistic and progressive views of the future’ (Paxton 28), and the years which preoccupied Foucault in his effort to understand the modern self and how it had emerged. David Macey notes that in his final

years, Foucault was considering a work on government practices and policies. He ‘proposed as the research topics the period of the First World War and its aftermath because “it witnessed the birth and spread of practices of government and exercises of power that are still with us today”’ (462).

Camus, Foucault and Beckett are not chosen arbitrarily here. It was during the pre-war years that all three acquired a common philosophical education which influenced their subsequent writing. In 1932, Camus described Nietzsche in terms that foreshadowed Foucault’s work on ethics fifty years later: ‘Nietzsche establishes a comparison between Ancient Greece and his time. What happened in Greece might very well have happened again in the nineteenth century. The way to escape from the withering rationalism of the time was to refashion the tragic soul within us’ (‘Music’ 143). Beckett began teaching French to undergraduates at Trinity College, Dublin, in 1930. As one of his students recalled, the authors Beckett discussed included ‘his great love Proust’, André Gide and Nietzsche (Knowlson 55). Foucault was briefly ‘taught philosophy by Jean Hyppolite, the greatest of the post-war French Hegelians’ (Macey 17) and began reading Heidegger and Nietzsche at the same time. According to Macey, Nietzsche was known in the immediate post-war years ‘primarily through a literary tradition which can be traced through Paul Valéry, the Gide of *Les Nourritures terrestres...* and, according to some readings, the Camus of *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*’ (34).

Other links between the three can be readily plotted. Macey notes that Foucault attended one of his French Communist Party meetings in April, 1953. Just three months earlier, Beckett’s ‘*En attendant Godot...* opened at the Théâtre Babylone’ and Foucault saw it (41). The play changed his life, allowing him to look over the horizon of ‘Marxism, phenomenology and existentialism’. As Foucault said, ‘For me the break was first Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, a breathtaking performance’ (qtd in Miller 65). Didier Eribon observes



that as part of his job at the University of Uppsala in Sweden ‘Foucault was supposed to receive speakers invited to Uppsala by the French embassy... He was also obliged to receive Albert Camus, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1957’ (80). Foucault was ‘very impressed’ by Camus’s Nobel Prize speech, and Camus’s command to forge ‘an art of living in a time of catastrophe’ resonates in the efforts of Foucault to outline his own ethics of existence in his final years (Macey 83). Later, teaching French literature at a university in Hamburg, Foucault animatedly discussed ‘contemporary theater... Sartre and Camus’ (Eribon 90). At Uppsala, Camus gave the lecture ‘Create Dangerously’ in which he outlined the transformation of the role of the artist in recent centuries. In light of Foucault’s praise for Camus’s Nobel Prize speech, it is hard to imagine that the words of ‘Create Dangerously’ did not also resonate with the young academic:

To create today is to create dangerously. Any publication is an act, and that act exposes one to the passions of an age that forgives nothing. Hence the question is not to find out if this is or is not prejudicial to art. The question, for all those who cannot live without art and what it signifies, is merely to find out how, among the police forces of so many ideologies (how many churches, what solitude!), the strange liberty of creation is possible. (251).

In Avi Sagi’s words, Camus was a ‘personal philosopher’ – his work was dedicated to an engagement with the world around him and the production of a body of work that responded to the critical issues of the day. He was also personally committed to the practices detailed in his philosophical texts, from his days at the Algerian House of Culture in the 1930s to his involvement with the French Resistance and his writings for *Combat*. Camus’s experience of communism, the Communist Party in Algeria and the Nazi and Vichy regimes in France during World War II were pivotal in his rejection of the ‘all or nothing’ perspective that dominated intellectual and political circles at the time.

Camus's and Beckett's experiences of Nazi occupation, the Vichy regime and the Resistance are well-documented. For Camus, the war was a sign of the devastation that nihilism and its pseudo-religious alternative could wreak; a reminder of the importance of the scepticism and self-questioning he traced in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. His wartime notebooks contain dark hints of his awareness of the current European situation and its historical antecedents:

1342—The Black death in Europe. The Jews are murdered.

1481—The plague ravages the South of Spain. The Inquisition says: The Jews.' (*Carnets* 114-5)

Obviously these are the seeds of *The Plague*. But in the context of their time, 1942, these notes carry another powerful message. Camus returned to the trauma of the war in his Nobel Prize for Literature Acceptance Speech in 1957:

For more than twenty years of an insane history, hopelessly lost like all the men of my generation in the convulsions of time, I have been supported by one thing: by the hidden feeling that to write today was an honour because this activity was a commitment... a commitment to bear, together with all those who were living through the same history... the world of concentration camps, a Europe of torture and prisons... They have had to forge for themselves an art of living in times of catastrophe in order to be born a second time and to fight openly against the instinct of death at work in our history.

For Beckett, escaping to Southern France and hiding from the Nazis exposed him to the agonies of waiting. In Lois Gordon's opinion, the war was 'an opportunity' for Beckett to confront, not merely contemplate, matters of human will, moral choice, and good and evil':

If, as the philosophers had taught him, virtue is dependent upon character and action, rather than being or "meaning," then Beckett's actions throughout the

war were exemplary. Although under no immediate threat himself, Beckett repeatedly put his life in danger to battle the enemies of human decency (48).

Gordon notes that Beckett ‘had firsthand evidence of the underside of humanity... the indescribable barbarity humans inflict upon one another’ from his childhood amidst the events of 1916 in Dublin, the Depression in London and the Resistance in the war’ (9). In Beckett’s own words, the war and revelations of the Holocaust prompted the realisation that

One cannot speak anymore of being, one must speak only of the mess. When Heidegger and Sartre speak of a contrast between being and existence, they may be right. I don’t know, but their language is too philosophical for me. I am not a philosopher. One can only speak of what is in front of him and that now is simply the mess (Beckett qtd in Gordon 1).

Foucault’s life was dramatically altered by World War II. In a 1981 interview, he recalled

very early memories of an absolutely threatening world, which could crush us... To have lived as an adolescent in a situation that had to end, that had to lead to another world, for better or worse, was to have the impression of spending one’s entire childhood in the night, waiting for the dawn. That prospect of another world marked the people of my generation, and we have carried with us, perhaps to excess, a dream of Apocalypse. (qtd in Miller 39)

Foucault spoke of how the ‘menace of war was our background, our framework of existence. Then the war arrives. Much more than the activities of family life, it was these events concerning the world which are the substance of our memory’ (qtd in Toole 135). Macey notes the town where the Foucault family lived, Poitiers, ‘was some thirty kilometres inside the occupied zone, and German soldiers patrolled the streets.... For the next four years, his childhood was lulled by official talk of “Fatherland, Labour, Family” and the new world of

solidarity and sacrifice which was going to replace the “egotistical, individualist, bourgeois cultural world” (7).

David Toole asserts Foucault was aware ‘that after Auschwitz and the Gulag the very notion of politics itself stood in question’. The centrality of the war in shaping Foucault’s approach to self-transformation is clear in another interview cited by Toole, in which an echo of Camus can be heard:

For anyone who was twenty right after the World War... what on earth could politics represent when it was a matter of choosing between the America of Truman or the U.S.S.R. of Stalin?... The very experience of the war had shown us the necessity and the urgency of creating a society radically different from the one in which we had lived; a society that had accepted Nazism, had prostituted itself before it, and then had come out of it *en masse* with De Gaulle... One not only wanted a different world and a different society, one also wanted to go deeper, to transform oneself and to revolutionize relationships to be completely ‘other’ (135)

Beside the intellectual map this wartime and post-Holocaust history further connects Camus, Beckett and Foucault. Camus and Beckett are most often linked by the concept of ‘the absurd’. Camus’s absurd trilogy – *L’Etranger*, *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *Caligula* – formed a literary, philosophical and theatrical triptych in which Camus explored the intersection of ‘man’s’ desire for unity with the indifferent universe. Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* offered a view of the absurd abyss – although it should be noted that the central characters are not Camus’s heroes of the absurd. Their commitment to a salvation connoted by Godot and their view of suicide as an acceptable form of action are far from the archetypes of creator, lover and conqueror discussed in *The Myth*.

Exploring the works of Camus and Hannah Arendt, Jeffrey C. Isaac asserts that they belonged to a ‘wide circle of Resistance intellectuals’. He continues: ‘these writers typified what Foucault has called the postmodern “specific” intellectual, suspicious of grand projects – “intellectual freelances [sic],” in Camus’s phrase, refusing to consider themselves “organic intellectuals” of any particular group or party and denying World-Historical significance to any movement or cause’. Arendt, Camus, Beckett and Foucault all occupy this space, disavowing ‘a posture of theoretical detachment, preferring instead to identify with and engage... historical experience and culture... Occupying the contested terrain of social life, avoiding the temptations of both pious, Archimedean detachment and boorish, blind loyalty to the status quo’ (13). Like Foucault, Arendt and Camus ‘retained many left-wing commitments, especially an affinity with anarchist politics. Both drew nourishment from a pagan appreciation of the Ancient Greeks, which they brought to bear on current events in a way at odds with the Hegelian spirit of much twentieth-century radical thinking, and yet also at odds with any kind of nostalgia’. Finally, and again as did Foucault, they ‘shared a tragic sensibility that was influenced by Nietzsche... yet both sought to join this appreciation of ambiguity to a distinctive democratic politics, one centered not on the institutions of mass politics but on the voluntary association of civil society’ (14).

This thesis weaves together the threads outlined above to posit the possibilities of crafting a post-Holocaust ethics of the self. These ethics are developed as a response to the call of the many re-emergent fundamentalisms which structure the contemporary world.

Chapter one offers a ‘history of the present’: a genealogy of contemporary fundamentalisms that sheds light upon their connections with each other, their common mechanisms and their shared enmity of pluralism. It argues that an articulation of ‘us versus them’ is impossible, as the very discursive conditions, institutions and possibilities that create ‘them’ are those that also create the ‘us’. The ‘clash of civilisations’ is actually a ‘clash of

fundamentalisms' which emerges from the processes of modernity and its globalisation. In James MacFarlane's terms, these 'anti-movements' are a reaction to modernity, supplying visions of community based on race, ethnicity, religion or nationalism. Fundamentalisms work by offering certainty through belonging, promising a return to a stable past that never existed.

The language used to describe fundamentalisms or anti-movements is as important as the language used by their adherents and practitioners. It is part of the framework by which fundamentalisms create their enemy other. The language of fundamentalism offers the notion of a singular subject that is capable of identifying completely with the totalising movement. It does not consider the complexities of contemporary identity. Fundamentalist language demonises outsiders. In doing so, the individuality of both insider and outsider, the sense of a shared humanity, is reduced or erased.

Anti-movements developed in the Christian and Muslim 'worlds' at the beginning of the twentieth century. Globalisation, itself a market fundamentalism, provokes situations in which fundamentalism can flourish. The upheavals of modernity and modernisation – the dissolution of traditional forms of social cohesion, an increase in migration and the unprecedented proliferation of the media – offer opportunity at the price of certainty. The tendency toward totalising narratives is not particular to those commonly identified such as communism and fascism. It is also present in neo-liberalism and its global variations.

Fundamentalists are not fundamentalist in their means. Sworn enemies become friends to defeat a common enemy – pluralists or 'moral relativists'. These enemies are identified as threats from within, threatening the power that comes from exclusive righteousness and challenging foundational fundamentalist claims of exclusivity and purity. Dehumanisation of the other results, enabling the reinforcement of identity and provoking the actions necessary to identify, expel and exterminate the threat.

Perpetuating 'us versus them' identities does not solve the problems of fundamentalism. Some critics cited in this chapter argue that we need to explore the distinctions that separate those 'we' seek to categorise as 'them'. This includes a self-reflexive examination of our own identities and the cultural, social, political and religious situations that have shaped them.

Chapter two considers the idea the way the self is constructed and viewed is central to an understanding of modernity. Challenges to the self and its place in the world emerged during the Enlightenment. First, subjects of God were turned into Man, subjects of the humanities and the social sciences. Second, the reshaping of geographies and demographics as a result of the Industrial Revolution created mobile individuals who were dislocated from their traditional shapers of identity.

These changes produced a crisis of ontological security – how we see ourselves in relation to ourselves and others and how secure we feel is destabilised by the dynamic forces of modernity. Globalisation, world wars, rationalisation all contribute to our increasing anxiety. Alain Touraine argues that modernity is defined by the important forces of subjectivity and rationalisation. The great battles of modernity have been fought when one of these is over-emphasised. As modernity swept away traditional sites of identity – the church and the family, for instance – new identities were produced that linked individuals to racial, national and imperial identities. These identities were strengthened by the exclusion of others who possessed a real or imagined difference. This exclusion often utilised scientific discourse to strengthen its effects. One of the greatest forms of exclusion was anti-Semitism.

Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud were important in identifying the transformation of the self in modernity. In modernity, bodies and selves were worked upon. They were both tools to produce and subjects to be produced. Chapter two examines how these bodies and selves were coerced and co-opted by the Nazi and Vichy regimes. By continually 'othering' the Jew,

Germany used a racial and biological discourse to cohere its citizens to an Aryan identity. France used the discourse of nationalism to perpetuate its othering. This othering dehumanised the Jew, the Gypsy, the mentally ill, communists and homosexuals which facilitated the collaboration of academics, bureaucrats and ordinary citizens in the eviction and extermination of such 'threats'.

Chapter three demonstrates how Camus's work addresses the subject of modernity in the form of the absurd man. A consideration of Camus's work on absurdity is relevant and useful in dealing with the processes of othering common to fundamentalisms.

*The Myth* was the beginning of his attempt to find alternatives to nihilism. It was a starting point for his personal exploration of the possibilities of thought that neither embraced nihilism nor offered a 'leap of faith' as consolation. Camus begins *The Myth* by stating: 'Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy' (11). He understands that life, with all its difficulties, is tremendously hard and that suicide constitutes a rejection of living life purely by habit. This recognition of life lived by habit is what Camus sees as 'man's' encounter with the absurd. It occurs in the form of an awakening – the realisation that there are no answers available when one considers the purpose of life and its finitude. Camus considers that it is the desire for unity – for a coherent and total understanding of existence – that causes the anguish which allows suicide to be viewed as an appropriate solution.

What can be known about the universe is only knowable through one's experience and senses and one's rational thought, and even this is not enough to produce the required logical clarity. For Camus, blind faith in religion and blind faith in rational science are equally suspect. Though comforting, neither of them are adequate in resolving the abyss between the desire for unity and the universe's indifferent response. Camus traces this



understanding of the absurd and the responses to it in the works of Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers and others.

Camus develops an ethics of the self that acknowledges the struggle, self-reflexively interrogates its propositions and rejects totalising or systematic answers. This ethics framed Camus's philosophical approach to World War II, the Holocaust, the reconstruction of France and the struggle for independence in Algeria.

He argues that rather than offering a final solution to the absurd, it is struggling and living with meaninglessness that paradoxically creates meaning. Any response that Camus develops must be 'without recourse' to solutions that offer religion or rationalism as an absolute. This step is critical in a post-Holocaust ethics of the self as it acknowledges that reason has its limits, that rationality has been abused in the past, and that reifying rational thought is no better than religious fundamentalisms or the vacuous nihilism that has arisen in modernity.

The chapter continues by detailing Camus's assertion that nostalgia for unity must be challenged and in doing so, the absurd man gains his freedom. It explores the influence of Nietzsche on Camus's ethics of absurdity and discusses Avi Sagi's rereading of the absurd in Camus's work. This rereading informs the chapter's argument that Camus's ethics of the absurd can be considered as a project similar to the one undertaken by Foucault.

Chapter four considers the reasons for Michel Foucault's interest in Greco-Roman practices of the self. It positions Volumes two and three of *The History of Sexuality* and his lectures and interviews as part of a greater project dealing with how the modern self developed and the possibilities of its becoming something other.

The first step towards this was by a problematisation of the self. Thinking differently about oneself and what it knows constituted the basis of Foucault's philosophical enquiry. This is the guiding motivation throughout his work on the ethics of the self. Foucault outlines

how morality has been traditionally analysed as a set of codes and practices given to someone to guide their behaviour. But Foucault's preoccupation is with the manner by which subjects take up these codes, not with the specific codes themselves. He offers a four-part framework for analysing ethics: the ethical substance, what needs to be worked on; the mode of subjection, or how the subject relates itself to the code; the work that needs to be done and the goal or outcome that is sought in doing that work.

Foucault uses this framework to offer a history of the subject in Greco-Roman civilisations, charting the changes in these 'techniques of the self'. These techniques shifted from a mastery of one's appetites in order to constitute a citizen capable of governance to a concern with the self that viewed it as being under attack from numerous forces.

Foucault's work functioned as an interrogation of the modern subject that he first historicised in an often-overlooked lecture called 'What is Critique?' delivered in 1978. Here Foucault re-engages with Enlightenment concepts of the self and the work of Immanuel Kant and articulates a concept of the self that uses critique to present the notion of 'being governed less' – a notion central to the Enlightenment, the Reformation, the Industrial and French Revolutions and modernity in its various phases. As with Camus's project, this conceptualisation of critique recognises the limits of rational thought and knowledge.

Critics of Foucault's work on ethics often refer to the more well-known text 'What is Enlightenment?' as the basis of their problematisation of his work, specifically because they think it reifies Baudelaire's dandy as an alternative to the self governed by 'pastoral power'. However, Foucault only considers the Baudelairean model as an example of the modern self's characteristic ability to mount a sustained critique of itself and its historical era. Again, Foucault's purpose was to emphasise the possibility of difference, not to reify the particular example.

Foucault's aesthetics of existence does not privilege an autonomous, artistic and stylised self, aloof from its surrounds. Rather, it takes the self as inherently political and engaged with its time. Various contemporary thinkers have adopted Foucault's genealogical framework and interrogated their own practices. These explorations demonstrate the framework's utility in self-reflexively critiquing one's practices and opening them to the possibility of change. However such an exploration often relies on a position of privilege, whether economic or cultural, and outstanding problems remain in terms of how Foucault's methodological framework can be distributed to a wider audience.

Chapter five turns to *Godot*, providing the final element of the dissertation's post-Holocaust ethical framework. Time is of central importance to the play. All the action occurs *while* waiting. How one passes the time, between birth and death, is the pivotal issue in *Godot's* second act.

In its textual and performative dimensions, *Godot* is read here as a summons of the reader and viewer to observe and participate in the suffering of the central characters. Like the works of Camus and Foucault, *Godot* emphasises the importance of how we conduct ourselves as we become other. *Godot* was initially interpreted as an existential allegory – a complement to Camus's concept of the absurd – and a critique of Enlightenment positivism. Later it was reappraised in terms of the breakdown of language, the failure of communication, the falsity of the fixed self and the dispossession that marked post-Holocaust existence. More recent psychoanalytic approaches to *Godot* foreground the idea that the characters are subjects in pain, suffering from trauma. This generates an audience-focused reading of the play. In the first act, the reader and audience are unaware of the impossibility of Godot's arrival, but as the second act progresses the audience and reader understand that they too are now waiting. Eventually they also comprehend that Godot will not bring salvation. The play goes on.

We wait with Vladimir and Estragon. We share their pain. Yet we can find possibilities that bear witness to the suffering of others – in how we wait with them, in what we take from our witnessing of their suffering and our participation in it. Here too the moment becomes important: although it seems all action is futile, some action is more futile and damaging to others. Beckett asks us to consider how we are awaiting. How have we responded to the pleas for help as we live in our own abyss? What we do while we are waiting matters. *Godot* reveals that we can witness and bear witness in our own lives. We are not passive spectators in a play but active participants in an existence that we must craft, even if meaning and absolute freedom are impossible.

In theoretical terms, this thesis argues that contrary to critical allegations, an ethics of the self does not turn away from an engagement with the society that forms it. To do so would be impossible: shaped by encounters with discourse, institutions, power and knowledge, the self is as much a product of the society as it is a participant in the production of identities and relationships. Furthermore, the ethics of the self elaborated in this thesis views the ethics that offer escape by means of absolute self-pleasure, self-involvement or self-abandonment as part of the problem, not a solution. Self-reflexivity, scepticism and bearing witness refuse the temptations of nihilism and self-renunciation.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE LANGUAGE AND LOGIC OF FUNDAMENTALISMS

Do not rejoice in his defeat, you men! For though the bastard is dead, the bitch  
that bore him is again in heat.

– Bertolt Brecht

After the publication of Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* in 1979, intellectuals working under the rubric 'postmodernism' proclaimed a new age in which grand narratives such as ideological systems, unitary selves and fixed identities were irrelevant. Diversity and difference were theorized as transcendent after an assumed rupture with the modern and pre-modern past (Lyotard 21). But as Mike Featherstone argues in *Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism and Identity*, globalisation has led 'to a clashing of plurality of different interpretations of the meaning of the world formulated from the perspective of different national and civilizational traditions' (115). These clashes have their origins in modernity's debates about identity, culture and nationalism (118-9). Guy Rundle identifies the dual pull of religion and nationalism: it 'is their ability to combine the abstract and the concrete in such a way that the individual who is subject to mass and impersonal forces, feels themselves to be situated within a meaningful cultural framework and way of life, and to have part of one's self that is solid and immutable'. This sense of the solidity and immutability of the self, taken to extremes, underwrites fundamentalisms.

Likewise, Stuart Sim's central argument is that notions such as Lyotard's are blatantly contradicted by the historical persistence of fundamentalisms: 'Grand narratives are back on the global political agenda... we are having to come to terms with... the realisation that religion is by no means either dead or dying, as so many of us had come to believe' (3-4).

The resurgence of fundamentalisms, concurrent with technological advancement and globalisation, calls into question the view that we inhabit a world of postmodern promises where fixed identity no longer matters. Indeed, Sim importantly situates fundamentalisms of various types (religious, economic, political, nationalist) as posing central problems in twentieth-century history and thought which have persisted into the new millennium. These fundamentalisms exist within the processes of modernisation and the conditions of modernity – processes and conditions which have been critically characterised by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane as ‘disposed to apocalyptic, crisis-centred views of history’ (20).

This produces what McFarlane calls ‘anti-movements’ (78): forces which seek to restore order by summoning powerful images of an imaginary, nostalgic and stable past whilst paradoxically calling for revolution and chaos to achieve it. By their mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion and their promises of belonging, these anti-movements offer a restoration of lost confidence by perpetuating difference at the expense of the Other. Benjamin Barber describes the inner logic of this process and how it functions: ‘The struggle of Jihad against McWorld is not a clash of civilizations but a dialectical expression of tensions built into a single global civilization as it emerges against a backdrop of traditional ethnic and religious divisions, many of which are actually created by McWorld and its infotainment industries and technological innovations’ (249). In the cases of both ‘Jihad’ and ‘McWorld’, the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion operate to support the certainties of fundamentalist world views.

The term ‘fundamentalism’ has considerable discursive baggage. Religious scholars Carl F. Hallencreutz and David Westerlund plot the term’s emergence from early twentieth-century American Protestantism. The contemporary Western meaning of the word ‘fundamentalism’ comes from the twelve pamphlets, titled *The Fundamentals*, edited by A.C. Dixon and distributed in the United States between 1910 and 1915. Hallencreutz and

Westerlund observe that in response to the 'scourge' of humanism affecting modern America, the pamphlets laid out 'five non-negotiable elements of true and authentic Christianity': 'the inerrancy of the Bible; the deity of Jesus Christ and the historicity of the virgin birth; the atonement based on the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ; the resurrection of Christ from the dead; and the second coming of Christ' (5).

Simon Coleman writes that by the time of the famous Scopes trial of 1925, when a Kansas schoolmaster was tried for teaching evolution, 'fundamentalists were marked by their scholasticism, strong advocacy of biblical inerrancy, strident opposition to modernism, and mistrust of political attempts to better the social order' (30-1). The conjunction of American fundamentalism with politics occurred in the 1970s when televangelist Jerry Falwell formed the Moral Majority in response to the perceived crisis of values produced by the dramatic social changes of the previous decade. Coleman claims that 'one of the most significant aspects of the Moral Majority... was its aim of attracting a constituency beyond that of conservative Christianity *per se*. Its leaders tried to construct an identity and therefore an appeal which transcended any single denominational affiliation' (35). Using the tools of modernity itself – networking and mobilising church goers to vote – the Moral Majority brought a previously sidelined and disdained group of believers into the mainstream of American politics. The maintenance of this movement required the interpellation of believers into a fundamentalist mind-set, anchored in a prefabricated collective identity that promoted a constant sense of spiritual embattlement and the need for perpetual vigilance. This, in turn, involved the demonisation of dangerous others and the creation of institutions designed to morally police them. A quarter of a century later, in the long after-shock of 9/11, the re-election of George W. Bush in 2004 was a sign to Moral Majority Christians that the power of Christ prevailed against the liberal pluralists, gays and Islamic fundamentalists who threatened America's freedom and existence (Wills).

However, when the term ‘fundamentalist’ is used to in relation to Islam, it paradoxically loses its meaning – *all* Muslims believe in the inerrancy of the Koran. In addition, Hallencreutz and Westerlund cite William Shepard’s argument that the word ‘fundamentalism’ is a false characterisation of the anti-imperialist politics that can be found in Islamic societies from Algeria to Indonesia. The notion of Islamic fundamentalism immediately others these culturally-diverse nations, displacing their capacity for political engagement with the image of religious fanaticism. Instead, Hallencreutz and Westerlund argue for the use of ‘anti-secular’: a term which, unlike ‘fundamentalism’, clarifies the socio-political aspect of anti-movements.

The language employed to describe anti-movements is essential to an understanding of their attraction and prominence. While coinages like ‘anti-secular’ offer a more accurate designation of many of these anti-movements, their adoption into the vocabulary of broader cultural and political discourse is limited. Whereas ‘fundamentalist’ conveys a connection to the tensions of modernity and modernisation across cultures, more recent appellations rely precisely on a pre-existing divide between the West and the rest. Emotive neologisms that spring from Samuel Huntington’s ‘clash of civilisations’ scenario are frequently employed, but these neologisms obscure the contingencies, genealogies and histories of anti-movements.

Former US President George W. Bush and others cultivated the term ‘Islamic Fascists’ (Associated Press ‘The New GOP Buzzword’) or ‘Islamofascism’, as Francis Fukuyama labelled ‘the radically intolerant and anti-modern doctrine that has recently arisen in many parts of the Muslim world’ (32). Fukuyama argued that the reasons for this Islamofascism ‘may not be that different from those driving European fascism in the early twentieth century.’ He continued:

The Islamic world has seen large populations uprooted from traditional village or tribal life in the past generation. Many have been urbanized and exposed to



a more abstract literary form of Islam that calls them back to a purer version of the religion, just as extremist German nationalism tried to resurrect a mythical, long-dead racial identity. This new form of radical Islam is immensely appealing because it purports to explain the loss of values and cultural disorientation that the modernization process itself has engendered. (32)

Alternatively, Peter Beinart prefers 'Islamic totalitarianism'. Nevertheless, he observes, blanket accusations of Islamo-fascism against such differing demons as Iraqi citizens, the Iranian government, Al-Qaeda terrorists and the Taliban have rendered the concept inadequate. None of these terms offers a critical understanding of the functioning of anti-movements or a framework by which we might evaluate their interactions with each other. Emotive language fails to explain how and why certain practices are common across the movements. Indeed, such language produces and perpetuates 'us against them' binaries.

Given the absence of a sufficient vocabulary to elucidate the genealogies and histories of anti-movements, 'fundamentalism' can be understood and employed in its broadest sense: elaborating a set of social, political and/or theological problems constituting a crisis; asserting and enunciating a singular response to that crisis, promising a final solution; necessary and strict adherence to a code of behaviour policed by the self and others; the continual exclusion of and hostility toward those who do not comply, convert or capitulate and, ultimately, the identification of the self in a prescribed and proscribed public and political life. Historically, the fundamentalist life is prescribed because it is scripted by the inerrant text. It is proscribed because its boundaries are static and non-negotiable.

The emergence of universalist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, were reactions to the decadence of the West. The Brotherhood's founder Hasan al-Banna was disgusted by how post-World War I Egypt abandoned what historian Reza Aslan calls 'the traditional Islamic ideals of egalitarianism and social justice' (235). Al-Banna saw Egypt's

corrupt ruling classes collaborating with British colonialists. They formed a small, privileged elite while the rest of the population laboured in extreme poverty. In response, al-Banna rejected the concepts of nationalism and modernism and founded the Muslim Brothers, a socialist welfare group grounded in the Islamisation of society not by force but by action informed by belief. This idea spread rapidly throughout the post-Ottoman Arab world. It attracted support because it refused to officialise itself into a political party while maintaining that Islam was a superior form of governance.

However, as Robert Dreyfuss reveals, the organisation's very existence was grounded in a fundamentalist view, epitomised by the slogan 'The Koran is our constitution' (52). In its political manoeuvres, the Brotherhood simultaneously allied with the Nazi party, pan-Islamists, and Arab nationalists. Atheist communists were their common enemy. The Brotherhood employed the Free Officers, a faction of the Egyptian military, to launch attacks against its opponents. Following the establishment of Israel, the Brotherhood trained Palestinian militias, and the Free Officers – whose ranks included future presidents Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar El Sadat – overthrew the Egyptian monarchy. The Brotherhood spread in Egypt but in 1954 it was legally outlawed – ironically by members of the Free Officers who had ascended to government. Forced underground, the Brothers continued their activities which led to the assassination of President Sadat and the subsequent formation of a group of militants called Islamic Jihad, under the leadership of Ayman al-Zawahiri (161). Newly energised by the anger arising from inequitable distribution of oil wealth, the Brotherhood gained many followers. In Saudi Arabia it combined with the strict Sharia law of Wahhabism, inspiring a wealthy businessman Osama bin Laden to imagine the creation of a new Caliphate.

As the godless Soviets invaded Afghanistan, Israeli money bankrolled Muslim Brotherhood activities to destabilise its neighbours (197) and the CIA spent millions setting

up training camps for bin Laden and fellow jihadists who were eager to repel the atheist invader from their Brothers' land. When the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1987, the West hailed bin Laden and his comrades as heroes. When the US refused to withdraw troops from Saudi Arabia after the Gulf War of 1990–1991 and Israel continued to occupy and settle in the West Bank and Gaza, the virulent form of political, religious and militant fundamentalism known as Al-Qaeda rose to prominence. America's expedient ally bin Laden was re-imaged in the West as folk devil, and the US forced his expulsion from Yemen, his exile from Saudi Arabia and eventually the loss of much of his fortune. He settled again in Afghanistan as a guest of the recently victorious Taliban. It was there that Al-Qaeda joined forces with Zawahiri's Islamic Jihad and from there missions were launched against US interests in the Middle East and Africa. Yet it was from Saudi Arabia where most of the 9/11 attackers hailed: internationally educated, well-dressed men who exploited the apparatuses of modernity – transnational citizenship, planes fuelled by Middle-Eastern oil and the ubiquity of mass media – to attack the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, powerful symbols of American imperialism and global capitalism (Ali 320). For a group portrayed as backward and uncivilised, the hijackers utilised the tools of twentieth-century triumphalism and technology, knowing that the spectacle would be broadcast world-wide.

Israel, in its various significations, looms large in bin-Laden's list of grievances. Yet the maintenance of Israel, its growth and its security preoccupy Zionist fundamentalists. From an early age, physically, mentally and spiritually, believers are encouraged to make pilgrimages to both the European sites of Jewish life and its destruction and the redemptive nation state that emerged from the Holocaust. The United Synagogue Youth program, for example, offers the 'From Darkness to Light: Poland and Israel experience'. This title clearly enunciates an emphatic, pre-determined, spiritually geographic direction. The program's organiser, The Department of Youth Activities of The United Synagogue of Conservative

Judaism, states its mission as inspiring ‘Jewish youth to explore, celebrate and practice ethical values, Zionism and community responsibility based on the ideology of the Conservative Movement.’ In this instance, a form of Zionism becomes a contemporary fundamentalism in two salient ways.

First, it insists that the very earth of Israel is the promised land prescribed by the Torah. The Torah’s covenant can only be fulfilled by the defence and expansion of ‘the greater Israel’. In this regard, the textual assertion reaffirms the promise as much as the occupation of land reaffirms the textual covenant. Second, as with other anti-movements, Zionism emerges in the late nineteenth century very much as a response to the pressures of modernism and the encroachment of secularism and socialism into Jewish communities.

Ironically, according to religious scholar Malise Ruthven, the original and decidedly secular Zionists disgusted Jewish religious leaders: Zion was not a material space but a spiritual land of longing, only to be restored at the end times. However, contemporary forms of Zionism reinscribe a tribal nationalism based on a religious ethnicity, stabilised by narratives of persecution and exacerbated by the enmity of those who have been excluded from their own lands – the unchosen people. ‘I tell you explicitly that the Torah... forbids us to surrender even one inch of our liberated land’, Rabbi Kook Jr. pronounced after the 1967 war in which Israel seized and occupied the territories of Gaza and the West Bank. Kook, founder of the National Religious Party, continued: ‘There are no conquests here and we are not occupying foreign lands; we are returning to our home, to the inheritance of our ancestors. There is no Arab land here.’ (qtd in Ruthven 160). Fundamentalist Zionism links religious, cultural, ethnic and geographical identities and binds them with strict adherence to scriptural doctrine. Rabbi Bernard Maza uses the sufferings of the Jewish people in Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and as victims of Nazism, to support the view that ‘we have seen the resurgence of the Torah in the east and west since the

Holocaust. We know that by sacrificing their lives they made it come to be' (226). The lives of those whose presence in Israel is written in the Torah must therefore also be sacrificed to protect the covenant. Lives are lost to protect the Word.

The name of protection has often been invoked by the fundamentalisms which underscore American imperialism. During the nineteenth century, America's manifest destiny was solidified into a systemic practice: interference with, or the actual overthrow of, foreign governments in Central American and Caribbean nations such as Guatemala. This consolidated practice was an assertion of American intervention as a foreign policy ideal (Fitzgerald). Entities like the United Fruit Company combined with US government agencies to guarantee economic dependency and political subservience in Latin America (Euraque 44, Sonnenburg 600-1). If necessary, American military might or the training of opposition forces ensured that unfriendly governments complied with US interests.

According to historical orthodoxy, the US was isolationist until Pearl Harbour. This is a convenient myth. The roots of anti-American, anti-imperialism were established throughout Latin America by the early twentieth century as a consequence of continual meddling by 'El Norte' in the region's affairs. This aggressive promotion of American interests and values later catalysed the battles of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, the CIA-sponsored overthrow of Salvador Allende in Chile and the creation of pro-American puppet regimes across the region. It would inflame many conflicts in the 1980s, notably America's assistance of right-wing militias – the Nicaraguan Contras – in their civil war against the democratically-elected Sandinista socialist government. The notorious Iran-Contra episode involved US operatives who facilitated the transfer of arms and cash to and from fundamentalist Iran, then at war with US-backed ally Iraq (Raum, Dobbs). Subsequent US invasions of Panama and Grenada restored faith in the resurgence of America's military effectiveness and interventionist authority after the fiasco of Vietnam.

At the same time Donald Rumsfeld, Richard Perle, William Kristol and others formed the core of what became known as the 'neo-conservative' faction in Washington. Under President George H. W. Bush the group expanded to include Paul Wolfowitz and Dick Cheney, who held senior White House positions and prepared what was then known as the Wolfowitz Report. Professor Emeritus of Sociology James Petras and Professor of International Studies Henry Veltmeyer explain that this report 'asserted that the US had to maintain a military machine so powerful as to discourage local or global rivalries, and to maintain its supremacy, America had to forcefully terminate the proliferation of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons in Iraq and North Korea' (187). Ten years later, the younger Bush was more amenable to these ideas than his father. The report became *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, or the Bush Doctrine, which refers to itself as constituting 'a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise' (Bush). This is the doctrine that supports pre-emptive strikes when and where necessary, without the need for multilateral support at home or abroad. As a political fundamentalism, this manifestation of American imperialist exceptionalism holds that eternal vigilance is necessary to detect and destroy those who 'hate everything about us, because of our freedom' (Bush *We Will* 185). Couched in the language of emerging threats, of international terrorism, and the defence and propagation of freedom, the Bush doctrine crystallised the President's famous phrase which passed into political lore after 9/11: 'You are either with us or against us' (CNN.com).

Like Islamism, American imperialist exceptionalism pivots on a selective, often literal interpretation of key texts: presidential decrees, pledges of allegiance, selective interpretations of legal opinion, Supreme Court judgements and the Patriot Act of 2001. When these texts are insufficient, American fundamentalists resort to a rhetorical tactic

similar to fundamentalist Zionism's invocation of the Holocaust. They refer to the trauma of 9/11, reminding the world that from that day 'everything has changed'.

Why has everything changed now? What caused this rash of fundamentalisms to re-emerge or rise in an era when the 'end of history' and a stable world polity were confidently proclaimed? Purely religious or nationalist explanations of contemporary fundamentalisms fail to identify one of the key features of modernity and modernisation – the functions and operations of globalisation itself as a fundamentalism. With no significant force to oppose it, economic rationalism and the extension of free-market capitalism into previously government-controlled economies produced circumstances marked by upheavals in quotidian existence. Typically, these upheavals included increased rural to urban migration; the dissolution of traditional (often family-based) models of social cohesion and community; painful, bewildering adjustments in the economic and lifestyle practices of individuals, and the intrusion of mass media and new technologies into the private sphere, inducing the construction of a sense of identity based on unprecedented levels of acquisition and consumption. Far from changing everything, the events of 9/11 confirmed that the world was once again experiencing a complex, globalised encounter with the viral dynamism and inner logic of modernity itself. 'The new dark age of dogma' is constituted in the dialogue, or argument, between the fundamentals of the market *weltanschauung* and fundamentalisms in their other variations.

Market fundamentalism emerged from the ashes of imperialism and the mechanics of industry, the search for and exploitation of resources (especially oil) with advances in transport and technology driving the accumulation of unparalleled corporate and private wealth in the developed world. Free markets took hold in the 1980s as the US and the UK began a long process of deregulation and 'reform' – a euphemistic buzzword for comprehensive social transformation. As British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher reminded

miners, dockers, labourers and other critics of her policies: ‘There is no alternative’ (Jenkins). Like any fundamentalism, John McMurtry explains that market theology advocates a strict set of ideas and brooks no opposition or modification to them. It presupposes ‘an “invisible hand” regulator of world economies, a metaphysics of “iron necessity,” and an inevitabilist market mechanism producing the public interest independent of human plan – in short, a tacit fundamentalist religion that regulates beneath [human] consciousness of it’ (152). The reopening of Wall Street’s Stock Exchange, globally televised in the week after 9/11, was scripted and presented as a public event symbolising the durability and recovery of American capitalism. It was the perfect counter-attack of market fundamentalism – business, and the show of business, must go on as usual.

Deregulation, the opening up of markets, the removal of trade barriers – these forces of economic liberalisation and ‘reform’ marched across the globe in the 1980s and 1990s, hand in hand with the demolition of welfare systems, the demise of manufacturing industries and the outsourcing of work to sweat shops in third-world countries. Following a decade in which Argentina’s state-owned assets and industries were sold at fire-sale prices, the spectacular result was national bankruptcy.

Fundamentalisms breed fundamentalisms. Thus, economic and social factors exacerbate the contemporary issues of identities, of exclusion and inclusion, in a world offering possibilities but no certainties. On the other hand, fundamentalisms offer fixed ideas, concrete enemies, answers rather than questions and a profound sense of belonging – permitting the true believer to participate in the inevitable war of purification that is to come. The notion that one is chosen and special, in an increasingly alienating world offers great comfort. To truly believe is to inhabit a world of grand narratives where difference is both essentialised and vilified; where ulterior motives are often concealed beneath the surface rhetoric of ‘common sense’ and positivist logic. Lands, spaces and resources can then be



annexed, if not in God's name then in the name of those who have been chosen. Those who object can be forced into camps, bombed into the next world or be persuaded by force, if necessary, to believe that the answer offered to them is the One Truth that will provide another final solution to the actions of those who hate 'us for who we are'.

Despite their emphasis on essentialised difference and radical exclusion, these examples show that fundamentalisms exist explicitly in a world of cooperation and contradiction. Israeli money pays the Muslim Brotherhood to subvert the Arab region; Israel's funding and training of Hamaas is a logical outcome of its opposition to the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. The CIA gives millions of dollars to bin Laden and fellow jihadists to undermine the Soviet Union. The US forms a partnership with its ostensible enemy, fundamentalist Iran, to destroy legitimate socialist republics in Latin America. Likewise, the world's leading democracy sponsors dictatorships from Chile to Pakistan. If fundamentalisms breed fundamentalisms, then fundamentalisms often engage in a marriage of convenience with other fundamentalisms to achieve their goals. The end – be it global dominance, the destruction of one's enemy or the maintenance of profit margins – can always justify the means.

What temporarily weds these disparate fundamentalisms to each other is a shared loathing for pluralists, postmodernists or, to use a favoured term, 'moral relativists'. The identification of this 'enemy within' serves to label and then 'other' such groups, often taxonomised as elites, intellectuals and liberals – types whom fundamentalists regard as the arch-villains in modernity's unfolding secular drama. The labelling and othering of such types also strengthens the call to unity, a unity that both enforces and polices the exclusion zone required by fundamentalist movements. It is the same mechanism that fundamentalist identities of race, religion, gender, nationalist and political/economic imperialism rely on for their assertions of supremacy. This branding of the enemy is not new. Writing of the New

Christian Right (NCR) in 1981, Erling Jorstad described how leaders ‘alleged that the American family was rapidly decaying due to abortion, the women’s movements, gay rights, and the lack of religious exercises in public schools’ (‘TNCR’ 195). Reproductive rights, equality issues for diverse minorities and the apparent secularisation of public spaces – all of these encompass issues of identity intimately tied to the modern.

In his treatise, *Let Freedom Ring*, Sean Hannity, a presenter for the Fox News channel, has no problem branding those who are culpable in the corruption of America’s hearts and minds. On the objection to the Declaration of Independence being repeated by rote in US schools, he writes that ‘liberals absolutely abhor and militantly reject the Founders’ belief in absolute truth’ (137). Outlining the historic battles against foreign foes, the conclusion of *Let Freedom Ring* returns home, asserting that ‘after we defeat our latest foreign enemy, we will still face threats to our freedom, largely from left-wing extremists in our own country’ (291). Hannity adds: ‘Though liberal politicians and thinkers continue to target our fixed standards, enabling the erosion of our culture, we must resist them at every turn’ (295). Hannity resurrects language from 1970s revivalism with undertones of the Iranian fundamentalist revolution – ‘We need to pray for a moral and spiritual awakening to end abortion’ – before recounting the tale of the repentant sinner Jane Roe (of the landmark *Roe v Wade* case) and her conversion to Christianity (185). Ultimately, after claiming liberals have placed American’s ‘freedom and security at risk’, there is one answer for Hannity: ‘It is therefore our job to stop [the Left]... Not just debate them, but defeat them’ (11).

Such expressions of enmity towards pluralism are the stock language of a host of speakers across the religious and ideological board. As Michael Barone, a conservative writer, typically ‘reveals’:

Our covert enemies are harder to identify, for they live in large numbers within our midst. And in terms of intentions, they are not enemies in the sense

that they consciously wish to destroy our society. On the contrary, they enjoy our freedoms and often call for their expansion. But they have also been working, over many years, to undermine faith in our society and confidence in its goodness. These covert enemies are those among our elites who have promoted the ideas labelled as multiculturalism [and] moral relativism.

Similarly, Indonesian cleric Abu Bakar Bashir asks ‘How can the Quran be interpreted rationally? These intellectuals and liberals want to interpret the Quran according to circumstances, whereas it is the circumstances that have to be adapted to the Quran’ (Noor). Rabbi Spero, radio talk show host, a pulpit rabbi and president of Caucus for America, denounces Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert as a liberal sell-out, alleging he craves ‘the approval of those who represent a barbaric and devilish system... That, my friends, is the disease of moral relativism, which afflicts the liberal West.’

Even those who uphold the faiths of this ‘liberal West’, with its rationalism and Enlightenment logic are often quick to declare their contempt for relativism. A. C. Grayling, professor of philosophy at Birkbeck College, University of London, dismisses the stupidities of fundamentalisms before remarking:

At the same time education has been infected by post-modern relativism and the less desirable effects of ‘political correctness’, whose combined effect is to encourage teachers to accept, and even promote as valid alternatives, the various superstitions and antique belief-systems constituting the multiplicity of different and generally competing religions represented in our multicultural society.

Moral relativism is the weapon which apostates, atheists and undesirables use to open wounds that allow bacilli of terrorists, immigrants, freedom-haters and other Others to infiltrate an already-sick but eternally fighting body politic whose survival is always at stake.

Eternal vigilance is necessary when your friend or neighbour could be propagating alternative truths. Despite the embrace of absolutes, the hatred of relativists and the exclusion and punishment of apostates and infidels, fundamentalists can join forces with alacrity and share a vocabulary to attain their common objectives.

Hence, the US could openly support General Pervez Musharref and the Pakistani government, despite the regime being an unelected military dictatorship with a nuclear weapons program. Christians United for Israel worked closely with the Bush administration to support Israel in its war in Lebanon and its continued strategic activities to maintain and/or expand the Promised Land's borders (Higgins). These Christians see their support of a Zionist Israel as a covenant between themselves and God, as outlined in various scriptures, and their defence of Israel is designed to ensure the Second Coming. For Zionist Christians, many of whom live in the United States, Israel's future is America's future and the continuation of military, financial and diplomatic bolstering of Israel is fundamental to their domestic political outlook.

Just as God's Chosen People have been aligned with fundamentalist Christians, Al-Qaeda successfully uses the internet, the technical epitome of contemporary modernity with all its vices and virtues, as a means to spread itself virally across the continents after its eviction from Afghanistan. The 'Great Satans' themselves, the banking and finance industries of global market capitalism, have been essential in the transfer of funds to Islamist operatives around the world. Capitalism and the invisible hand of the market played its role in the US-led war in Afghanistan – in the weeks leading up to the invasion, special forces were parachuted into the country, carrying briefcases of large-denomination US notes, destined for war lords who would agree to change allegiance and support the Northern Alliance (Friedman 161-2). Rather than standing in the way of globalised modernity, these fundamentalisms utilise its tools in pursuit of their goals. Their methods are not their

message. They work conveniently to communicate their meaning to the broadest possible audience.

Fundamentalisms deploy a concept of language and identity that refuses to consider the complexities of contemporary identity or even the possibilities of pluralities within the group identified as other. Writing in the *New English Review* in 2006, John Derbyshire contemplated the possibilities that the American subjugation of the Middle East might require either nuclear strikes or ‘boots on the ground’. The choice was between ‘civilizational annihilation or civilizational makeover’ (4), the former option constituting a Muslim genocide – the ‘deliberate mass killing’ of a ‘clan, a tribe, an ethny, a nation, a race’ (2). Derbyshire’s broadening of the term ‘genocide’ is problematic – exactly which nation, tribe, people of the many in the Middle East might be targeted. While working obviously from a US perspective, he is able to show, implicitly and explicitly, the problems of tackling fundamentalism on its own terms. For instance, when talking of the ‘tribal revenge’ he felt regarding the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, he writes: ‘If that’s what the loss of a couple of skyscrapers and 3,000 lives will do to us, even in such an amiable and even-tempered fellow as myself, how will we respond to a smuggled nuke taking out one of our cities, with a death toll in six or seven digits?’ (4). He continues in the next paragraph: ‘The upcoming Iranian nuclear bomb will mean that two backward, unstable Muslim nations (I mean, counting Pakistan), with lots of friendly connections with transnational jihadi groups, will be nuclear.’

While the nationalist identification here is easy to spot, the underlying effects take some deciphering. First, the identity of the 3,000 victims of the World Trade Centre attack are classed immediately as ‘we’. While understandable, this classification denies the other subjectivities of the dead – many were Muslim, many were immigrants from ‘backward, Muslim’ countries. Second, Derbyshire focuses only on the so-called Muslim threat, ignoring North Korea, China, India and Israel’s nuclear arsenals. Third, his fear of the two Muslim

nations ignores the vast religious differences that shape each country – Iran is governed by Shiite theocracy while Pakistan is an ethnically and religiously diverse, sometimes-democratic country with ties to Sunni and Taliban radicals. Finally, his consideration of ‘civilizational annihilation or civilizational makeover’ cements his apparent faith in and identification with a US-based advancement of civilisation through military force: an enterprise that parses the other as ‘enemy civilian casualties’, recipients of a ‘makeover’, willing or otherwise; nameless others to be saved or destroyed. It is not only the ghosts of modernity that haunt us but also those ancient mariners, the Conquistadors, backed by their empire.

Those classified as ‘other’ are not immune to the language employed by fundamentalists and totalitarians. Richard Dawkins, member of a coalition of so-called New Atheists, refers to religion as a ‘virus of the mind’ (qtd in D’Souza 1). Dinesh D’Souza responds to Dawkins: ‘It seems perplexing why nature would breed a group of people who see no purpose to life or the universe, indeed whose only moral drive seems to be sneering at their fellow human beings who do have sense of purpose’ (2). But in D’Souza’s own work, including *The End of Racism* (1995), biology and reproduction as determinants of identity and threat pervade his argument. Even the title of D’Souza’s *The Enemy at Home: The Cultural Left and Its Responsibility for 9/11* speaks to the idea of a body under attack from within. The biologised language of menace – the metaphors of infiltrating bacteria and virus – hardly belong to one side or another. Joseph Cirincione, Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress, argued at a debate that neoconservatism was ‘rotten from the core’ and that Americans should ‘crush this neoconservative virus’ (qtd in White).

Writing in the Wall Street Journal, Mark Steyn characterises radical Islam as like AIDS: ‘an opportunistic infection’ challenging the West because of ‘*our* lack of civilizational confidence’ (italics mine). It is ‘the progressive agenda – lavish social welfare, abortion,

secularism, multiculturalism' that is the 'real suicide bomb'. However, Steyn is blind to the fact that the threats he rhetorically brands are very similar to those identified by radical Islamists. He also fails to hear in his own words the echoes of former extremists when he writes 'just as the AIDS pandemic greatly facilitated societal surrender to the gay agenda, so 9/11 is greatly facilitating our surrender to the most extreme aspects of the multicultural agenda'. Steyn is inadequately informed when he argues that we 'are living through a remarkable period: the self-extinction of the races who, for good or ill, shaped the modern world'. These races are the civilised European Christians; their failure – 'softness, decadence, extinction' – is expedited by their low reproduction rate compared to that in Islamic countries. All that is modern including, anomalously, the 'pluralist, liberal democracy' in which Steyn's crimes take place, are threatened at the core by liberals, reproductive-rights activists and others who pave the way for the triumph of the 'the fastest-breeding group on the planet': Muslims. Steyn's assertions occlude mentioning that these battles are constitutive of the modern 'civilisations' he privileges. He remains unaware that by using the discourses of biological, virological and 'racial' threats he is re-citing the eugenic discourses that proliferated in the first decades of the twentieth century.

As a system, democracy is no guarantee against the lexicon of fundamentalisms. Katherine Harris, one-time Republican candidate for the US Senate, proclaimed in an interview given to the *Florida Baptist Witness* in 2006: 'If you're not electing Christians, then in essence you are going to legislate sin' and 'God is the one who chooses our rulers'(Associated Press 'Harris Clarifies').

The appropriation of fundamentalist language can have a value-adding function. In the weeks leading up to the November 2006 Congressional elections, the Republican National Committee launched a television advertisement. Apart from the final message 'These Are The Stakes. Vote No. 7 – [www.GOP.com](http://www.GOP.com)', the entire commercial consisted of

quotations from Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Each of these quotes emphasised Al-Qaeda's own adoption of the language of inclusion and exclusion: 'They will not come to their senses unless the attacks fall on their heads'; 'our message is clear... these are nothing compared to what you will see next'. These texts fit neatly into a campaign designed precisely to highlight who the enemy was (Democrat and Islamist alike) and, via the fear of attack, to suggest that only one solution, a Republican victory, could prevent it (Raw Story).

Rebecca Dingo astutely analyses the 'convergence of market fundamentalism, right-wing Christian fundamentalisms, and neoliberal values that structure the rhetoric of pro-family ethics at the end of the twentieth century' (174). This convergence sees the collapse of distinct categories of meaning between the individual and the family, the citizen and the nation, and the public and the private spheres. Consequently:

Within neoliberalism's gendered family values, women's roles are both public and private since their familial reproduction and their enacted personal moral convictions (perhaps executed through social and political organizing) is [sic] tethered to securing national cultural values. Neoliberalism's family values redefines [sic] the family as a powerful and autonomous yet acculturated entity that serves the nation through its support of the free-market and of 'traditional' American values. Belief in the 'natural' family and the adherence of its agency serves as the central answer of global crises (174-5).

In modernity's atmosphere of perpetual crisis the family and the market become 'the crucial agents to solve the nation's core cultural problems' (175). This belief, Dingo writes, has come to be known as 'market fundamentalism' which, conjoined with a belief in the 'natural' family, 'simultaneously provide[s] a scapegoat for the bad economy, the amoral market, and the decline of national cultural values *and* a sense of individual agency to change one's personal economic or social position' (176). Consequently, such beliefs and the practices they



entail produce a self intimately tied to the good of the nation. Through this ethical framework, the self becomes entwined with Christian fundamentalisms. This aligns with a sense of righteousness that circularly encourages a further identification with the nation state. Thus, Dingo concludes, 'Faith + Family +Free-Market = Freedom' (176).

Given the resurgence of fundamentalist binaries, of discourses and institutions working to hegemonise the subject by corporeal and spiritual techniques, a number of theorists and critics have elucidated how these fundamentalisms challenge and change contemporary society. In 'Dueling Workforces: How Globalization Drives Down Western Wages', Gabor Steingart writes perceptively on the changes to labour forces and communities under the pressures of globalisation:

People today are connected through an invisible system of conduits, people who don't know each other and, in some cases, aren't even aware of the existence of the country in which their counterparts live.

This is precisely what distinguishes today's globalization from the trading nations of the past... For the first time in history, a largely homogeneous, economic system has developed that encompasses all production factors.... Many of the things we once took for granted have become less than certain. Power and wealth are being redistributed, and so is opportunity. Although we all see the world, we see it from widely differing perspectives. (3-4)

*Newsweek* writer Jonathan Alter discusses the overwhelming use of the term 'values' in American politics before referring to the book *Applebee's America*, 'a cross-aisle collaboration among President Bush's pollster, Matthew Down, President Bill Clinton's political director, Douglas Sosnik, and Ron Fournier, formerly of the Associated Press'. The central theme of the book, Alter writes, is 'that success from politics to religion to the

restaurant industry comes to those who tap into the most powerful American value of all: the hunger for community.’ Nevertheless, the unexamined critical assumption that values such as ‘community’ are necessarily good disregards their capacity to enact the process of othering. The emphasis on community is productive in enhancing social good and developing positive sites of cultural and social development. However, when taken to its extremes, it becomes the basis for exclusion, an exclusion that perpetuates itself across the contemporary media-scape.

Small-town America has long represented particular values embedded in US democracy. Many US military personnel hail from this heartland, drawn by the offer of secure employment and the pride of distinguished service – a welcome relief from life in declining rural areas or the ‘rustbelt’. From the beginning of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, small-town communities publicly symbolised their faith in their soldiers by flying the US flag and yellow ribbons, images of which were broadcast back to the soldiers in a mass-mediated bolstering of morale at home and abroad. But the sense of united purpose in these communities was shaken by the release of the notorious photographs from Abu Ghraib. Two aspects of the Abu Ghraib fiasco shocked the nation. First, the perpetrators most highly profiled by the media – ‘bad apples’ Lynndie England and Charles Graner – were ordinary blue-collar folk from middle America. They were quickly disowned, othered, by media, military and government.

Second, yet far less publicised, the photos showed not just the danger of dehumanisation of the other but also the possibility inherent in all groups, regardless of nationality, to abandon or desecrate the virtues which they fight to defend. Abu Ghraib was made possible by the discursive dynamic of othering inherent to fundamentalisms. The language used by President Bush and his officials after 9/11 initiated a process which led directly to the abuse of detainees in Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo. Michelle Brown shows how President Bush’s rhetoric initiated this cycle of violence: “‘The United States will hunt

down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts,” those responsible being individuals, to employ the administration’s binary rhetoric, who had “burrowed” into the everyday life of Americans, the hidden “cowards,” “barbarians,” and “evil-doers,” lurking in the “shadows” and “caves,” afraid to show their faces’ (981). Ordinary human beings with complex identities were transformed into faceless others.

Brown writes compellingly of how disturbing the Abu Ghraib photos were for the US audience: ‘In them, we are presented with a seemingly unsustainable contradiction: an image of liberators engaged in torture, of a democracy acting sadistically in a totalitarian setting. We are confronted with America decentered publicly and unavoidably, its “imagined community” disrupted by way of a hyper-aggressive patriotism’ (973). For Brown, the normalisation of Abu Ghraib, ‘one site of detainee abuse among many in the war against terror’, does not stand out in its presence as a site of abuse but in the ‘absence of any perceived *need* for [a] justification’ of its existence (975). Sergeant Ivan Frederick, ‘the senior enlisted man convicted’ over the abuse of detainees, wrote how military ‘intelligence has encouraged and told us “Great job”... We help getting [the detainees] with the way we handle them. We’ve had a very high rate with our style of getting them to break’ (qtd in Brown 978).

By the time such abuse occurs, it is far too late to ask how such methods of abuse could be inflicted upon another human being – the abused subject has long since ceased to be regarded as human. Brown notes that defence lawyers for those who stood trial in the abuse cases argued the soldiers were ‘being asked to “provide a safe, secure, and humane environment” that simultaneously supported “the expeditious collection of intelligence” by “setting the conditions for successful exploitation of the detainees.”’ Brown continues: ‘It was also a world in which the patterns of punishment in the United States were more broadly applied in the extralegal setting of Guantánamo and then imported into Iraq’ (981).

These methods, techniques and situations were not created in Iraq but adapted, the perimeters of exclusion having already been established with the legal framework of the Bush administration's response to 9/11. The abuse was not an aberration. It was the product of a socio-political group of discourses within decidedly American institutions that allowed for procedures including rendition flights, mass round-ups of male citizens in Iraq and Afghanistan and detention without trial. As Brown goes on to reveal, these processes emerged from the US prison culture where even 'before September 11, more than twenty thousand undocumented immigrants were in custody for long periods of time and in harsh conditions, many placed outside of INS facilities in the general populations of U.S. jails and prisons, and many of who spoke little or no English' (984). She asserts that after 9/11 'the number of detainees held indefinitely without charges by American forces is estimated to be at or above fifty thousand' (985). Brown alleges that in 'supermax' prisons 'what it means to be human and to be social devolve into arbitrary legal categories concerning the amount of natural light a human should have, the level of noise that is unbearable to human ears [and] the kind of punch or slap that is permissible' (990).

Henry Giroux writes of the conflation of neoliberalism with Christian fundamentalism and the actions of the Bush government after 9/11: 'The appeal to moral absolutes and the constant mobilization of emergency time coded as a culture of fear configures politics in religious terms, hiding its entanglement with particular ideologies and diverse relations of power' (4). He continues: 'Authoritarianism marches forward just as political culture is being replaced with a nation of national security based on fear, surveillance, and control rather than a vibrant culture of shared responsibility and critical questioning' (4). For Giroux, the cultural and social crises that accompanied the rise of market and religious fundamentalism in the US have spawned 'a politics that hides its own ideology by eliminating the traces of its power in a rhetoric of normalization, populism, and the staging of public spectacles' (12) – elements that

were as present in the reign of the Taliban in Afghanistan as they were during Germany's Nazi years. According to Giroux:

As a cultural politics and a form of economic domination, neoliberalism tells a very limited story, one that is antithetical to nurturing democratic identities, values, public spaces, and institutions and thereby enables fascism to grow because it has no ethical language for recognizing politics outside the realm of the market, for controlling market excesses, or for challenging the underlying tenets of a growing authoritarianism bolstered by the pretence of religious piety. (13-14)

What we are witnessing in the twenty-first century is not a clash of civilisations but a clash of fundamentalisms – totalising systems that see each other as dominated by barbarians; systems which call for their citizens as consumers and believers to demonstrate their faith repeatedly and publicly.

For Roxanne Euben, 'unusually careful distinctions' that require self-examination and questioning are needed to deal with these contemporary fundamentalisms. These distinctions include the difference between

a patriotism that calls for unquestioning loyalty to the United States and its leaders, thereby reducing all critique to anti-Americanism, and a tradition of critical patriotism with a long and illustrious history from Socrates to Martin Luther King, Jr., that holds a country up to its own highest moral and political standards. Between Islamic fundamentalists (or 'Islamists') who insist that they are the sole authorities of what Islam 'really is' and the millions and millions of Muslims across the world whose Islam is radically different. Between the rich diversity of meanings of *jihad* in Islamic practices and the practices – some but not all appalling – pursued in its name. Between random,

insane butchery, and carefully planned mass murder designed to remake the landscape of contemporary politics. Between abstractions such as ‘the West’ and ‘Islam’, and the inescapably heterogeneous and culturally syncretic peoples coexisting within them that render permeable any boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’. (18155)

This process of distinguishing, this multiplying of difference, enables a critical understanding of the complexities of modernity and the identities it produces. It also provides insights into the web of relationships that draws fundamentalisms together, illuminating their genealogical commonality. This strategy is not purely descriptive – indeed, it opens up a form of engagement with fundamentalisms that contains positions of resistance to the very mechanisms that enable their functioning. As Euben explains:

[I]t is precisely this anti-hermeneutical move that is central to the definition of ‘fundamentalism’: as I have written elsewhere, while origins, fundamentals, and foundations have always been a contested source of legitimacy for many communities, the radicalism of fundamentalists of all stripes lies not only in their conviction that textual authority is guaranteed by its divine author – for in that Muslims, for example, generally agree – but also that the essential core of the sacred text is clear and not subject to contestation; on the contrary, it is human interpretation that introduces the fallible into the words of the divine. Fundamentalists tend to reject the authority of past religious commentaries and textual interpretations in favour of what the text ‘really says,’ thereby denying that determining what the text ‘really says’ is an act of interpretation. This stance places fundamentalists in an epistemologically privileged position from which to determine, once and for all, the one and only authentic way to live in a collectivity as a Muslim, a Christian, a Jew, an American. Defining

fundamentalism in terms of the way it contests and reformulates not only the interpretation of original foundations but also the criteria by which such interpretations are authorised suggests that it may capture a range of both ‘religious’ and ‘secular practices, from Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia’s determination of the American Constitution’s ‘real meanings’ to the claim that Islam is inherently violent. (17920)

For Euben, the double judgement of ‘not only the actions of others but also ourselves’ will ‘complicate the very categories of the “West” and “Islam,” “us” and “them,” those abstractions that no doubt help organise the world but do so by erasing a long history of cultural interpenetration, porousness and internal dissension’ (18157-8).

Jimmy Clausen, reviewing Mahmood Mamdani’s *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, quotes the author’s assertion that no ‘Chinese wall divides “our” terrorism from “their” terrorism.’

Clausen continues:

‘[O]urs’ is co-implicated in ‘theirs’ – and this commingling of terror’s roots dates to the early Cold War. From Indochina to Southern Africa to Central America, the Pentagon and America’s Commander in Chief fine-tuned their skills at achieving their foreign policy objectives – namely, Communist containment and then rollback – by sidestepping Congressional pressure for public accountability. Directly and via proxies, the executive branch had in fact patronized and armed as counterinsurgents the very terrorist forces that would later attack American nationals in the Middle East, East Africa, and finally the United States itself. (8)

Clausen also quotes Rashid Khalidi, author of *Resurrecting Empire: History*, ‘starting with Thucydides, teaches us that those who believe themselves to be special, different, and touched by providence, and who ignore history’s lessons, may be cruelly surprised by the

turn of events' (25). Likewise, considering the role of critical enquiry after 9/11, James Der Derian claims that

there was a willingness (as judged by the unholy trinity of polls, polls and programming) to accept as wisdom President Bush's early declaration that evil – which expanded from a person to a network to the now notorious 'axis of evil' – was to blame. From that moment, policy debate and political action downshifted to a simple declarative with an impossible performative: to eradicate evil. Binary narratives displaced any complex or critical analysis of what happened and why. Retribution required certainty, and certainty was produced as salve for the actually as well as symbolically injured. (102)

For Derian, what developed after 9/11 was a mimetic war of images: 'a battle of imitation and representation, in which the relationship of who we are and who they are is played out along a wide spectrum of familiarity and friendliness, indifference and tolerance, estrangement and hostility. It can result in appreciation or denigration, accommodation or separation, assimilation or extermination.' Consequently, 'people go to war because of how they see, perceive, picture, imagine and speak of others; that is, how they construct the difference of others as well as the sameness of themselves through representation' (110).

These mimetic wars were fought on the terrain of discourse and representation. Their language, their effects and their progression are reminiscent of the ways previous generations dealt with the effects of modernisation. In respect of the historical persistence of discursive and representational conflict, Tony Judt powerfully anatomises the parallels of contemporary politics and the past:

[T]here is a precedent in modern Western history for a country whose leader exploits national humiliation and fear to restrict public freedoms; for a government that makes permanent war as a tool of state policy and arranges



for the torture of its political enemies; for a ruling class that pursues divisive social goals under the guise of national 'values'; for a culture that asserts its unique destiny and superiority and that worships military prowess; for a political system in which the dominant party manipulates procedural rules and threatens to change the law in order to get its own way; where journalists are intimidated into confessing their errors and made to do public penance. Europeans in particular have experienced such a regime in the recent past and they have a word for it. That word is not 'democracy'. ('New World' 3)

## CHAPTER TWO

### MODERNITY, THE SELF AND THE HOLOCAUST

I sensed I would have to live a leaderless and individual life, I would receive no directives from anybody, no orders and commands would any longer be issued to me, no pertinent ordinances would be there to consult – in brief, a life never known before lay before me.

– Adolf Eichmann on the significance of Germany's defeat

Writing in 1979, Tilo Schabert commented on the crises in western societies throughout the twentieth century:

These problems, easily recognizable in any 'modern' society, include: the fragmentation of the social world, the absence of universally accepted values and norms of behaviour, the paramount role of the selfish individual as prototype for human existence, the public display of private obsessions transmitted in an imagery of chaos and terror, dream, and fantasy, the swift succession of 'fashions' in intellectual and cultural matters, the collective feeling of superiority towards the past and ancient cultures, and the widely spread predilection for disorder, disturbance, disobedience. (123)

Schabert's delineation here is useful not just as an example of the possibilities of modernities and their fluctuations, but also of their inherently self-reflexive quality. Movements labelled as modern, responding to crises, from fundamentalisms to celebrations of the taboo, become part of modernities' contesters, seeking to shape their modernities as much as they themselves are shaped. This ceaseless returning, the folding in and around the agents, events,

subjects and selves of modernity, creates the tensions between what is, was or should be – the continual temporal sliding that equally facilitates the utopian narratives of totalitarianism and the positivist, Humanist ideals of progress embedded in contemporary neoliberalism.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Western Europe experienced the repercussions of capitalist, industrial and military advancement that corresponded with the decay of imperialism. The German, Austro-Hungarian, British, Russian and Ottoman empires staggered towards their ultimate dissolution, drawing the continent and its colonies into global war. This seismic shift created fault lines that opened up the rest of the century; faults and gaps into which totalitarian and fascist regimes dumped the corpses of those who stood in the way of their futuristic visions. This situation did not emerge unannounced or unparented.

According to Anthony Giddens, modernity had been forming and reshaping the world since the seventeenth century (*Consequences* 1). It was a product of social, cultural and epistemological changes sparked by the Enlightenment – a term signifying the sweeping away of the pre-rational past. The French and the Industrial revolutions expanded imperial borders whilst reforming and reformatting the territories previously cared for by God and his broad church of representatives. Chief amongst these new territories was Man. Whereas in Judaeo-Christian Europe existence had been viewed through the prism of man's relationship to his creator, Man – his being, his nature and his essence – was now the subject of rational enquiry. As John O. Lyons observes in *The Invention of the Self*, Man was 'freed' from his transcendental chains by the efforts of Immanuel Kant and David Hume (22). But Man's 'empirical self' now had to be self-analysed under the clinical gaze gifted by science (Martin and Barresi 173). What was seen, what was displayed, what was brought forward in the name of liberty as something present, alterable, and capable of change was the 'Self'. And if the self was actionable upon as well as capable of action, methods were available with which to study and structure these new ways of being. As psychology emerged from the oedipal ashes

of philosophy, the ‘human’ sciences allowed for the study of the emerging Man within his own natural habitat – society. Writing of the centrality of the scientific method to the nineteenth century, James Macfarlane remarks: ‘The conviction that behavioural phenomena were reducible to the same kind of general laws as were seen in the physical world, using similar methods of observation and verification, became deeply rooted in nineteenth-century social thought... the study of society took on the characteristics of a science’ (73-4).

As the works of Charles Darwin and Karl Marx entered into this discursive field, a new impetus was given to Man’s progress, entwined with that of ‘Civilisation’. Regimes crumbled, nation states formed and education and the increased prevalence and influence of the print media circulated ideas more rapidly than ever. At the same time, the project to realise a new man, a better man, an *überman* gained momentum. Alain Touraine incisively explains this convergence in *Critique of Modernity*:

In its most ambitious form, the idea of modernity was the assertion that men and women are what they do, and that there must therefore be an increasingly close connection between production, which is made more efficient by science, technology or administration, the organisation of a society governed by law, and a personal life motivated by both self-interest and the will to be free of all constraints.... Reason alone could establish a correspondence between human action and the order of the world. (1)

In a similar vein, Antonio Leopold Rappa’s ‘A Critique of Modernity: On Positivism, and Phenomenology’ considers the internal tensions of the Enlightenment that would paradoxically guide the world into modernity and simultaneously create the situations and institutions against which the great battles of modernity would be fought:

The Enlightenment was a political codex that released as it revealed Europeans (but, ironically, not their colonized subjects of non-European

people) from the blind acceptance of the divine right of kings and the spiritual claims of the Church. ‘Civilization’ thus owed a ‘debt of gratitude’ to the British empiricists, the Irish and Italian political economists and the natural scientists for catalyzing political, social, and economic change. (222)

But ‘civilisation’ was not achieved by the mechanisms of the Enlightenment – rational debate, collective agreement and considered consultation. Instead, throughout the European imperial domains, evangelicals of the Christian and the secular kind, often side by side, enforced what Reza Aslan calls the civilising mission, by which colonies were forced through processes of modernisation to serve the economies of their ruling powers (223). The civilising mission was not usually represented in crude economic terms. The mission was generally characterised in universalising discourse as the emergence from pre-Enlightenment barbarism: in the words of the great imperial plunderer Cecil Rhodes, the more civilisation there was, ‘the better it is for the human race’ (qtd in Aslan 223).

The social conditions of modernity in Western Europe shaped the conception of the self as much as the self participated in the shaping of the modern condition. According to Macfarlane, by the 1890s the dimensions of time and space had begun to alter. ‘As communications improved,’ he writes, ‘distances shrank. As the more hectic rhythms of urban living imposed themselves over wider areas of society, so events moved faster and the whole tempo of life quickened’ (77). For Giddens, this change in time and space both characterised and catalysed modernity. It intensified the sense of rupture with all that had gone before: the scope and swiftness of change encompassed institutions, industry, the places and spaces of everyday life and the ways in which that life took place (*Consequences* 6). Progress, efficiency, productivity – as ‘civilisation’ advanced from the dark ages before the Enlightenment, so too did industry and the globalising market place. Technological innovations and newly organised labour ‘resources’ fed the insatiable machinery of might,

winning the West in the United States, connecting the coasts by railway and constructing the great skyscraping cities in the East. In Europe, Paris was literally rebuilt after 1848 to support the new order, shaping a thoroughly modern city centre that prevented its citizens from congregating as they had done on barricades in the past. Across the channel, England's green fields were transformed by farming enclosures and factory practices, pushing citizens towards industrialised centres like Manchester and Liverpool whilst centralising population, power and the Empire itself in the exploding boroughs of London.

Modernity did not fulfil the Enlightenment vision of a new and better world structured by progress as a precondition for peace, stability and equality. Modernisation often violently transformed the world, physically and conceptually, and irrevocably altered the ways in which people could regard themselves. In his influential work *The Consequences of Modernity*, Giddens terms this a 'crisis' of 'ontological' security. This security is 'the confidence most humans [sic] beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action' (92). In order to deal with the 'ontological crisis' of modernity, Giddens asserts that we develop this security mechanism from lessons learnt in early childhood, particularly those involving trust (94). Drawing on social identity theorists such as Erik Erikson, D. W. Winnicott and Erving Goffman, Giddens posits: 'A feeling of the reliability, yet independent experience, of others [is] central to a sense of continuity of self-identity' (97). How we experience this reliability, in terms of others and the world around us, affects our sense of being and belonging – our ontological security.

Giddens argues that key elements of modernity threaten this security. Amongst these are the globalisation of risk, in terms of its intensity (world war), contingency (dependence on those in other countries/hemispheres) and its institutionalisation (for example, in the stock market). Our awareness of risk and concurrent uncertainty are complemented by an

understanding of ‘the limitations of expertise’ which undermine the foundations of Enlightenment and pre-modern thought (124-5). As Michel Foucault would later observe, pre-modern societies looked to the clergy and monarchy for protection and governance. In contrast, participatory democracies offered universal suffrage yet their elected governments failed to provide broad encompassing solutions to modernity’s risks and uncertainties.

Sociologist Alain Touraine rose to prominence in France in the 1960s and 1970s, primarily for his work on the concept of necessary self-analysis for modernity’s social scientists and movements. However, in seminars and research between 1988 and 1992, Touraine reassessed these social agents, their movements and the modernity in which they operated. The pivot of this reassessment was his theorisation of the central role the subject had played in the events of the last two hundred years. This subject and its corresponding ‘subjectivation’ contained the possibility of resistance and agency in a society he termed ‘post-industrial’ or ‘programmatic’. Touraine asserts that this type of society emerged in the later twentieth century, consolidating itself after the collapse of European communism and the ascendancy of the market-capitalist state – the present era, in which the triumphalist grand narratives of democracy, the free market and freedom are intertwined. These assertions are the basis of *Critique of Modernity*, which engages with the social, cultural and political movements that led to World War II. This engagement suggests that contingencies from the past two centuries perpetuate and extend modernity, rather than rupturing it and replacing it with postmodernity.

Touraine begins by articulating the idea of modernity at its most ambitious. In short, it was an era when subjectivity and rationalisation co-existed. The great struggles and tragedies were provoked by attempts to over-emphasise one at the expense of the other (10, 315). The very label ‘modernity’ denotes newness: the end of the *ancien régime* and the French Revolution’s enlightened dictums of *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* constitute the originary

moment of the modern age. If modernity begins with the French Revolution, Touraine argues that it also contains and constitutes not just this eruption of revolt against the monarchy but also the American War of Independence, the English and German Romantic, Victorian and the Modernist and anti-modern epochs.

Linking modernity explicitly to the struggle against the monarchy, the Church and absolute power, Touraine argues that those who struggled used reason and universal concepts to empower their arguments against autocracy (19). He cites Jean-Jacques Rousseau as the first to undertake the self-reflexive critique that came to characterise modernity and modernism, in particular (21). Both Giddens and Touraine note the violence of change endemic in modernity. For the former, it is the scale of destruction that an ever-changing modernity requires (*Modernity and Self* 15). For the latter, it is the way that violence has been a structural feature of the concept of triumphalist progress. Humans became citizens in nation states but they also became human capital in the progress of industry, the proletariat in Marxist theory, human resources in twentieth-century managerial discourse and infantry and collateral in many and various conflicts. They became a factor, a number to be manipulated and used, as rationalisation organised mass populations with the building of factories, the acquisition of colonies and the rise of corporations (30). Critically for Touraine, this rationalisation was also accompanied by the concurrent shift from a sacred world, where one was subject to God and king, to a new world where Man was subject of himself. In this realm, on the one hand, reason was seen as the newly-divine tool by which Man could become. On the other, the divine subject was now human, 'man-as-subject', and subject to the forces of subjectivation (31). According to Touraine, these two antagonistic forces – reason/rationalisation and the subject/subjectivation – would conflict, define and continue to shape modernity in all its manifestations.



Consequently, 'modern modernity' (from the late nineteenth century to the present) can be viewed as a product of the Enlightenment and the modernity it propelled, and also as a violent reaction to that modernity. It is yet again a sign of the push-pull dynamic at the core of modernity. Therefore, where modernity promoted Enlightenment values that undermined traditional sites of identity – such as faith and servitude – those who found themselves in newly-unified nation states instead turned to the cultural and social as the basis of a national identity. This was done not just by exploring what it meant to be a citizen of geographical Germany, for example, but by linking the subject's identity to that of the nation, creating the identity and state of 'being German'. That identity was not created by a process of inclusion, educating nationalised subjects to identify with specific conceptions of geography, history and myth. These fundamentally-nationalist identities also functioned via exclusion: to be German was not to be French; to be Aryan was not to be Semitic.

Touraine makes an important point when he considers the rise of the nation state in modernity. The processes of modernisation did not occur equally or simultaneously in all states, a phenomenon that would become more evident throughout the twentieth century. A nation may have modernised its industries to consolidate its economic base and to facilitate its military adventures. But the nation state could also function as a regulator of traditions and identities, discouraging the pluralist ideals normally associated with modernity's progress. Touraine argues that this situation 'took extreme forms as industrialization progressed in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe' (137). German and French nationalisms 'became anti-Semitic in order to defend traditional national cultures which were steeped in history against a rationalism [the universalisms of science, trade and art associated with the Jews] which was supposedly rootless and pernicious' (138). As a result, 'the alliance between nation and modernity... mobilized the past in order to construct the future.' This alliance would turn 'against modernity... become fundamentalist and reject... as foreign agents or

satanic forces all those who [did] not identify completely with a cultural heritage.’ These agents were ‘often interpreted in biological terms’ (138): a threat to the body and soul of the nation; one which, like all pests, parasites and threats to corporeal integrity, would eventually require extermination.

In 1962, sociologist and public intellectual Henri Lefebvre argued that ‘[m]odernity is best characterized not as an already established “structure”, nor as something which clearly has the capacity to become structured and coherent, but rather as a fruitless attempt to achieve structure and coherence’ (187). Lefebvre observed that within this fruitless quest for stasis, battles of class and nation were played out which led ‘to the conclusion that it is impossible to represent the “world” as having a realizable structure and a possible stability’ (188).

For Lefebvre, as for Giddens and Touraine, contradiction permeates modernity: ‘Anxiety, anguish, and the feeling of loneliness,’ he writes, ‘are on the increase’ in an epoch where ‘crowds or masses’ are congregated ‘in gigantic cities, massive business companies... in armies [and] in political parties’ (189). This critique is far from postmodern. Karl Marx criticised the cult of individualism, noting ‘the epoch which produces this standpoint, that of the isolated individual, is also precisely that of hitherto most developed social... relations’ (84). Lefebvre also asserts that the availability and marketing of personal comforts are concurrent with ‘genocide, mass extermination, wars of destruction [and] great political purges’ (190). In the estimation of Lefebvre, Giddens and Touraine, the battles of modernity take place on the body and in the meaning of the self and subject: as individual and as social member, as maker and recipient of meaning, and as actor and acted upon.

Two of the most sustained attacks against the subject came from figures whose influence on modernity would be as great as the influence modernity exerted on them. Responding to Kant’s elevation of the enlightened subject as the creation of reason (Larrain 145), Friedrich Nietzsche poured scorn on this triumphalist ideal. Nietzsche compared

absolute self-knowledge to the illusion that one could step into the same river twice. He suggested that conceptualising the subject/self as the foundation and interrogator of its own truth was, at best, open to misleading results (Martin and Bartschi 194). Nietzsche called into question the idea of a unified consciousness, a place where the soul or a spirit resided (198). He warned of the State that had come to claim its citizens, giving them their freedom in the act of killing their god, and recognised that the citizenry was unwilling to enact this freedom and to shoulder all its complex responsibilities. In the voice of Zarathustra he called these states new idols, monsters who would ‘give you everything if you adore it, this new idol... Indeed, a dying for many was invented there, which praises itself as life.’ He continued: ‘State I call it where all drink poison... where all lose themselves... where the slow suicide of all is called “life”’ (*Thus Spoke* 161-2).

What marks Nietzsche as the thinker and critic *par excellence* of modernity is his call for a ‘state of being’ founded on nostalgia for a time that never was. In *Twilight of the Idols* he bemoans the decadence of modernity, citing the example of marriages based on love as a symptom of institutional decline (544). For Nietzsche, as the state was rising, culture, its antagonist, declined (509). His solution was an ‘ascent’ to nature, against the poisons of doctrinal equality that emerged from that ‘bloody farce’, the French Revolution (553). Here it is the artifice as opposed to the actual, the artificial as opposed to the natural, that constitutes the hypocritical exercise that Nietzsche condemned. To create one’s self, in the midst of life, was to ascend towards freedom (554). This was Nietzsche’s ‘return’ to nature – nature representing an authentic place as well as the life-way of *übermensch*.

This thesis returns to Nietzsche in its examination of the works of Camus, Foucault and Beckett, as his ideas on art and the aesthetics of existence influence all three. Their words echo the final pages of *Twilight of the Idols*: ‘Saying Yes to life, even in its strangest and

hardest problems, the will to life rejoicing over its own inexhaustibility even in the very sacrifice of its highest types' may be at the centre of what it is to exist (562).

Nietzsche was not the only one to take issue with Kant's assertion that reason created and defined the subject. Sigmund Freud attempted to prove that the subject was an unreasonable offspring and, ultimately, a creation of something immune to reason and its will: the unconscious. Although Freud's initial work identified the self's reflexivity as part of its foundational processes, thus highlighting one of the key features of the self in modernity, his structured analyses of the means of forming and maintaining a self questioned the Enlightenment assertion of self sovereignty (Seigel 654-5). Freud's theories led to the pathologisation of the self, continuing the need for man to be studied by man. This destabilised the popular notion of the self as transcendent and reduced agency to something that was acquired only in the process of analysis. Despite wide condemnation for its anti-humanism and preoccupation with decadence, Freud's work inspired artists, writers and intellectuals.

This was not the only paradox with regard to Freud's position in modernity. As Touraine points out, although Freud's very modern assault on the triumph of the will and the rationality of the enlightened self contravened the logic of modernity, it also opened up the self to a new modernity, a new science of man. The unconscious, site of 'deep psychical activity' (118) became the focal point for post-World War I European surrealists as much as it did for those in post-Victorian literary circles. Writing of the post-war spirit, G. H. Bantock notes 'the "will" (the instrument of the moral "superego") had... in some degree exhausted itself in the war effort; it was, in any case, suspect through its association with Victorian strenuousness and the subtle dominations of family relations' (22). Bantock argues that Freud's concept of man 'as a biological phenomenon', intertwined with Marxist and rationalist ideas of identity and the self, created a broad 'inability to arrive at a commonly

accepted metaphysical picture of man' (23). In the era when Man was most studied, his nature was contested, his being questioned and his ability to form – let alone pursue – the will of a self was continually challenged.

Ironically, Freud's attack on the primacy and totality of the will established the unconscious as the new primary. Though he and other practitioners such as Carl Jung and Jacques Lacan sought to articulate a structure of the unconscious, it remained mysterious and shifting: a centre that could not hold, like the Enlightenment subject's rationality or its pre-modern antecedents. By May 1933, Freud's structuralism, as much as his 'Jewishness', was significant enough to be considered a threat to the emerging modes of being in Europe. Upon hearing of the Nazis burning his books, Freud remarked: 'What progress we are making. In the middle ages they would have burnt me; nowadays they are content with burning my books.' Freud's biographer and contemporary Ernest Jones immediately remarked on the falsehood of such modern progress, noting that 'ten years later they would have burned his body as well' (496).

If Freud's work was read as prototypically modern and therefore suspicious, as well as dubious and anti-modernist, it is not surprising that theorists of modernity take issue with his judgements on the modern self. Giddens, for example, questions Freud's insistence on the role of guilt in modernity, suggesting that the 'characteristic movement, on the level of individual existence, is away from guilt' (*Modernity and Self* 155). He does, however, hint at a Foucauldian notion: 'The individual no longer lives primarily by extrinsic moral precepts' which create guilt, 'but by means of the reflexive organisation of the self, incorporating, for instance, shame' (153). While this neat division of extrinsic and internalised morality is not exact, it reinforces the ideas of governance and the techniques of the self: our bodies, ourselves, as they exist in modernity, are not liberated or absolutely free to exercise will and

power. They are sites of production on which meaning is produced and from which meaning can arise.

How this understanding developed, and the degree to which self-reflexivity was used to demean and destroy the self, can be seen as the machineries of nationalism shifted into overdrive, interpellating the self as it experienced its crises in post-World War I Europe. The self was summonsed and provided with a place to belong, to re-become. It was also given a normalised, naturalised threat to exterminate in order to strengthen its rightful place in the modern world. Combined with ruthless rationalism – a product of two hundred years of Enlightenment-fuelled thought that saw mankind, the individual and the self, reduced to a resource, a product, and ultimately a number – the very types of production and destruction that could be harnessed to the self became evident. In consolidating the self while at the same time exterminating the parasitic ‘unselves’ needed to sustain the fallacies of identity in the Third Reich, a triumphalist will was coupled to a vision that sought to transcend history, time, and the self. Again, in one of the many paradoxes of modernity, these were the very forces most available to support the vision – the industry and the furnace of the nationalised self. As Robert Paxton writes, World War I produced

wide cultural, social, and political opportunities for fascism... Socially, it spawned armies of restless veterans (and their younger brothers) looking for ways to express their anger and disillusion without heed for old-fashioned law or morality. Politically, it generated economic and social strains that exceeded the capacity of existing institutions – whether liberal or conservative – to resolve. (28)

If the post-World War I period opened a new artistic field encompassing styles from Marcel Proust to Pablo Picasso, Constantin Brancusi to Georges Bataille, it did so in the aftermath of

‘[f]our years of industrialized slaughter [that] had left little of Europe’s legacy unaltered and nothing of its future certain’ (29).

While it has been argued that anti-Semitism was threaded throughout German modernity, attaching itself to nascent nationalism and its associated sense of cultural supremacy, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party thoroughly exploited it in their rise to power. From the earliest ‘Program of the National Socialist German Workers Party of 1920’, the preoccupation with identifying enemies within was writ large. Article One called on ‘all Germans to form a Greater Germany’ and Article Four quickly qualified: ‘None but members of the nation may be citizens of the State. None but those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation. No Jew therefore may be a member of the nation’ (64). According to this ideology, the veins of authentic Germans coursed with the blood that fused their identities to the nation; all Jews, even those who had converted to other faiths, were likewise condemned by their blood. Judaism and its beliefs and cultural practices were signs and symptoms of the sickness that defined the ‘outsider organism’. This sickness threatened to infect the German ‘race’. Article Seven called for the expulsion of all non-citizens should Germany require it. According to Article 24, the Party ‘combats the Jewish-materialist spirit within us and around us’ (65) that had already infected the German body politic. The program insisted that ‘the first obligation of every citizen must be to work with his mind or with his body. The activities of the individual may not clash with the interests of the whole, but must proceed within the framework of the community’ (64). As a result, the German body and mind was welded to the German good. In the following years, the framework elaborated saw any endeavour assisting the Jewish people or objecting to the actions of the government as collaboration with the enemy and was dealt with swiftly. To be German meant to abide by the wishes of the regime: to do otherwise was foreign, sickening and treacherous to the entire

body. As with a bacterial infection, the only solution was a destruction of the infectious agent.

This call to the good of a greater Germany was reinforced by the intellectual architecture of the time. Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, member of the 'Conservative Revolution', reminded his fellow citizens that Germany was in decline. Writing less than four years after the treaty of Versailles, Bruck claimed that 'we' need not think about 'the Europe of today... we are thinking of the Europe of yesterday and whatever thereof may be salvaged for tomorrow. We are thinking of the Germany of all time, the Germany of a two-thousand-year past, the Germany of an eternal present' (82). Nostalgia for a non-existent state of stability was already present by the early 1920s; so too was the sense of the state of Germany's decline: 'The German nationalist.... knows that within the radius of these peoples' civilisation, which they so complacently describe as Western, humanity has not risen but has sunk' (80). In a language that would be eerily echoed in the first decade of the twenty-first century, Bruck blamed liberalism and relativism not just for the current situation but also for the decline and fall of Ancient Greece: 'The disciples of reason, the apostles of enlightenment.... are usually in the first generation great idealists, high-principled men... But no later than the second generation the peculiar and unholy connection betrays itself which exists between materialist philosophy and nihilist interpretation' (79). Within a few years, during which hyperinflation, reparations and the Great Depression took their toll, another unholy connection would be spotted: this time between the Jews and the Bolsheviks and the Jews and the economic and social crises that comprised modernity.

In 1928, Hitler wrote that Marxism was a Jewish plot that 'destroyed marriage, sexual morality and the bonds of social order', and 'only the National Socialist movement could prevent a similar victory for Jewry' in Germany (Wistrich 47). Bauman notes how the European nobility was threatened by industrialisation and blamed the Jews accordingly for



their disturbance of the pre-existing social order. Socially-aspirant Jews eager to assimilate and promote liberalism and capitalism ‘were perceived as a sinister and destructive force, as agents of chaos and disorder; typically, as that glutinous substance which blurs the boundary between thing which ought to be kept apart, which renders all hierarchical ladders slippery’ (50). The agents of disorder could assimilate so well that they often ‘passed’ as Germans. The assimilation of secular Jewry in particular posed a threat to the German people and was perceived and portrayed as proof of the danger Jews presented to the nation. Ironically, the bureaucrats of the Holocaust were the first to seize the industrial workplaces and businesses owned by the Jews and use them in their plan to rationalise the economy as it prepared for war.

Holocaust scholar Saul Friedländer describes how the first thrust of anti-Semitism struck the artistic and intellectual community almost immediately after Hitler became Chancellor in January 1933. Albert Einstein’s ‘citizenship was rescinded’ (12); artists, scholars and writers were stripped of official positions, members of the Prussian Academy of the Arts were asked to sign ‘a declaration of loyalty’. By May, books were being burnt (11). These events were met with a muted public reaction – even Thomas Mann, a homosexual and a friend of Einstein, was ‘ambivalent’, claiming: ‘That Alfred Kerr’s arrogant and poisonous Jewish garbling of Nietzsche is now excluded, is not altogether a catastrophe; and also the de-Judaization of justice isn’t one’ (qtd in Friedländer 13). Friedländer continues:

[E]ven before launching the first systematic anti-Jewish measures of exclusion, the new rulers of Germany had turned against the most visible representatives of the ‘Jewish spirit’ that henceforth was to be eradicated. In general the major anti-Jewish measures the Nazis would take from then on in the various domains were not only acts of terror but also symbolic statements. This dual function expressed the pervasive presence of ideology within the

system: Its tenets had to be ritually reasserted, with the persecution of chosen victims as part of the ongoing ritual. There was more. The double significance of the regime's initiatives engendered a kind of split consciousness in a great part of the population: For instance, people might not agree with the brutality of the dismissals of Jewish intellectuals from their positions, but they welcomed the cleansing of the 'excessive influence' of Jews from German cultural life. (12-3)

Academia was not protected. By April 1933 the Civil Service Law was in place, combining with the boycott of Jewish businesses. This was the beginning of the expulsion of Jews from German public life. Known officially as the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, it applied to academics who were considered to be civil servants.

According to Friedländer, by the end of 1933 'about twelve hundred Jews holding academic positions would be dismissed' (50); further laws governing students would increase the depletion of Jews from academic life. This was exacerbated by an enthusiastic National Socialist Student Association which began an 'information' campaign that led to the book burnings (57). Friedländer describes the absence of any significant opposition from University authorities: 'As the first months of 1933 went by, Hitler must have seen that he could count on the genuine support of church and university; whatever opposition may have existed, it would not be expressed as long as direct institutional interests and basic dogmatic tenets were not threatened' (60). The purging of Jews was productive in many respects. Friedländer writes:

The April laws and supplementary decrees that followed compelled at least two million state employees and tens of thousands of lawyers, physicians, students, and many others to look for adequate proof of Aryan ancestry; the same process turned tens of thousands of priests, pastors, town clerks, and

archivists into investigators and suppliers of vital attestations of impeccable blood purity; willingly or not, these were becoming part of a racial bureaucratic machine that had begun to search, probe, and exclude. (31)

The expulsions had other effects, including ‘new career opportunities for ambitious non-Jewish Germans’ (Wistrich 55).

In their book *Architects of Annihilation*, Götz Aly and Susanne Heim write of the co-opting of a new generation of bureaucrats and scholars, eager to escape the economic and social vicissitudes that plagued Germany during the 1920s. Little suggested a penchant for their involvement in the systematic murder of millions that would take place in the 1940s:

They were interested in securing funding for their research projects, privileges for themselves, and the fullest possible translation of their theoretical findings into social practice. They saw themselves as professionals and specialists in their field – not Party creatures, carrying out research to order, but men who wished to place their expertise in the service of the modernizing project that would transform society....

The aspiring young professionals... became accessories to acts of injustice and crimes. And that complicity cemented their loyalty to the system that had opened up new career prospects for them in this way. In the years that followed, the opportunities for further advancement and that exercise of their professional influence grew with the state’s steady encroachment on more and more areas of social and national life and with every new step along the path of territorial expansion. (286-7)

The Nazi machinery was moving efficiently. Academics, with their interconnected ethos of ‘doing and being’, had their idea of self linked explicitly to the fortunes of the Aryan race and the German nation. Nazi fundamentalism worked by offering them the chance to be a part of

this success; it interpellated them with promises of a central place in their society. Whereas industrialisation and capitalism had sidelined and ostracised the intelligentsia, the new Germany set a place for these social scientists at the table where major decisions were made.

Aly and Heim warn:

The notion that this young German intelligentsia had simply embraced National Socialist dogma and allowed it to dictate their thoughts and actions is probably just as false as the collective excuse later offered by those involved: that they had adopted the *rhetoric* of National Socialism – for reasons of expediency and self-preservation – but not its philosophy and ideas. However overblown and anachronistic Nazi ideology seemed, it was no obstacle to the modernization of the economy and the society.... It was only when ideology came together with modern scientific rationalism that a series of vague programme headings became concrete, realizable projects. Traditional concepts like ‘race’, ‘blood’ and ‘soil’ were gradually imbued with new meaning by the social scientists, economists and agrarian experts. (288)

The concepts of race, blood and soil appeared innocuous when they were adapted into the bland vocabulary of state bureaucracy. It was only in retrospect, however, that this language of rationalisation was exposed as a constitutive cog in the apparatus of the Holocaust.

In their conclusion, Aly and Heim explain the significance of their focus on these ordinary technocrats, inheritors of a long tradition of Enlightenment and Reformation culture shattered by World War I and its after-effects. Upwardly-mobile educated citizens, seeing opportunities through racial identity, hitched themselves to the rationalisation and modernisation of Germany:

Our study has shown that the modern praxis-oriented social sciences and the reception of their findings in the seats of political power played a

significant part in the decisions that led to systematic mass murder. If the links between Auschwitz and visionary German projects of the time for a modernized and pacified Europe are denied or ignored, then Germany's crimes appear as a descent into barbarism and a break with Western civilization – rather than a potentiality inherent within it....

[T]he reasons for the murder of millions of people are not beyond thought and rational contemplation. On the contrary: it is possible to reconstruct, and put into words, the thinking that lay beyond the individual stages in the process. The various programmes of mass murder that were implemented and the others that were planned all have a common utilitarian denominator. (294)

By viewing their jobs as connected to the process of rationalisation and restructuring, rather than the facilitation of genocide; by treating the handicapped, the sick, Gypsies and Jews as human resources requiring study, management and resettlement and dispersal, these men and women chose to be part of something much larger. Their voluntary acquiescence to racial laws, their lack of objections to the dismissal of colleagues, their active and knowing participation in the Nazi cultural, social, bureaucratic and medical 'reforms' allowed the machinery of the Holocaust to operate.

If members of the intelligentsia, the upper and middle classes and those in the civil service were interpellated and allowed themselves to benefit from the situations that occurred in Germany, then the general population behaved no better. In *The Third Reich*, Michael Burleigh views Nazism as 'a form of political religion or of totalitarianism' (3). Its embrace led to 'what happened when sections of the German elites and masses of ordinary people chose to abdicate their individual critical faculties in favour of a politics based on faith, hope, hatred and sentimental collective self-regard for their own race and nation. It is therefore a

very twentieth-century story' (1). Against the background of slaughter, impoverishment and chaos that characterised German modernity, Nazism 'offered intense inclusivity in a society that had been scarred by deep divisions, dynamism where there was stagnation, and a sense of lofty purpose, almost a national mission, in a society where material interests seemed all-pervasive' (12).

The everyday experience of life changed for Jews and non-Jews alike. Friedländer quotes Martha Appel, a rabbi's wife from Dortmund, who wrote: 'With every passing day under Nazi rule... the chasm between us and our neighbours grew wider. Friends with whom we had had relations for years did not know us anymore. Suddenly we discovered that we were different' (38). Burleigh describes the outcome of the depersonalisation that occurred as a result of the laws and the demonisation of the Jew: Most 'Germans did not care for public disturbances, even if many of them agreed that there was a "Jewish Question" requiring *legal* resolution. Disturbingly, this belief transcended whatever experience people actually had of Jews as individuals' (293).

By late 1935, the Nuremberg Laws were in place. A collection of laws that solidified the Nazi Party's place as the legal solution to the 'Bolshevik-Jewish conspiracy', they formalised the expulsion of Jews from German life. The laws placed them in a category comparable with foreign citizens, prohibiting inter-marriage with 'true' Germans and establishing them as 'subjects' of the Reich – a move that would later underline their status as sub-human (Friedländer 141-4). Again, there was no protest: 'most people thought that the [Nuremberg] laws would stabilise the situation, confining the Jews to a second-class, semi-autonomous sphere, and that this would lance the boil of street violence' (Burleigh 296-7). In barely three years, a country regarded as one of the shining lights of post-Enlightenment culture, with a population of Jews that constituted less than one per cent of the total population (Burleigh 94), allowed the restoration of the Reich for its chosen people. The re-

establishment of the Reich rested upon the identification of foreign threats that resided within and outside the German *volk*. By its indifference, the chosen people collaborated in initiating the eradication of this threat (Friedländer 162-3).

Hitler was intent on war. This was a war provoked by the Jews, but he would seek to reverse the fortunes of the German people after their 'betrayal' in 1918. The ghettoisation of the Jews began. Combined with the Nuremberg laws, economic and social policy took their toll on the Jews and fuelled the machinery necessary for the rearmament of the nation; a machinery subsequently utilised with great facility in the deportation, containment and execution of the Jews.

By this time, the propaganda of Joseph Goebbels and the ever-growing transformation of German life by the Nazi Party had eliminated the possibility of a sense of individuality necessary to maintain a private life, a selfhood somehow separate from that of nation (Todorov 14). Although the outcome was only grasped in hindsight, the framework of the individual self had been destroyed. It was replaced with a new infrastructure that fused identity with race and nation and the imperative to confront and destroy the enemy by all means necessary. Europe was on the brink of war. Hitler's euthanasia of the handicapped and ill was under way. However, as Friedländer writes:

None of this could yet have had any impact on the popular fervor surrounding Hitler or on the public's ardent adherence to many of the regime's goals. Hitler's accession to power would be remembered by a majority of Germans as the beginning of a period of 'good times'. The chronology of persecution, segregation, emigration, and expulsion, the sequence of humiliations and violence, of loss and grief that moulded the memories of the Jews of Germany from 1933 to 1939 was not what impressed itself on the consciousness and memory of German society as a whole. (331)

Over six years, the totalising processes of Nazism had reduced the Jew to alien, non-German and then to biological threat. These processes worked simultaneously to produce the self-policing society, the ruthless denunciation of any opposition and the 'docile bodies' needed for the annexation of *lebensraum*. German historian Norbert Frei describes the way in which ordinary people actively participated in the affirmation of collective identity:

With astonishing rapidity, many [Germans] identified themselves with the social will to construct a Volksgemeinschaft that kept any thoughtful or critical stance at arm's length.... They were beguiled by the esthetics of the Nuremberg rallies.... In the brief moments left between the demands of a profession and those of the ever-growing jungle of Nazi organisations, they enjoyed modest well-being and private happiness. (qtd in Friedländer 331-2)

It was only in retrospect that ordinary Germans would contemplate the extraordinary price others paid for this happiness.

If the rise of fascism in Germany under the Nazi Party helped produce a set of interconnected circumstances which led to the Holocaust, the German invasion of France in 1940 was equally the propellant for a fire that had long smouldered at the centre of French life. Although France was the first European nation to emancipate the Jews, this freedom was closely aligned with the renunciation of 'Jewishness' in favour of the 'French' identity. Integration was encouraged but its success was often called into question by the anti-Semitic discourses that inflamed national incidents such as the infamous Dreyfus affair. Institutional and personal anti-Semitism increased throughout the 1920s, and was intensified in reaction to the influx of Jewish refugees fleeing Hitler's regime after 1933.

This was the situation that led to the Vichy regime, in the 'unoccupied' area of France, deporting around 75,000 Jews to concentration/extermination camps (Burleigh 652). Under German occupation, wide-spread collaboration occurred. All social strata participated



in the denunciation, detention and dispersal of Jews in a manner which would have no parallel in other European nations.

In the 1960s, the German people began to confront their participation in the Holocaust. In stark contrast, the French cultivated a silent status quo where Vichy-era collaboration often went unpunished and was, with Presidential involvement, unrecognised until investigations in the late 1970s and early 1980s revealed the extent of French involvement (Webster 5-7).

It was precisely in this climate of revelation that Michel Foucault would write his major works on the ethics of the self. It was against the desolation and failure of the Third Republic and the surge of identity-based politics that Camus would write *The Myth of Sisyphus*. And it was in the aftermath of the Vichy regime and the reconstruction of France when Samuel Beckett would write *En Attendant Godot*.

Modernity was both a product of and a producer of France throughout the nineteenth century. From the Revolution, through Napoleon's imperial adventures to the Paris communes of 1848 and the nation's defeat by the Prussians in 1870, French life was dramatically transformed, often with violent consequences. Paris had become the centre of cosmopolitanism, attracting artists, writers and intellectuals from all over the world, while the country itself benefited from the spoils of its empire in Africa, Asia, the Pacific Islands and the Americas. But the material and cultural progress of imperial modernity was shadowed by an increasing sense of instability. The newly-created Republic model was destabilised by both Napoleons. As Paul Webster writes, by the time of the declaration of the Third Republic in 1875, a new constitution had been developed 'as a holding operation to prepare for the return of the king' (25). Communism and capitalism flourished in the late 1800s and, as in Germany, Jews would be associated with and blamed for both (25). Consequently, those loyal to the idea of a return to the monarchy determined that a 'permanent hierarchy was needed

with the highest places reserved for those of pure French descent cherishing conservative ideals. By inference, Jews were excluded on three grounds – their race, their religion and their attachment to the republican system, which had liberated them’ (Webster 25).

By the early 1930s France was experiencing grim and turbulent circumstances. The Depression had struck hard, unemployment was rife and government institutions designed to strengthen democracy proved weak and ineffectual against increasing civil strife and the growing German threat. Webster writes that by 1934

the supposedly dying embers of Jew-hating had been revived with the arrival of 30,000 German Jews fleeing Hitler. Even though government restrictions meant that only 7000 settled in Paris, they added to a flood of Polish immigrants that had turned parts of the capital into ghettos. It was enough to reinvigorate an unstoppable campaign to rid the country of all Jews.

Two calumnies developed side by side. One was the fear that foreigners would take French jobs during the Depression. The second was a revival of the basic accusation of the Dreyfus Affair that Jews were traitors by nature. (33)

As Carmen Callil writes, by the end of the 1930s anti-Semitism was firmly established in the national mind, in part because many ‘French writers – literary authors and editors, essayists, novelists and orators, poets and playwrights, but above all journalists – put their facility with words at its service and, in a great number of cases, at the service of Nazi Germany’ (166). Chief among these was the well-educated doctor and novelist Louis-Ferdinand Céline who saw France as infected by the gangrene of the Jews. ‘We’re rotten to the core with Jews,’ he claimed to Louis Darquier, close confidant and the future Minister for Jewish Affairs in the Vichy government (qtd in Callil 169).

As the Third Republic crumbled with the German invasion of 1940, and Charles de Gaulle and fellow members of the French Armed Forces were evacuated, World War I veteran and hero Maréchal Philippe Pétain was appointed head of the new government, based in the southern town of Vichy. He used a language familiar to the French, proclaiming a ‘National Revolution’, ostensibly to heal the damaged soul of a nation shamed by its second surrender to Germany. It was also designed to inspire France with a return to an imagined utopian past. Few considered that Germany was unlikely to support any type of French restoration, collaborationist or otherwise, yet Pétain looked admiringly at certain elements of Germany’s fascist revolution. The French were careful, precise and rational in drawing distinctions between their own anti-Semitism and the German version:

Vichy based its action on what was called ‘state anti-Semitism’ to distinguish it from ‘anti-Semitism of the skin’. Jews were excluded from most professions on the grounds that they were incapable of fulfilling their duties as citizens because of divided patriotic and religious loyalties. One of the simplest examples was the incompatibility between the obligations of compulsory military service and recognition of the Sabbath. (Webster 20)

The Vichy regime ‘drew upon deep wells of anti-Semitism, anti-socialism and Catholic moralism, rather than upon the social radicalism of febrile French fascists.... [C]ollective duties overrode individual rights, and [it was declared] that Work, Family and Country should usurp Liberty, Equality and Fraternity’ (Burleigh 469). Whereas the Nazis instituted a race-based program of Aryanisation, the Vichy regime sublimated the individual self for the greater good to France:

The ‘true France’ would first have to rid herself of ‘anti-France’, the *métèques* (from the Greek for ‘alien’), who, since Protestantism was no longer considered a threat, primarily consisted of Freemasons and Jews, particularly

radicalised eastern European immigrants. Vichy set about discriminating against these groups without prior German prompting. (Burleigh 471)

No other country, occupied or Allied, would be so ‘successful’ in using its own resources to do Hitler’s work.

The National Revolution was not limited to the French mainland. In early October 1940, Burleigh writes, the regime implemented the statute on the Jews. The statute ‘defined who was a Jew and sanctioned exclusion of Jews from the upper echelons of the civil service, the armed forces, the professions, and the worlds of entertainment, arts and media.’ Burleigh continues:

A law which granted French citizenship to Jews in Algeria in 1870 was rescinded, at the insistence of Algerian colonists, and despite objections from many Algerian Moslems, who sensed that they might be next in line for this form of discrimination. Indeed, these issues were connected, since the French colonists detected the hand of metropolitan Jewry behind attempts to grant citizenship to limited numbers of Arabs. (473)

Camus, now living in France, understood that he could not return to Algeria. His personal philosophy compelled him both to continue writing *The Myth of Sisyphus* and to join the Resistance.

Concentration camps, previously detaining Spanish Civil War refugees, were expanded. As Callil notes:

Between 1939 and 1946 these camps imprisoned 600,000 men, women and children: 350,000 Spanish refugees, 40,000 other foreign nationals, 1,500 political prisoners, 3,000 gypsies and 100,000 Jews. The Jews were not the only ones deported, though it was mostly the Jews who did not return....

But most of all the French camps became the assembly points for the fulfilment of the final solution. Hitler could not spare Germans for this collection work; it was Vichy's CGQJ [*Commissariat Générale aux Questions Juives*] and its civil and administrative services, and most of all the French police, who carried out his orders. (229)

This unforced collaboration on such a scale was unique. Knowingly and willingly, at least for the first two years of the war, large segments of the French population readily engaged in activities that had required greater institutional organisation in Germany. France was already capable of and prepared to 'export' its Jews.

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, many French remained unrepentant. Writing after the war, Xavier Vallat, Vichy's first Commissioner for Jewish affairs, argued:

We are not 'pleading guilty with attenuated circumstances'. It is simply a matter of proving, in intellectual honesty, against those who accuse the Marshal's government of having been a servile plagiarist of the Nazis, that this anti-Jewish legislation, as distinct from that across the Rhine, never went beyond the just limits established by the Church in accordance with the right of protecting the national community against the abuses and harmful influence of the foreign element. (qtd in Callil 233)

As De Gaulle, the Allies and the Resistance liberated Paris, plans were made to reconstruct a free France under De Gaulle that was recognised by the Americans. Whereas the French revenged themselves against obvious collaborators in the Occupied Zone, the crimes of the 'unoccupied' Vichy regime were largely ignored. While Nazi officials were charged for crimes against humanity at Nuremberg, the French government focussed on reuniting and rebuilding a nation that had been laid waste. This national revitalisation required official silence on the role of the French in the Holocaust.

It was only in the late 1970s that the silence began to shatter. Investigations of surviving members of the Vichy regime resulted in a well-publicised 1978 interview in which ‘the French Eichmann’, Louis Darquier de Pellepoix, said ‘I’ll tell you exactly what happened at Auschwitz. They used gas. Yes. That’s true. But they gassed the lice’ (449). Asked later what happened to the Jews deported from France, he replied ‘How do you think I know? It wasn’t my job to know what happened to Jews *afterwards*. I was a senior French civil servant. I always make sure that the Jewish problem in France should be resolved by the French. And, believe me, it wasn’t easy’ (450). He claimed ‘I was only a civil servant. I was very far removed from the day-to-day practicalities. And I was too busy saving good Jews, the French Jews’ (456). How the French viewed the Holocaust was a matter of constant public debate throughout the early 1980s. When President Mitterand was photographed dining with former members of the Vichy regime, the nation finally responded with outrage.

However, if the Holocaust was not dealt with directly in the years following World War II, what led to the Holocaust was a concern at the centre of French intellectual life. Knowledge, language, institutions and officials – all had been found complicit. Academics and writers were amongst those who were quickest to collaborate. As a nation proud of its rich cultural heritage, France now had to turn inside out to ask ‘How had we become?’

In Germany, the term ‘post-Holocaust’ was circulating. Elie Wiesel used the term in an essay about Jewish values in 1967 (Knopp 213 n1) and Lawrence Linger adopted it in his seminal 1975 work *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination*. As a general term denoting a purely historical position, it informed texts that investigated cultural aspects of German life and, more particularly, expositions of ethics within philosophical and theological discourses. The phrase was often used with specific reference to Emmanuel Levinas and Hannah Arendt. In the case of Arendt and her work on political thought and meaning in the Holocaust, Steve Buckler frequently makes reference to a ‘post-Holocaust culture’. Such a conjunction is not

unique: Efraim Sicher mentions a ‘post-Holocaust generation’ in his exploration of memory and narrative in ‘The Future of the Past: Countermemory and Postmemory in Contemporary American Post-Holocaust Narratives’.

However, it is Berel Lang’s analysis and exploration *Post-Holocaust: Interpretation, Misinterpretation, and the Claims of History* (2005) that provides the fundamental basis for understanding the term’s relevance and utility. Lang, a well-regarded scholar of the Holocaust and its representations, asserts that ‘Post-Holocaust’ is ‘the period of sixty years since the end of the Holocaust’ (xi). In her review essay, Carolyn Dean adds that it is also ‘the questions, categories, and presumptions that now shape discussions and debates about the extermination of European Jewry and its aftermath’ (276). The contemporary world finds itself in the ‘Post-Holocaust’ period, writes Lang,

whether acknowledged or not... including regions and people that were not, and in many cases could not have been, directly affected by the Holocaust at the time of its occurrence. Even the most extreme and extraordinary moments of experience take place, after all, inside history; thus, also the reactions to them – accommodation or denial, avoidance or transformation – are open to explanation as part of the historical and social practices in which they occur.

(17)

This claim to historical and cultural particularity and contingency is echoed in the conditions that produced the works of Camus, Beckett and Foucault, and also the historical forces that render their work all the more relevant in an age of resurgent fundamentalisms. However ‘Post-Holocaust’ does not imply an absolutely unique, transcendent or ineffable quality to the Holocaust; indeed it is the Holocaust’s particularity, its comprehensibility, with regard to modernity and what has emerged since that allow us to re-view the historical, cultural and theoretical consequences of the event. Dean locates Lang’s work as

part of (if not identical to) broader criticism not only of ‘uniqueness’ but of what we might call ‘grandiloquence’: a tendency within post-Holocaust discourses toward hyperbole, pomposity, an overwrought identification with past suffering, and a belief in secular redemption or revelation that is part of the ‘surplus talk’ about the Holocaust of European Jewry. (284)

Dean’s critical targets include works by Tzvetan Todorov and Michael Bernstein. Bernstein argues that ‘the only way to get out of this sterile debate is to refuse to argue about the Shoah’s uniqueness, versus its comparative historicity, but, instead, to question whether genocide is ever revelatory of anything but itself, of the particular political system that perpetrated it, and the particular individuals who enacted it’ (qtd in Dean 284).

Borrowing Lang’s insights, this thesis argues that the Holocaust shows the outcome of systems of totalisation that rely on singular notions of the self. This self, identified completely with a core group and dependant on the exclusion of identified others, operated in collaboration with a bureaucracy driven by discourses of capitalist efficiency and production. However, as Lang writes, the Holocaust must be understood as ‘acts or a series of acts that particular people have done to other people, that they *chose* to do, for reasons of their own choosing’. Importantly:

Each survivor bears witness, particular and concrete to this possibility [that the Holocaust need not have occurred] – as does also each agent who imposed himself on this. This sense of contingency – that what happened might have been avoided – is the single most important implication of the particularity of the Holocaust. (107)

Consequently, this thesis works towards a post-Holocaust understanding of the self, drawing on writings from post-Holocaust France, in order to posit an ethics of the self that can resist,



at a particular and contingent level, the aggregated fundamentalist forces similar to those which produced and prosecuted the Holocaust.

The usefulness of the term post-Holocaust is apparent with regard to the second component of Lang's definition: the work done in the period since the Holocaust. Lang asserts that the 'extent of the Holocaust's events is too large and inclusive, and the pressures too complex, to hope for a single overarching theory or explanation that could avoid competing with another no less serious or detailed one' (xii). What Lang proposes is a broad categorisation of post-Holocaust works into four 'rubrics': 'the Archival, Explanatory, Testimonial, and Representational modes – not as autonomous or independent of each other, but as reflecting different emphases' (xii). Consequently, 'empirical evidence' projects would be classed as Archival. However, material in the Archival category could be closely related to works in the Explanatory class. It is here that questions such as 'why?' and 'how?' and 'theology, philosophy, linguistics and literary analysis, as questions of the relation between individual and corporate "mentality" and decision-making (reasons and causes) come to the fore' (xiii). According to Lang, this includes works such as Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, and Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (xiii). Testimonial refers to eyewitness/survivor accounts and memorials, whereas Representational denotes attempts to portray the Holocaust in novels, films and drama.

The key works analysed in this thesis are both Explanatory and Representational, but they also resist definitive categorisation. Camus, Foucault and Beckett's writings were shaped by and responded to the Holocaust. Each of them addressed key issues directly responding to the questions 'Why did the Holocaust occur?' and 'How can we prevent it occurring again?'

### CHAPTER THREE

#### EMOTION AND LUCIDITY: CAMUS, SISYPHUS AND THE SELF

And I even think that we should understand - without ceasing to fight it - the error of those who in an excess of despair have asserted their right to dishonour and have rushed into the nihilism of the era. But the fact remains that most of us, in my country and in Europe, have refused this nihilism and have engaged upon a quest for legitimacy. They have had to forge for themselves an art of living in times of catastrophe in order to be born a second time and to fight openly against the instinct of death at work in our history.

–Albert Camus, Acceptance Speech for the Nobel Prize in Literature, 1957

Albert Camus's work specifically addressed the subject of modernity – what Camus called the 'absurd man'. His writings on the absurd, and later texts on revolt, form a body of work that can be situated clearly as a part of the French intellectual and literary attempt to deal with the modern subject. In Camus's oeuvre the subject is considered in its relation to the conditions of modernity (the death of God, the rise of Humanism and the failure of the Enlightenment) and as a participant in the shaping of something other than a transcendent, unitary teleological being. Camus's writing was influenced by and infused with his experiences of poverty in Algeria, the brutality of war-time Europe and the failure of post-war France to deal adequately with the problems it faced. But importantly, for Camus and for this thesis in relation to Foucault's work on the self, Camus developed an aesthetics of existence in his engagement with Nietzsche and his work forms an art, a body of work, that acts upon itself and equally upon Camus – the author, the intellectual, the actual. Finally, his work on the absurd can be read as addressing the key problems of fundamentalism without

dismissing or denigrating the religious views of believers. Camus's ideas on absurdity and self-reflexivity provide the theoretical foundations for an engagement, 'in-and-of-this-world' that helps prevent fundamentalism in 'our' selves. His practical indifference also provides a model for negotiating with fundamentalist 'others'.

Despite his Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957, Camus's reputation as a writer suffered in the years after his death in 1960. Though lauded for *L'Etranger* and mourned publicly by many, including Jean Paul Sartre, in the ensuing decades Camus's work was marginalised in French and international critical estimation. His standing as a philosopher was already damaged by the public split with Sartre and his circle, provoked by Camus's increasing hostility to socialism and the publication of *The Rebel* in 1951. He was remembered, if at all, as a voice of the Resistance. This role was no longer relevant to a generation which saw Algeria gain independence in 1962 after a bloody campaign and Paris barricaded in revolt throughout 1968. In the 1970s and 1980s, the rise of post-structuralism, the death of Sartre and the victory of the socialist party in the French elections of 1982 further diminished Camus's legacy. In the wider world, *L'Etranger* was still viewed and valued – erroneously – as a key 'existentialist' text.

Mark Blanchard oddly and hyperbolically labelled George W. Bush's presidency 'the Camus years', meaning that after 9/11, Camus needed to be reread as an important and valuable critical theorist relevant to uncertain times (666). Jeffrey C. Isaac similarly noted the value of reappraising Camus in light of contemporary circumstances. The focus of this reappraisal has been *The Rebel* and the theme of revolt. However, this thesis takes its directions from Israeli author Avi Sagi, examining the absurd and reassessing its presence in the 'life work' of Camus on Camus and his oeuvre. It also explores how Camus's absurd can be used to re-engage with fundamentalisms. This thesis does not use Camus's texts to analyse the foundations of fundamentalisms as something outside of the experience of the Western

modern subject – a ‘them’ opposed to ‘us’. In this thesis, Camus’s work on the absurd is proffered as a means of resisting the growth of fundamentalisms within ourselves – as subjects of modernity’s modernities. Thus, Camus’s work is experiential rather than prescriptive. This approach can be applied to a mode of being in this world that produces the framework for an ethics, rather than as a condemnatory, oppositional or ideologically-entwined set of practices. In this approach, this thesis begins the process of decorating the abyss – avoiding totalising systems, the ethical abjection of nihilism and the tendency to prescribe the lives of others.

This chapter considers how the concept of the absurd functioned in Camus’s work, and how the absurd reflectively acted upon his work and life. Biographical contexts of *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *L’Etranger* and *The Rebel* are outlined. Subsequently, there is a textual analysis of *The Myth* before a review of criticisms of Camus’s philosophy of the absurd and the possible problems he identified with using *The Myth* on its own to formulate an ethics of the self. Finally, in opening a space in which to analyse Foucault’s ethics of the self, the chapter asks: How is it possible to see the absurd as working reflexively on Camus’s work? How much does Nietzsche influence *The Myth*?

Camus developed his understanding of the absurd in the years preceding World War II, when he still lived in Algeria. His early *Carnets* (Notebooks) contain sketches of the concept. According to biographer Herbert Lottman, Camus was contemplating crafting a work based on his understanding of the absurd by 1936 (115). Residing in Algiers, he was involved in a number of theatrical, journalistic and political endeavours as well as finishing his dissertation on Christianity and Neo-Platonism. Throughout 1937, Camus was involved with the Algerian House of Culture, a space intimately connected to the political and social issues of the day through its participation in the arts, the production of intellectual manifestos and the staging of cultural discussions – including a debate on André Gide’s ‘pessimistic’

report on the USSR (141). This debate marked the beginning of the end of Camus's participation in the Communist Party. Ironically, he was expelled for Trotskyite agitation, among other incidents and Camus severed official ties with the Party in mid-1937 (Todd 62, Lottman 168).

Camus's social, cultural and political pursuits proved generative. Slowly he formed a cross-platform approach to his writing, honed by his experience as translator and director of events at the House of Culture. At the same time his body was failing him, with repeated bouts of tuberculosis preventing a future career in either the academy or military. The rise of fascism in Spain and Hitler's Germany provided further impetus for Camus's writing in Algerian newspapers. In this turmoil he began writing his 'absurd trilogy' – the philosophical treatise *The Myth of Sisyphus*, the accompanying novel *L'Etranger* and the play *Caligula*.

*The Myth* was written 'in 1940, amidst the French and European disaster' (*The Myth* 7) but only fully published in 1946 with the inclusion of a chapter on Franz Kafka – banned during the Occupation due to the prohibition of work on Jewish writers. In 1955, as another battle stripped him of his friends, his social standing and his position within French intellectual circles, Camus provided the best description of *The Myth*'s famous assertion that suicide was the central philosophical question of his times. In the preface to the English translation he wrote that this 'book declares that even within the limits of nihilism it is possible to find the means to proceed beyond nihilism. In all the books I have written since, I have attempted to pursue this direction... [*The Myth* is] a lucid invitation to live and to create, in the very midst of the desert' (7).

In the two paragraph introduction 'An Absurd Reasoning', Camus writes that 'the absurd... is considered in this essay as a starting point'. The commentary requires 'no metaphysic, no belief is involved in it for the moment.' Camus characterises *The Myth* as 'provisional' and indebted to 'certain contemporary thinkers'. This is not a manifesto

demanding an acceptance of Camus's rhetorical and logical assertions. Rather, what is 'merely the description, in the pure state, of an intellectual malady' is something Camus presents as very personal. The final line, 'Certain personal experiences urge me to make this clear', also indicates that this philosophical essay was not written in the dispassionate prose and pose of contemporary French intellectuals and Academicians (10). For Camus, *The Myth* was a work of survival: it presented the philosophical and ethical self-practice he depended on for life.

Camus is forthright: 'Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy' (11). This judgement and its consequences signpost the way an ethics of the self might be germinated. Camus issues a statement that evocatively describes not just what he will write in this work, but also a course he will pursue throughout his career: 'Solely the balance between evidence and lyricism can allow us to achieve simultaneously emotion and lucidity' (12). This confirms his introductory assertions and prefigures the arguments that follow. Descriptive and coherent, *The Myth* highlights both the importance of reason and its inadequacy as an alternative to totalising belief systems.

Camus turns first to a sympathetic discussion of the impulse to suicide, hinting at the religiosity of the act: 'In a sense, and as in melodrama, killing yourself amounts to confessing. It is confessing that life is too much for you or that you do not understand it'. To a point, such a confession is understandable: 'Living, naturally, is never easy. You continue making the gestures commanded by existence for many reasons, the first of which is habit. Dying voluntarily,' he continues, 'implies that you have recognized, even instinctively, the ridiculous character of that habit' (13).

However, the recognition of this habit does not necessarily demand suicide as a response. Thus, Camus begins his analysis of what comes before the moment when suicide is

embraced as the only valid action. In ‘a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity’ (13). This understanding, this desperate enlightenment, is the central theme of *The Myth* and its companions *L’Etranger* and *Caligula*. This awareness comprehensively shaped Camus’s subsequent actions and understanding of his life.

Camus asks how we can respond to this absurdity: Is suicide the appropriate answer (14)? Does life’s ‘absurdity require one to escape it through hope or suicide – this is what must be clarified, hunted down and elucidated... Does the Absurd dictate death?’. In the same paragraph, Camus addresses the failings of those who have asked such a question before and the methods they developed in their answers. ‘Many have begun,’ Camus writes about absurd reasoning before noting, somewhat disingenuously, ‘I do not yet know whether or not they kept to it’ (16). This is Camus’s mode of engagement: logic and feeling, analysis and counter-attack, using the works of past masters to show where their attempts crumble and desert their truths.

Camus does not define the absurd or absurdity precisely. He conceptualises it in terms of the feeling that it produces. The absurd does not exist, in and of itself: rather, it is the product of the interaction between the human being and the world. It is ‘that elusive feeling of absurdity’, a result of the realisation of the relation between one’s self and the world. And ‘[t]he climate of absurdity is in the beginning’ (18); it is neither an end point nor a fixed point. How can this be?

*The Myth* traces the birth of this feeling ‘in which the void becomes eloquent, in which the chain of daily gestures is broken, in which the heart vainly seeks the link that will connect it again’. Camus writes of the quotidian timetable of an average worker, the

repetition of the routine ‘work, meal, sleep’ most days of the week until, for an undescribed reason, ‘the “why” arises and everything begins in that weariness.... it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness. It awakens consciousness and provokes what follows’. Consciousness, or the awareness of the absurd, is then preceded by existence, certainly, and possibly an essence, which Camus considers in later works. But in *The Myth*, Camus is not interested in origins which cannot be proved. He is preoccupied only with what he can know through logic and feeling. Logic and feeling lead those who experience the absurd to ‘suicide or recovery’ (19).

Coinciding with the feeling of weariness is an awareness of time: its fleetingness and, in particular, one’s role in the procession towards death. ‘He [sic] belongs to time and, by the horror that seizes him, he recognizes his worst enemy’. The absurd can also be found in ‘the denseness and that strangeness of the world’, how the ‘primitive hostility of the world rises up to face us across millennia’ (20). One’s fellow human beings, or one’s relationships with them, are hosts of the absurd. One is ‘the stranger who at certain seconds comes to meet us in a mirror, the familiar and yet alarming brother we encounter in our own photographs’. Finally, Camus leads us to death. We can have no preliminary experience of it, yet ‘everything has been said.... From this inert body on which a slap makes no mark the soul has disappeared. This elementary and definitive aspect of the adventure constitutes the absurd feeling’ (21). These ‘absurd discoveries’ may provide an answer to the question: ‘Is one to die voluntarily or to hope in spite of everything?’ (22).

Camus pauses here to consider what type of answers might be valid. He quotes Aristotle before asserting that the ‘mind’s deepest desire, even in its most elaborate operations, parallels man’s unconscious feelings in the face of his universe: it is an insistence upon familiarity, an appetite for clarity’ (22-3). This desire for unity is what causes us to demand an adequate response from the universe. It consequently generates feelings of



meaninglessness when the universe returns our cries for meaning with indifference. Camus alleges it is this desire that fuels the demand for religions, for totalising belief systems that falsely reassure – as opposed to allowing the absurd man to stare into the abyss and accept the universe on its own terms. He warns: ‘That nostalgia for unity, that appetite for the absolute illustrates the essential impulse for the human drama. But the fact of that nostalgia’s existence does not imply that it is to be immediately satisfied’ (23). Just because we desire does not make it so. In fact, the attempted conversion of this desire into being leads us further away from the ability to respond adequately to the absurd and to the contradictions that encompass and confront the mind.

If Camus moves swiftly through the metaphysical and psychological, he plunders epistemology with equal speed. ‘Of whom and of what indeed can I say: “I know that!”’ he exclaims, before branching into a type of phenomenology. A judgement can be formed from what his heart feels and his body touches but there ‘ends all my knowledge, and the rest is construction. For if I try to seize this self of which I feel sure, if I try to define and to summarize it, it is nothing but water slipping through my fingers.... Between the certainty I have of my existence and the content I try to give to that assurance, the gap will never be filled. For ever I shall be a stranger to myself’.

This is Camus’s firmest statement on essence in *The Myth* – on the notion of a fixed, stable self and on the possibilities of an enduring knowledge emanating from therein. For Camus, it is a ‘sense’ of self, a slippery feeling that resists containment. Consequently, Camus situates Socrates’s maxim ‘know thyself’ alongside the ‘be virtuous’ of the Church: ‘They reveal a nostalgia at the same time as an ignorance. They are sterile exercises on great subjects’ (24). In contrast, *The Myth* is not instructional but expository – if the reader gains any knowledge, or an ethics, it is through the relation of their experiences to the concepts they encounter in *The Myth*.

Camus's text is also an accusation of the nameless scientists who have encouraged the author to 'seize phenomena and enumerate them' but not know them, leaving him in a condition where he 'can have peace only by refusing to know and to live'. This is his 'poisoned peace, produced by thoughtlessness, lack of heart or fatal renunciations' (25). The peace is not lasting. Camus continues his critique of rationality, science and then religion:

[B]ind reason... may well claim that all is clear.... That universal reason, practical or ethical, that determinism, those categories that explain everything are enough to make a decent man laugh.... They negate [the mind's] profound truth which is to be enchained. In this unintelligible and limited universe, man's fate henceforth assumes its meaning. A horde of irrationals has sprung up and surrounds him until his ultimate end. In his recovered and now studied lucidity, the feeling of the absurd becomes clear and definite. (26)

This encapsulates the value of Camus's critique for the formation of an ethics of thought that refutes the tendency to grand narratives common to fundamentalisms. This scepticism was born from his experiences with the Communist Party during the 1930s and the rise of fascism on the continent. Camus contends that it is not necessary to have faith in the transcendence of History (determinism), race or religion, or a narrative that provides a totalising explanation. Rather, it is in the midst of 'this unintelligible and limited universe' that we are possessed of the ability to see our situation most clearly; to contemplate the absurd that we encounter and to stand bravely in the unknown and the unknowable. 'The world in itself is not reasonable,' he continues, 'that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation of the irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart. The absurd depends as much on man as on the world. For the moment it is all that links them together' (26).

Camus displays a familiarity with 'existential' texts that attempted to address these issues. Citing Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger, Camus notes the violence of the attack on reason before highlighting the role of the spiritual in phenomenology (27-30). But rather than deifying the unknowable, he declares it nonsense, claiming: 'The world itself, whose single meaning I do not understand, is but a vast irrational' (31). Here, Camus seems eager for a singular solution. 'If one could only say just once: "this is clear", all would be saved' (31), but Camus knows such a solution is unavailable, impossible according to his own assumptions. Again, Camus speaks of himself as much as to others, writing that 'man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him his longing for happiness and for reason. The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world' (31-2). This is Camus's awareness of his situation and his relationship with the absurd. He is honest in his exposition of his nostalgia for complete reason, for a state of understanding that could produce a happy belonging as opposed to the eternal exile of a stranger. What concerns Camus is how to deal with this exile, how to confront the abyss in oneself. He understands the severity of the situation, writing of the philosophers he has mentioned: 'Living under that stifling sky forces one to get away or to stay. The important thing is to find out how people get away in the first case and why people stay in the second case. This is how I define the problem of suicide and the possible interest in the conclusions of existential philosophy' (32).

In his inimitable style, Camus pauses to consider the differences between the meaning of the absurd and its consequences. He charts the quotidian uses of the term 'absurd' before noting that its effect lies in what 'springs from a comparison' between the two objects involved. As Camus understands it, the absurd 'is essentially a divorce. It lies in neither of the elements compared; it is born of their confrontation' (33). Consequently, 'the Absurd is not in man... nor in the world, but in their presence together. For the moment it is the only

bond uniting them'. Camus cites this bond – in actuality, this divorce – as the first certainty underpinning his subsequent argument. For Camus, the absurd is the essential element of human life in the universe, 'the confrontation and... unceasing struggle' that unites as much as it crushes (34). Death ends the absurd, as it ends the life that confronts the indifferent universe. Likewise, there is no absurd beyond this world as we can know it. The struggle through life 'implies a total absence of hope (which has nothing to do with despair), a continual rejection (which must not be confused with renunciation), and a conscious dissatisfaction (which must not be compared to immature unrest)' (34-5). These three elements constitute the practices of the absurd human: an ethics of the self that articulates how the struggle might be conducted, how the confrontation could be managed and how life can be lived in the absence of universal answers.

Throughout Camus's career and life, well beyond his early writings, these principles were a guiding force, propelling him away from blind communitarianism and uncritical contrarianism. Camus did not abandon his right to reject or the responsibility that came with this – whether in his final years with *Combat*, disgusted with the rise of De Gaulle and the failure of the possibilities of the Fourth Republic, or throughout the years of apparent silence during the Algerian crisis. Nor would he offer a partisan solution to appease his critics (Todd 387). It was not communism or capitalism, the French colony of Algeria or the independent Muslim nation of Algeria. Absence of hope, continual rejection and conscious dissatisfaction allowed Camus to live and offer a life in which one was, as his famous essay title recognised, 'neither victim *nor* executioner.' Camus's philosophy was also his practice.

The truth, for Camus and those who awakened to the absurd, was that they were 'for ever bound to' it. The human tendency is 'to escape the universe of which he is the creator' and certain 'men, starting from a critique of rationalism' have tried to elaborate this (35). Camus remonstrates with these thinkers for the 'forced hope [that] is religious in all of them'.

This is their crime: abandoning the struggle with the absurd for a hopeful passage across the abyss. These thinkers extend their guilt by covering their religion with the cloak of philosophy: Jaspers ‘contributes nothing new’, just the ‘confession of his own impotence’ (35-6). Camus insists that the answers are ‘worthy of the conflict that concerns me’ and Jaspers, in deifying that which is not understandable and thus transcending it, is not. Likewise, Leon Chestov is found wanting: ‘To Chestov reason is useless but there is something beyond reason. To an absurd mind reason is useless and there is nothing beyond reason’ (38). This limited power of reason is Camus’s bulwark against the excesses of Enlightenment philosophy and Christian thought. There is no refuge. Camus’s sceptical search continues – but it is not in search of a final point. The ‘point’ is in the search. To consider, to examine, to refute – in these actions, and how one conducts them, Camus and the absurd man are found: ‘He recognizes the struggle, does not absolutely scorn reason and admits the irrational.... He knows ... in that alert awareness there is no further place for hope’ (39). Kierkegaard therefore also fails: he ‘wants to be cured.... The entire effort of his intelligence is to escape the antinomy of the human condition’. Furthermore ‘he gives the irrational the appearance and God the attributes of the absurd: unjust, incoherent and incomprehensible’ (41).

Again the presence of hope and the idea of transcendence enable Camus to discard Kierkegaard’s theories. He writes: ‘I want to know whether I can live with what I know and with that alone.’ Consequently the ‘absurd, which is the metaphysical state of the conscious man, does not lead to God.’ Camus footnotes this declaration with ‘I did not say “excludes God”, which would still amount to asserting’ (42). Camus is not interested in ‘the beyond’ that he finds his fellow philosophers need to justify their existence in ‘the now’. He takes Kierkegaard’s question, ‘if the bottomless void that nothing can fill underlay all things, what would life be but despair?’ and answers: ‘This cry is not likely to stop the absurd man.

Seeking what is true is not seeking what is desirable'. Finally, in the statement that underpins Camus's commitment to the truths of his project and the ethics he has established for himself, he argues: 'If in order to elude the anxious question: "What would life be?" one must, like the donkey, feed on the roses of illusion, then the absurd mind, rather than resigning itself to falsehood, prefers to adopt fearlessly Kierkegaard's reply: "despair"'. Camus stares into the abyss, asserts its existence and its necessity and contends: 'Everything considered, a determined soul will always manage' (43). This is neither blind courage nor the ignorant bravura of those convinced of another existence as they charge into battle. It is mindful, considered, sceptical and aware. This determination, empowered by these considerations, is the first site that links Camus to Michel Foucault and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

Universal reason – what Camus considers 'the most widespread spiritual attitude of our enlightened age' – is no substitute (43). Phenomenology, part of the pre-war intellectual framework of France, is dismissed as a 'metaphysic of consolation' (47). 'The abstract philosopher,' Camus writes, 'and the religious philosopher start out from the same disorder and support each other in the same anxiety'. Although their paths to their truths may be different, 'the will to arrive suffices' (48). Reason 'provides modern anguish the means of calming itself in the familiar setting of the eternal', earning Camus's scorn for providing the illusion of a unitary truth (48-9). Husserl gives reason no limits; Kierkegaard offers a powerful limit to comfort the existential anguish. But the absurd, Camus contends, 'is lucid reason noting its limits' (49). These existentialists, as Camus calls them, do not satisfy his efforts to live and think 'with those dislocations, of knowing whether one had to accept or refuse'. Husserl's 'final leap restores in him the eternal and its comfort'; for Kierkegaard the danger is before the leap, not the leap itself (50). Neither will suffice for the absurd (hu)man.

Neither will they suffice for Camus, who returns to the personal under the heading of 'Absurd Freedom'. He reasserts his commitment to what he knows. 'I can negate everything

of that part of me that lives on vague nostalgias,' he writes, 'except this desire for unity, this longing to solve, this need for clarity and cohesion.' He continues:

I can refute everything in this world surrounding me that offends or enraptures me, except this chaos, this sovereign chance and this divine equivalence which springs from anarchy. I don't know whether this world has a meaning that transcends it. But I know that I do not know that meaning and that it is impossible for me just now to know it. (51)

This is Camus's clarity, his knowledge that notes its limits. He adds: 'What I touch, what resists me – that is what I understand. And these two certainties – my appetite for the absolute and for unity and the impossibility of reducing this world to a rational and reasonable principle – I also know that I cannot reconcile them' (51). Camus is clear on the power of the nostalgia for unity at the heart of fundamentalisms and totalising belief systems. It is this nostalgia that allows for the present to be circumvented and abused in the name of a day – that of judgement or that of the new man – which is yet to come.

However, this nostalgia is shadowed by a recognition of the impossibility of absolute union, the resistance of the world and the universe to acquiesce to all-too-human demands. In that recognition, the futility of fundamentalisms can be identified. By accepting this, the attraction of such anti-movements is apparent. In the combination of recognition and acceptance, the call of fundamentalisms, totalising systems and grand narratives can be identified and rejected. Clarity returns 'through a constant awareness [of the absurd], ever revived, ever alert'. Camus sees this path 'in daily life.... This hell of the present is his Kingdom at last. All problems recover their sharp edge.... Is one going to die, escape by the leap, rebuild a mansion of ideas and forms to one's own scale? Is one on the contrary going to take up the heartrending and marvellous wager of the absurd?' (52). There are choices. That much is clear.

The absurd man will be tempted to accept illusions of unity or to leap into the arms of those who promise it. But the absurd man demands ‘to live *solely* with what he knows, to accommodate himself to what is and to bring in nothing that is not certain. He is told that nothing is. But this at least is a certainty’. Camus is aware that the theme that prompted his enquiries has returned: the matter of suicide must now be addressed. He contends that the question itself, and therefore our response, has changed. It ‘was previously a question of finding out whether or not life had to have a meaning to be lived. It now becomes clear on the contrary that it will be lived all the better if it has no meaning’ (53). Camus is not arguing that life is meaningless, but that meaning emerges from the living of life.

Moving on, Camus argues that to ‘abolish conscious revolt is to elude the problem. The theme of permanent revolution is thus carried into individual experience. Living is keeping the absurd alive. Keeping it alive is above all contemplating it.... One of the only coherent philosophical positions is thus revolt’. Why? Because revolt is a ‘constant confrontation between man and his own obscurity. It is an insistence upon an impossible transparency. It challenges the world anew every second’ (53). Therefore, the absurd man finds meaning in revolt – an absurd revolt, bound to fail against the indifference of the universe, but an honest revolt nevertheless. It is ‘devoid of hope’, existing in the present without the need for a new day. By revolting, the absurd man defines himself in distinction to the rationalists and the religious who equally claim the term. Rather than sliding into the pitfalls of nihilism or redemptive transcendence, this ‘revolt gives life its value.... it restores a majesty to that life. To a man devoid of blinkers, there is no finer sight than that of the intelligence at grips with a reality that transcends it.... That discipline that the mind imposes on itself, that will conjured up out of nothing, that face-to-face struggle have something exceptional about them’ (54).



Finally Camus returns to the Sirens who tempt with ‘doctrines that explain everything’. With a nod to the certainty of Augustine, he writes ‘I cannot conceive that a sceptical metaphysics can be joined to an ethics of renunciation’ (54). For Camus: ‘Consciousness and revolt, these rejections are the contrary of renunciation’. In a double rejection of those who tempt and the accusations of nihilism levelled at him, Camus asserts: ‘The absurd man can only drain everything to the bitter end, and deplete himself. The absurd is his extreme tension which he maintains constantly by solitary effort, for he knows in that consciousness and in that day-to-day revolt he gives proof of his only truth which is defiance’ (55).

There is a type of freedom that comes with the knowledge of the absurd and this defiance. If ‘the absurd cancels all my chances of eternal freedom,’ Camus writes, ‘it restores and magnifies on the other hand my freedom of action’ (56). But this is not a limitless freedom granted from above. It is a freedom that knows its own limits and is made greater by this self-reflexive knowledge. Camus knows, for instance, that ‘the absurd man *realizes* that he *was* not really free’ when he comprehends the way he has been influenced by moral or social presumptions. This is similar to the process of becoming aware of one’s subjectivisation, conceptualised by Foucault. The absurd guarantees no future and thus provides Camus his ‘inner freedom’ (57).

Unlike the mystics who give themselves to a god, the absurd man who understands the absurdity of life and the guarantee of death can feel free, even though he is lost ‘in that bottomless certainty’ (58). Here, the ‘absurd man thus catches sight of a burning and frigid, transparent and limited universe in which nothing is possible but everything is given, and beyond which all is collapse and nothingness. He can then decide to accept such a universe and draw from it his strength, his refusal to hope, and the unyielding evidence of a life

without consolation' (58-9). This freedom comes with responsibilities – the responsibility of possibilities that exist in the revolt against the absurd.

Camus carefully avoids the equation that freedom is the meaning of life. He refers to his primary goal of living 'without appeal' to external recourse and affirms the value of a life privileging quantity over quality. This is the most problematic section of *The Myth*, as Camus calls for the abandonment of value judgements (59). By favouring quantity over quality, his aim is to emphasise that it 'is up to us to be conscious of' the experiences we have: 'Being aware of one's life, one's revolt, one's freedom, and to the maximum, is living' (61). He does not allege that all experiences should have no quality but rather that all of them should be lived equally as experiences, with revolt and 'to the maximum'. Each moment of life is absurd and therefore we are empowered to revolt at any time. Accordingly, the 'present and the succession of presents before a constantly conscious soul is the ideal of the absurd man.... Having started from an anguished awareness of the inhuman, the meditation on the absurd returns at the end of its itinerary to the very heart of the passionate flames of human revolt' (62). This constitutes one of the differences between Camus's and Foucault's ethics and also suggests the need to combine them. Camus rescues the possibility of the moment from the totality of History, whereas Foucault reminds us of the moment's and the actor's contingency. By refuting suicide, Camus asserts a value judgement: he contends that if the mind 'must encounter a night, let it be rather that of despair which remains lucid – polar night, vigil of the mind – whence will arise perhaps that white and virginal brightness which outlines every object in the light of intelligence'. As he notes before moving on to explore literary and historical models for the absurd man, the 'preceding merely defines a way of thinking. But the point is to live' (63).

Following an assertion concerning the value of living itself, Camus refuses to prescribe how value in that living is managed. 'There can be no question of holding forth on

ethics,' he writes. 'I have seen people behave badly with great morality and I note everyday that integrity has no need of rules' (64). Camus insists on the existence of integrity but not its connection to any codified structure of practices. But this lack of restriction does not constitute a vacuum: 'The absurd does not liberate; it binds. It does not authorize all actions. Everything is permitted does not mean that nothing is forbidden. The absurd merely confers an equivalence on the consequences of those actions'. This equivalence is not an absence but an equal responsibility. Camus's absurd does not have a plan outlining what constitutes his existence, but an understanding of the responsibility that underlies it. As Camus declares: 'All systems of morality are based on the idea that an action has consequences that legitimize or cancel it. A mind imbued with the absurd merely judges that those consequences must be considered calmly. It is ready to pay up'. Here too, Camus's distaste for codification parallels Foucault's work on the ethics of the self.

Camus contends that the 'absurd mind cannot so much expect rules at the end of its reasoning'. Rather, the absurd mind encounters 'illustrations and the breath of human lives' (65). To decorate the abyss, one must live in it, be responsible for one's actions therein and be suspicious of all attempts that offer salvation. The absurd man realises the possibilities of life in the living of life guided by this self-reflexive consciousness.

Camus proceeds to discuss 'Conquerors' – an example of the absurd man – to elucidate a further point. 'Conquerors sometimes talk of vanquishing and overcoming. But it is always "overcoming oneself"'. Fighting this battle in the 'human crucible', the Conquerors

encounter there the only values they like and admire, man and his silence....

There is but one luxury for them – that of human relations. How can one fail to realize that in the vulnerable universe everything that is human and solely human assumes a more vivid meaning?.... [Intelligence] lights up the desert

and dominates it. It knows its obligations and illustrates them. It will die at the same time as this body. But knowing this constitutes its freedom. (83)

Contrary to the accusations of Camus's critics, the practice of this freedom leads to an engagement with others – not a self-absorbed, nihilistic apolitical stance.

*The Myth's* penultimate chapter 'Absurd Creation' supplies examples of lived freedom and suggests the connections that link Camus and Foucault to Nietzsche. These examples provide 'profound and constant thought' to strengthen the absurd man in his efforts to 'elude nothing'. Camus quotes Nietzsche, arguing that 'the absurd joy *par excellence* is creation. "Art and nothing but art," said Nietzsche; "we have art in order not to die of the truth"' (86). Camus contends that 'the work of art is then the sole chance of keeping [the absurd man's] consciousness and of fixing its adventures'. Here Camus glances at what Foucault later brings into focus: art 'has no more significance than the continual and imperceptible creation in which the actor, the conqueror, and all absurd men indulge every day of their lives' (87). For Foucault, existence will become the art itself.

Likewise, Camus contends that for 'the same reason as the thinker, the artist commits himself and becomes himself in his work' (89); yet the work 'cannot be the end, the meaning, the consolation of life. Creating or not creating changes nothing. The absurd creator does not prize his work' (90). On this point, Camus is not clear. If the absurd creator does not value his work, how can the absurd creator engage fully and passionately with himself, the work of his creation? A dispassionate, indifferent approach does not create the moment of awakening to the absurd. It is an involved, mindful and self-reflexive creation, lucid and aware of its limits through experience, that allows the self to appraise its situation. 'Prize' is not the correct term. What needs to be invoked here is a sense of time – thus, the absurd creator does not view his creation as static and unchanging. Subsequently, the self's existence, its 'how of being', attests to the absurd, lives 'without' appeal and provides an example against

fundamentalisms that seek to negate or transcend what Camus views as the fundamentals of the absurd. For Camus, 'in the end, the great artist [of the absurd]... is above all a great living being, it being understood that living in this case is just as much experiencing as reflecting.... The absurd work illustrates thought's renouncing of its privilege and its resignation to being no more than the intelligence that works up appearances and covers with images what has no reason' (90). Consequently, an absurd existence testifies to both its own limits and its temporality. It is mindful of the responsibilities to its freedom in the present, in the action of its being. Though its existence is futile, its 'being' in the present is alive with possibilities.

While writing of the role of the absurd artist who understands that his work has no transcendent significance, Camus issues an edict for those committed to transforming their existence. Although in the long term existence is utterly futile (107), their understanding and acceptance of the absurd requires them to create: 'you must give the void its colours' (103). This creation is 'the staggering evidence of man's sole dignity: the dogged revolt against his condition, perseverance in an effort considered sterile. It calls for a daily effort, self-mastery, a precise estimate of the limits of truth, measure and strength. It constitutes an *ascesis*'. Camus concludes that 'perhaps the great work of art has less importance in itself than in the ordeal it demands of a man and the opportunity with which it provides him of overcoming his phantoms and approaching a little closer to his naked reality' (104).

Finally Camus introduces the mythical character of the essay's title. Sisyphus is the absurd hero *par excellence*: his 'scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted towards accomplishing nothing'. Camus sees this as 'the price that must be paid for the passions of this earth' (108); the tragedy is that Sisyphus is conscious of the absurdity of his punishment. Yet it is his very lucidity that transforms the situation: Camus declares, somewhat naively, that there 'is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn' (109). This naivety will not appear

in Camus's post-Holocaust works. For the purposes of this thesis however, 'surmount' can be understood as a transformation, not a transcendence.

Consequently, in his consciousness, in acknowledging his fate and yet continuing, mindfully, Sisyphus represents an example of how to bear existence without 'recourse to appeal'. The absurd 'teaches that all is not, has not been, exhausted.... It makes of fate a human matter which must be settled among men'. It removes our illusions and our consolations, but Camus rightly contends with lyrical precision: 'There is no sun without shadow, and it is essential to know the night' (110). It is this knowledge, not hope, which accompanies us to the dawn. And it is the final absurdity of Camus's essay – his defining example of the absurd hero is a victim of the Gods beyond. Through an encounter with Camus's and Sisyphus's consciousness of the absurd, aware and awake in the night, they and the reader become much more than passive recipients of an external, imposed and predestined fate.

Can Camus's description of the absurd and his attempts to battle with it be viewed as constituting a totalising approach? No. Nowhere in Camus's work is there a demand to take his arguments as inerrant. In fact, scepticism of all dogma, of reason *and* irrationality, is encouraged. Furthermore, Camus never asserts that his arguments comprise a truth transcending all other conceptions of existence. In this matter, Sagi compares Camus to Ludwig Wittgenstein, arguing that they insist 'that an all-encompassing explanation of the world requires a perspective from outside the world enabling us to grasp this unity. For Camus, who emphasizes the finality of reason, this point of view is not possible' (62-3).

Though Camus criticises the existentialists and the religious, his estimation is diminished by the flaws in their arguments as much as how they exist in relation to the available evidence (*The Myth* 35). Camus does not offer an apocalyptic scenario to rid the world of its chaos: the chaos is accepted as part of existence and is necessary to an

understanding of it. There is no return to a primeval garden, only the nostalgia for unity. But to suggest a utopia to remedy this is anathema to Camus's assertions. In his life and work, Camus was unwilling to dogmatise the absurd. The absurd is a starting point, not an end in itself, and though its conception and understanding are consistent referents throughout, Camus is eager to challenge himself – as he did with the issue of Algerian independence and Sartre's support of the Communist Party. As Camus writes in his essay 'Pessimism and Courage': 'No, everything is not summed up in negation and absurdity. But we must first posit negation and absurdity because they are what our generation has encountered and what we must take into account' (qtd. in Isaac 52). The absurd is not a totality, but a departure point on the journey of becoming.

Writing in 1948, Michel Mohrt made the accusation that as an 'ethics engendered by an aesthetics, the code of Albert Camus remains that of an élite... The poetic modes in which their revolt finds utterance are themselves exceptional. In the word "complicity" itself, which Camus prefers to "solidarity," there is a proud suggestion of choice, of election' (118). Yet Camus's exceptionalism answers to the urgency of the absurd in the everyday as much as it does to times of war. There is no thereafter, no time of safety from the exigencies of the quotidian: war, terrorism and the use and abuse of others for totalising ends shed light on the mechanisms of the everyday, rather than distract from them. If a decision is made not to kill one's self or an other, what follows is the question: How then do we live? The practices undertaken in day-to-day life testify to both the world as it is and the manner by which it is constructed and destroyed. Neither a self nor a great work of art is created through moments of thoughtlessness, grand abandon or ignorance. They are produced by a reflexive and sceptical process, open to possibilities yet careful not to accept easily available answers. Camus's ethics, from Sisyphus through to the characters on the bridge in *The Fall*, all speak to and from that basic question: How are we to live?

Camus insists the absurd is a starting point. However, many critics conceptualised it as a terminus. But Camus abandoned the absurd as an end-point after his experiences in the Resistance and the ravages of World War II. What Sagi terms ‘solipsism’ is overtaken by the moralistic humanism of *The Rebel*, where Camus’s emphasis on solidarity and revolt against murder are rightly highlighted as valuable counters to nihilism and totalitarianism. To see revolt without the absurd is to strip it from its foundations – it is the very value of the absurd life that Camus elaborates in *The Myth*. Without this life, there is no right to live it. Without the freedom to reject suicide, philosophical and corporeal, there is no corresponding responsibility to not take life.

Critiques of *The Myth* as a stand-alone text can be broadly categorised as falling into two camps. The first argues that its status as a philosophical work is questionable in terms of logic (Ayer and Cruickshank in Thody 56). The second maintains that it is a personalised exploration and subsequent generalisation of the absurd (Nagel 721-7). Philip Thody’s response to these criticisms is appropriate: ‘Even though [Camus’s] premise of the absurdity of the world may be highly personal and unproven, his attitude towards it is most consistent... linked with a modest realisation that, although reason and individual judgement may be fallible, they are in fact all we have’ (57). Furthermore, Camus ‘always insisted that the essay on the absurd was not to be looked upon as recommending a universal attitude, and that it was simply an objective and provisional statement of what conclusions could be drawn from a particular starting point. “What did I do,” he later wrote, “but reason on an idea which I found in the streets of my time?”’ (60).

In ‘Albert Camus and the Ethic of Absurdity’ (1965) Herbert Hochberg critiqued both these positions – absurdity and the possibility of an ethics emerging from it. He memorably wrote in the opening paragraph that Camus ‘failed completely’ at the latter and his success in the former was dependant on ‘triviality... [and] paradoxical ambiguities’ (87). Hochberg



began his sustained attack by exploring the philosophy of the neo-Platonist Plotinus, juxtaposing it to Camus's. Hochberg's use of Plotinus as a philosophical instrument to probe Camus's work is ironic – Camus's teaching license dissertation was, in part, focussed on Plotinus, a fact Hochberg seems unaware of as he discusses the Greek philosopher's ideas. As I. H. Walker observes: 'It was, indeed, in Plotinus that Camus encountered travel in an alien land as an allegory of the human condition, which, much modified, was to provide him with the two most persistent symbols in his work, *patrie* [native land] or *royaume* [kingdom] and its counterpart, *exile*' (qtd. in Eubanks and Petrakis 294).

Nevertheless, Hochberg correctly elucidates the Plotinian position that 'rational thought... was thus held to be incapable of comprehending *absolute unity*.... In the mystic experience the One is finally reached and grasped' (87-8). This, to Camus, would mean 'there is no Plotinian absolute – no ultimate unity, divine or secular, which explains all' (89). Hochberg rightly suggests that Camus seeks all or nothing to explain existence, a situation Camus finds untenable as neither absolute reason nor a leap of faith is acceptable. Camus wants meaning from this world and yet meaning will never be enough. Hochberg sees this as problematic, arguing that Camus fails 'to provide the intrinsic value he seeks' (90). However this argument can only be sustained if Camus is viewed as arguing that life has an inherent meaning prior to human interaction. To the contrary, in *The Myth* he argues that life comes to have meaning only after we understand it has no external, pre-existing meaning. Meaning is in the living – the becoming and the being – and all life's problems arise therein. Hochberg's notion of intrinsic value suggests a transcendent solution, universally available as a response to the absurd. Camus meticulously argues against this and the false hope it entails. Life is worth living precisely because it is not worth not living; our reason and our consciousness are both curse and blessing. Freedom is responsibility.

Hochberg continued his refutation of Camus's absurdism with a bitter twist: 'One hopes [*The Myth*] is not the sole barrier holding some from suicide'. He charges that 'Camus has leaped from the factual premise that the juxtaposition of man and the universe is absurd, to the evaluative conclusion that this state ought to be preserved' (92). Again, Hochberg is correct but Camus's 'leap' is a factual necessity of Camus's position – to seek an overthrow of the absurd would require an abandonment of his principles, his stated desire to find how it is possible to live 'without recourse' to faith, to nihilism or utopian totalitarianism. For Camus, living is the best and only revenge against the absurd. Hochberg accurately paraphrases Camus's claim that 'the realization of [our own immanent] death brings us freedom' (Hochberg 94). It is an absurd logic but this makes it neither less cohesive as a philosophy nor less valid as a response to the situation that creates it.

Much of Hochberg's subsequent argument pivots on the failure of Camus's elaboration of the ethic of revolt in *The Rebel*. Hochberg is not alone in this judgement. The well-regarded Camus scholar John Cruickshank dismisses Camus's ethics as unsatisfactory; so too is 'his solipsistic moral world, which provides no basis for a sound ethics, and his moral absolutes of "freedom" and "lucidity".' (qtd. in Carlson 270). Cruickshank's particular concern is Camus's notion of an ethics of quantity as opposed to quality. According to Camus, each experience is of equal significance. Each moment contains a possibility. This is opposed to an ethic of quality, whereby suicide would become acceptable after one achieves the perfect moment. For Camus, this would be impossible – how could one realise perfection and know about it, except in the negative?

Hochberg maintains that an ethic of quantity opens the door to nihilism, pleasure for pleasure's sake. He concedes that Camus slams shut this door in *The Rebel*, which adds murder to Camus's list of absolute sins against life (95). Contrary to Cruickshank, Hochberg attests that 'out of the absurd emerges morality' (95).

Finally, Serge Doubrovsky defends Camus's absurd from the very traps Cruickshank and others have highlighted: 'Camus has no system, no general framework, no philosophy.... it is impossible to extract a "morality" from Camus's various intuitions and an "ethic" from his meditations on ethics.... What Camus's monotonous and powerful appeal to "justice" or to "happiness" reveals is in fact, an existentialist tension, rather than any rules for the living' (72). The symptoms are well documented; the prescription is left for us to write and repeatedly erase.

Avi Sagi's *Albert Camus and the Philosophy of the Absurd*, published in English translation in 2002, illuminates Camus's work in terms of its cohesion as an oeuvre and the contextualisation of his work on the self. Sagi conceptualises Camus as part of 'the breed of thinkers whose philosophy is a conscious contest with their lives', propelled by 'a contradictory experience involving the sense of a crumbling, disintegrating reality eroding his ontological security... for a metaphysical and transcendent order' (1). In distinction to more traditional scholars who identify *The Rebel* as the final and separate part of Camus's philosophical work, Sagi argues that Camus's vision of the individual and the absurd and human solidarity, and the failure of both to transcend man's problems, extend throughout his fictional work. Sagi views *The Fall* as proof that 'Camus is recurrently concerned with the decoding of the absurd' (24). Therefore, each work can be read as engaging in a dialogue with its predecessors. Like the self that Camus became, each work is contingent and in flux, refusing and refuting the absolute in favour of a moderated, limits-based understanding of reason, the self and the consequences of their interaction. Consequently, Sagi's research can be extrapolated to resituate Camus as a predecessor of work on the self and an ethics of the self. These themes emerge later in French intellectual culture, especially in the final works of Foucault.

Sagi charts the development of the concept of the self and its alienation, with particular relation to the ‘development of philosophical agnosticism and... profound scepticism’ that characterised the loss of ‘epistemological security’ following the Enlightenment (12-3). From Pascal and Rousseau through the German Romantics to Marx and Kierkegaard, Sagi demonstrates how the individual had come to be seen as alienated from itself and from society, a process exacerbated by the development of modernity. He proceeds to differentiate this alienation from Camus’s absurd: ‘The experience of alienation focuses on the process of detachment and separation. By contrast, the experience of the absurd assumes that unity and alienation coexist, and the sole legitimate meaning of unity is the constant yearning for it. The yearning for unity does not eliminate alienation, it intensifies it’ (23). This yearning and its place and presence in human existence is the constant theme of Camus’s work – both the literary and philosophical, and the work of his life on himself.

Sagi terms thinkers who use their personal experience as the primary matter for their philosophy as ‘personal philosophers’, placing Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and others alongside Camus. Accordingly, ‘the literary or philosophical work of the personal thinker is a form of self-objectification.... Philosophizing, then, is an unremitting endeavour of self-interpretation or, in Karl Jaspers’s words, “existence is interpretation”’ (26). He continues: ‘Self-interpretation is the process through which personal thinkers shape their lives, and has a dynamic meaning as the process through which individuals transcend their givenness, their original mode of existence.... The epitome of self-interpretation is action, the return to existence’ (26-7). Sagi’s use of ‘transcendence’ here is problematic. A more suitable term is ‘transformation’. But later, discussing the connection between Camus and Husserl, Sagi adds: ‘The elimination of transcendent dimensions and the perception of consciousness as a kind of relationship to a complex cluster of experiences extracts the world from the shallowness and

uniformity resulting from classic rationalism' (55). In light of this, Camus's and Foucault's ethics can be seen precisely as 'a return to existence'.

Therefore, personal thinkers 'decode or mold the meaning of their existence by exposing the general foundations underlying their concrete individual experience.... They live in the tension between affirming the personal and its transcendence into the general. This tension marks the boundaries of the field within which personal thinkers create their own selves' (27). From the introductory statement in 'An Absurd Reasoning', Camus's work in *The Myth* is personal. His oeuvre constitutes the boundaries of his own self. Although Camus's texts were his own creation, they can be used to help the reader reflect on the process of constructing their selves.

Many have followed Camus's work through *The Plague* to *The Rebel*, charting the journey from absurd understanding to concrete revolt (Sagi 65). How one acts on oneself through a process of self articulation and transformation; the ethics of how that self might interact with an Other, other than its own self, is explored not only in *The Rebel*, but also throughout the works of Emmanuel Levinas, Hannah Arendt and Jacques Derrida. Each attests to the significance of the Holocaust in post-World War II European philosophy. Similarly, each merits further study in relation to the crafting of an interpersonal, non-prescriptive ethics. However, this thesis turns to Sagi's reading of *The Fall* to frame a view of Camus's oeuvre and its relation to the project of Foucault.

Discussing *The Fall*, Sagi claims that Clamence, the central character of the novel who allegedly resembles Camus, 'argues that his existentialist friends are incapable, as he is, to act in response to a demand addressed to them by other human beings. Unlike them, however, he does not pretend to appear as an accomplished, innocent man and, unlike them, he is aware of himself as an actor incapable of fully experiencing reality' (132). This

reflexive awareness is also apparent in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* where *how* one waits is as important as the waiting: the ethics are as important as the subsequent action.

Sagi sees much of Clamence's self-criticism as Camus questioning himself, citing Donald Lazere's reading of the novel as 'Camus now questioning whether his position [on Algerian independence] is not an expression of the stagnation that had taken hold of him' (132). If Camus is criticising the morality of his generation, a generation which had triumphed over the Nazis and yet squandered victory's possibilities, he is also criticising himself. Here, though Camus condemns the inability to act, he 'does not reject the hope that human beings might respond to the demand, willing to take risks and jump into the cold water to rescue themselves and the other from narcissism and self-involvement' (134). This is neither a hope in transcendence nor the leap of faith that he opposes in *The Myth*: it is a recognition of the possibilities of existence, of being and its consequences. Without optimism or pessimism, Camus never resolves what he, Clamence and the reader are to become. Instead, he highlights the confluence of situations that confront and challenge them.

The price of freedom – the freedom to reflect and shape the self – may be inaction and alienation but they are undertaken consciously. Sagi argues that self consciousness 'creates images; instead of destroying the masks to discover the authentic self concealed in the depths, it supplies more and more options for existence' (136). Furthermore, Clamence shows that 'self-consciousness invariably leads us to discover the arbitrary, imaginative element in human life. Individuals believe they have found themselves, they have reached home, but consciousness rediscovers that the "self," or being "home," is just another game' (137). Camus's absurd actor re-turns, ceaselessly acting yet aware of the act. There is nothing to return to, no fundamental self and certainly nothing innocent. However, the show must go on.

For Sagi, then, *The Fall* 'is a kind of voyage, not to a place but to the self'. There is no arrival except in that voyage, a dangerous voyage 'without an identity and without a

defined reference group'. As Sagi concludes, 'Clarence's modern *rite de passage* does not end, because no basic cosmic ontological order exists to ensure transition from one identity to another. Self-consciousness also stops individuals from innocently re-entering a new identity. The fall thus represents a process, an endless existential voyage' (143), the always and already becoming in the limited, finite and shrinking of being.

Finally, Sagi argues that Camus offers a 'lucidity, a transparent consciousness well aware of its limits.... self-restraint, confining ourselves to the boundaries of the possible' (176). This clarity of gaze – its interrogation of the self and existence – is a crucial element of Camus's endeavours to transform the abyss that resides within. Through a conscious acceptance of the absurd and a willingness to question his assumptions as mercilessly as he did those of others, Camus translated his theory into action. If Camus's work revisits and rewrites itself, it is because Camus did so on himself.

Camus offers a wide-eyed, knowing appreciation of the present and its possibilities, born from suffering as much as from knowledge. This is formed by scepticism toward promises of the future and in full knowledge of the nostalgic seductions of the past. The self gazes into the abyss because the self constitutes that abyss. Camus's challenge is to transform the abyss by acknowledging it and acting – upon the self and in life itself.

This action upon the self, by the self – in this case both on Camus the man and Camus's work – is best summed up by critic Donald Lazere. In *The Unique Creation of Albert Camus*, Lazere regards 'as the most distinctive quality of... [Camus's] art the dialectical interrelations between all his individual novels, stories, plays and philosophical, lyrical, and journalistic essays that unite them thematically and stylistically into what is in effect a single, dynamic creation' (ix). Furthermore, Lazere argues for an understanding of the works as interacting circularly, rather than the traditional linear interpretation offered by previous critics. He writes that 'the philosophy of limits, for instance, that is central to *The*

*Rebel*, already appears in *The Myth* and some of the early lyrical essays' (8). Lazere does not contradict those who note the distinction between *The Myth* and *The Rebel*. Instead, he believes that Camus 'begins *The Myth* by dramatically setting a tone of despair and knocking down all the conventional values, only to end up reaffirming life's worth and reconstituting a value system within the terms of the absurd, and this final position in *The Myth* in turn becomes only a preamble or point of departure to *The Rebel*' (9).

Camus's texts possess an inherent instability, which Sagi suggests 'reveals [Camus] as a critical thinker, willing to reexamine his positions... realiz[ing] the ideal of philosophy as a lasting pursuit'. Sagi continues: 'Camus's work is an existential pilgrimage... his thought moves with the pace of life... his thought and literary oeuvre grow from and react to real life... Camus is inconsistent, since latent in experience are new insights and new understandings' (172-3). Therefore, the value of Camus's work can be located in its transformations.

In retrospect, Mark Orme considers that Camus engaged in 'an experiment of "writing the self better," an idea instrumental to autobiographical discourse and which... can also be applied to *The Rebel*.... This psychological shift away from despair toward lucidity reflects, then, Camus's response to the prospect and actuality of war' (109). Olivier Todd concurs. In

almost all his writings, Camus had expressed a tragic emotion about life and a massive mistrust of those who built systems. His temperament and his reading of Nietzsche nourished his suspicions of all traditional morality.... As a writer, busy with the relations between aesthetics and ethics, he did not want to propose any universal moral code... From 1938 to 1941 he had a feeling of absurdity about the world, history, and his own life. (142-3)

Referring to Camus's personal struggle against tuberculosis, Todd notes that faced 'with illness and attacks of lassitude, Camus was as heroic as the absurd man described in his book,



often scorning and despising his life's contingencies. The absurd was also the inadmissible, the inexcusable, and the incomprehensible' (145). Thus we return to the intimate, personal struggle essential to the understanding and contextualisation of *The Myth*. As an historic work with autobiographical dimensions, it is a document of a battle, an outline of a strategy and a self-assisting explanation that alters the self of Camus as it is crafted. As a work on its own, it lays the foundation of the absurd, that impasse in which Camus wondered if we could live (Todd 167), the rolling rock which his own work would wrestle with continually and endlessly. Camus understood that Camus had to change – his work, his silence, his attempts at intervention testify to that becoming. Against the prevailing intellectual milieu, against his own personal struggles with the complexities of colonisation, against his past of poverty and illness, Camus did not fall back on the systems of belief he despised or submit to easy answers. He transformed himself into a thinker, a writer, a being, someone different from The First Man in his final work. His ethics, if one can refer to them, were an ethics of the self, a personal ethic communicated publically through his work on Camus – the man – and his writings. Perhaps, as we re-read Camus's work against itself, we can imagine Camus happy in the abyss.

Nietzsche was crucial in Camus's development and understanding of the role of aesthetics in his self-crafting. Jacob Golomb maintains that like 'Nietzsche, [Camus] demands that we liberate ourselves from the yearning for salvation by overcoming our nostalgia for it... The way to live with the absurd on the verge of the abyss is not to seek external salvation but to turn to self-creation' (175). Isaac notes that Camus identified 'with Nietzsche's critique of the self-assured modern sovereign self' (98), a critique particularly resonant in Camus's earlier works including *The Myth*. However, following Plotinus – one of the subjects of Camus's first scholarly work *Christian Metaphysics and Neoplatonism* – Camus's absurd man was well aware of limits and responsibilities, and his emphasis on a

more productive nihilism saw Camus move away from the German's concept of the *übermensch* (98). Though scholars such as Orme correctly highlight the significance of Nietzsche's philosophy in the crafting of *The Rebel* (159), many also see *The Myth* as Camus's first significant attempt to both engage in a dialogue with the German and separate himself from the philosopher, of whom he wrote in *The Rebel*, 'with him, nihilism becomes conscious for the first time' (qtd. in Orme 159). Writing in 1968, F. C. St Aubyn claimed, with some exaggeration, that 'Nietzsche's influence on *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* is revealed on almost every page, where he is mentioned or quoted from first to last' (110). Aubyn cites Germaine Bree's assertion that 'Nietzsche he read thoroughly and with passionate attention after 1937, and he was fighting against Nietzsche more than any other philosopher or at least against certain facets of Nietzsche's thought' (111).

In *The Myth*, Camus wrestles Nietzsche and his *übermensch*. William Duvall's essay 'Albert Camus Against History' outlines Camus's linking of Nietzsche with Hegel and Marx: 'Together they yield the logic of world domination, demand totality not unity, and are culpable as the creators and the cause of the prison house that was the twentieth century' (79–80). Ultimately, in Camus's eyes they stand together as the 'three evil geniuses of contemporary Europe (who) bore the label of philosopher.' Duvall argues that Camus came to see Nietzsche's proclamation of 'nothing is true, if the world is without order, then nothing is forbidden' as a precursor to passive nihilism and the definitive servitude of inaction; for if nothing is forbidden, 'at the same time nothing is authorized' (Camus qtd in Duvall 143). This dialogue with Nietzsche is not just an analytical exercise for Camus. To speak to Nietzsche and his proclamations of freedom, as much as his presentation of nihilism, would be to speak to Camus's own self and to the absurdity and tragedy of the early war years.

The differences between Nietzsche's aesthetic theories and Camus's own thoughts on the value of art would allow Camus, as Nietzsche might well have encouraged, to

differentiate himself from his master. George Sefler, in his comparison of the two, writes first of the similarities when contemplating the question of life and its value:

Man, if he is to survive, must accept and embrace life. What is life? An incarnation of dissonance, states Nietzsche. Camus concurs: There are no absolute values in the world, only confused, unachieved ends. Thus acceptance of life has certain shattering consequences. It is to these consequences that both men's aesthetics are directed and thereby justified.

However, Sefler continues:

Man, Nietzsche maintains, in order to endure life needs artistic illusions to veil it with a cope of beauty.... Camus denies this function to art; it veils nothing. In this sense Camus's world is more severe than Nietzsche's – the latter has included within its bounds a means of sedation to calm man momentarily in his existential situation: art. No such tranquilizing agent exists within Camus's world. Art aggravates worldly tensions; it does not soothe them. Absurd art makes more piercing the acute distresses of man by portraying them artistically.... Art does not offer a refuge from reality. It cannot be the consolation for life. Yet it is precisely such consolation which Nietzsche sees in art. (419)

In the articulation of an aesthetics of the absurd, as opposed to the aesthetics of existentialism, Sefler finds Camus's mastery: 'The good student listens to the master; then he builds upon the latter's insights, either in the form of a constructive continuance or of a reactionary reversal.' In Sefler's opinion, 'Camus built upon a Nietzschean foundation, altering, modifying, and rejecting elements of his thought. Within the world of aesthetics, Camus's position has transfigured Nietzsche's' (420).

Camus would continue this transfiguration, altering his own work and himself in response to the atrocities of the Holocaust, the spirit of the Resistance and his exile from Jean Paul Sartre's kingdom. *The Myth*, however, is Camus's flare erupting into the darkness of European nihilism and the failure of the Enlightenment. It provides scholars of French intellectual thought with a point at which humanism, nihilism, existentialism and Christian discourses converge. It also provides Camus scholars the philosophical underpinnings which Camus responded to, rejected and reworked throughout his life. Finally, it provides an understanding of how an ethics of the self can appear; the types of self reflexivity and scepticism that are necessary and the possibilities of a becoming – concerns which Michel Foucault attempted to articulate in the final years of his life.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FOUCAULT, CRITIQUE AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE SELF

Basically, I have only one object of historical study, that is the threshold of modernity. Who are we, we who speak a language such that it has powers that are imposed on us in our society as well as on other societies? What is this language which can be turned against us which we can turn against ourselves? What is this incredible obsession with the passage to the universal in Western discourse? That is my historical problem.

– Michel Foucault

By 1986, when the two final volumes of *The History of Sexuality* were translated into English, Michel Foucault had been dead for two years. In the English-speaking world he was principally known for *Discipline and Punish*, his work on the social functions of power, and *The Will to Knowledge*, the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. The latter work was best known for its refutation of the ‘repressive hypothesis’: instead of restricting speech, the modern subject was formed precisely by this demand to speak of itself and its sexuality. *The Will to Knowledge* quickly became a core text in gay and lesbian studies (O’Leary 22), while *Discipline and Punish* formed part of a common framework in the areas of identity production, post-colonial studies and the burgeoning field of cultural studies (Mort and Peters 9). These two works, published in the mid-late 1970s, were Foucault’s functioning faces in Anglophone academia. Consequently, it was with confusion, anger and misunderstanding that proponents of Foucault’s work greeted the two posthumous books, *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*, volumes two and three respectively of his *History of Sexuality*. This reaction was provoked by Foucault’s consideration of the ancient Greek and Roman

conceptions of everyday ethical practice, which many critics regarded as irrelevant to modern questions of sexuality in the mid-1980s. It was also viewed as an apparent return to a subject of agency that was capable of working on its self – a position that seemed to contradict the received understanding of his earlier analysis of subjectivity and the problems of Humanism. Foucault's emphasis on aesthetic practices of the self – as opposed to collectivised action – was judged objectionable by many on the left. He was criticised for failing to offer work that treated contemporary conceptions of sexuality and power relations with any appropriate depth.

The reaction in France was different. The two volumes were published in June 1984 and Foucault's death soon after overshadowed debate on their content. When the gaze returned to the two volumes a more nuanced interaction resulted. Scholars and those familiar with Foucault's work were aware that for the previous four years his annual presentations at the Collège de France focussed on issues relating to his study of the practices of the self. His seminars pivoted on what he termed the 'problematising' of norms connected to the desiring subject. His research revealed that these processes of normalisation stretched back to antiquity in differing formations (Foucault *Use 5*).

However, this 'new' work did not contradict Foucault's previous examinations of how power functioned in society: the project emerged directly from studies undertaken in the late 1970s. In attempting to chart the development of the modern subject of sexuality, Foucault analysed forms of power. First was biopower – the ways governments and nation states constituted their subjects into populations to be managed (Lloyd and Thacker 46). Second was pastoral power, in which he saw psychiatric practices (Peters 365) as the inheritors of confessions of the self developed by the Catholic Church (Bernauer 79), with the faithful confessing their sins to an empowered listener. Foucault, whose histories emphasised the contingent and inter-related understanding of such practices, was thus presented with a much

larger site of study than the one he had initially conceived. Rather than charting a simple progression from the Christian self to the self of modernity, he realised that Christian practices of self-renunciation dated back to early Christian times. These techniques, in turn, inherited traditions elaborated by Greek and Roman citizens – traditions based on an entwined understanding of truth and the self's relation to that truth. Accordingly, instead of maintaining a focus on the modern subject, formed by the Enlightenment with a sexuality that constituted 'his' inner essence and needing continual revelation and control, Foucault's attention moved to the questions of how subjects became in relation to themselves: how they worked on themselves, and how their relation to particular understandings of truth and subjectivity produced different practices and subjects. The connection between these practices and their transformation by early Christian writers and monks formed the text of the fourth volume of *The History of Sexuality, Les Aveux de la chair, or Confessions of the Flesh* (Humphreys 126).

Foucault prohibited the posthumous publication of any further works. Consequently, *Confessions*, though completed, remains unpublished and is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future (Elden). Fortunately, however, Foucault's estate has published the text of the courses he gave at the Collège de France, as well as interviews and other writings that can be rightly termed Foucault's work on the ethics of the self. These writings have allowed Foucault's work on the self to be circulated more widely. They have also enabled a re-evaluation of Foucault's output: how it relates to itself and to its author, and the labour he undertook as an intellectual.

In this chapter, a critical exploration of these writings and their place in Foucault's work demonstrates how Foucault problematised the normalisation of the self – the methods he used to analyse multiple normalisations across time and the possibilities that emerged from his critique. Criticisms of Foucault's analyses are interwoven, as is an interrogation of

these critical arguments. Contemporary applications of problematisation are also investigated, to argue how and why Foucault's work on subjectivisation and the self is relevant to this thesis. The similarities of Camus and Foucault's works will again be highlighted, especially their use of Nietzsche to understand Greek aesthetic practice.

This chapter does not analyse Foucault's earlier texts such as the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, *The Will to Knowledge*. It avoids the false teleology that reads Foucault's work as either a unified oeuvre or a progression to a foundational conception of the self. It is true that at various stages in his life Foucault re-examined his work in the context of his current concerns (Fontana and Bertani 275). His death, however, imposes a limit on this reflection. There might well be some discernible progression from Foucault's research on power and knowledge to his concern with self and subjectivisation. But the suggestion that this consists of a renunciation of his earlier work or a solidification of his earlier positions is undermined by Foucault's continued emphasis on contingencies, the importance of self-reflexivity and the task of the intellectual to interrogate his own positions. Foucault never offered a programmatic interpretation of his work. Consequently, this chapter responds to the possibilities of Foucault's later works. How can they be adopted, interrogated and acted upon in contemporary Western societies? How might they assist us in becoming something other than who we are as subjects, authors and readers of ourselves?

The final volumes of Foucault's lectures were published only recently in French. In this thesis then, the texts of interviews and presentations that Foucault gave during the early 1980s, chiefly in the United States, are relied upon. They offer an elaboration of the themes explored in the final volumes of *The History of Sexuality* and are key sources for an estimation of their importance to Foucault and his work on his own self. In this thesis, the importance of Foucault's ethics of the self is considered in both the details of his research into the practices of antiquity, and the manner in which Foucault used that research to shape



himself as an intellectual. The chapter also explores the ways in which subsequent criticism approaches these works. Criticisms of Foucault's work on the self fall into three general categories: the historical accuracy of his analysis, the prioritisation of an individual, aestheticised ethics of the dandy and the privileging of a particular type of aestheticised experience. This chapter sets these critical positions in a dialogue with both Foucault's work and its interlocutors. It concludes by detailing a variety of approaches that have successfully employed Foucault's ethical framework.

In 'Still Thinking Differently: Foucault Twenty Years On', Moya Lloyd and Andrew Thacker develop an argument relating to the changes in the project of *The History of Sexuality*. They posit that Foucault signalled the shift in perspective in an interview in May 1979. Questioned about *The Will to Knowledge*, Foucault replied that the book was 'also "a history of other notions, other concepts which are related to this notion of sexuality and perversion" and "of the way in which these notions themselves have intervened in the experience of everyone"'. According to Lloyd and Thacker, this vague response marked the beginning of Foucault's investigation of 'governmentality' and his theory of the 'technologies of the self' (45). They continue:

Over the next few months Foucault came to realise that examining oneself, and formulating a consciousness of one's sexuality, were really ways of *governing* one's self, a set of discursive practices that could be related back to the earlier concerns with bio-politics and how populations and sexual identities are governed by the state and other social forces. What Foucault had called in the May interview 'a history of other notions... related to this notion of sexuality' has now become a history of *subjectivity* as such. (46-7)

In an interview with Frank Mort and Roy Peters, Foucault argued that his history was not 'in any way concerned with sexual behaviours, nor is it a history of the prohibitive

legislation of religion or morality. The analysis is a relationship of knowledge which is in the process of being developed, and of the experiential which is in the process of being transformed' (13). Even at this early stage, Foucault emphasised the notion of transformation. Liberation from the games of sexual truth was not the point. Rather, Foucault proposed an understanding of the ways in which these games had been played throughout history and how we had been the subjects of such mechanisms. Through this understanding, Foucault aimed 'to demonstrate how things which appear most evident are in fact fragile and that they rest upon particular circumstances, and are often attributable to historical conjectures which have absolutely nothing necessary or definitive about them'. The purpose of these demonstrations was 'to render us free to effect possible transformations', yet he was careful to add 'I do not believe the function of an intellectual is to prophesy, prescribe or lay down the law'. Foucault saw himself as part of a group that could 'invent forms of action, and actually to practice transformations. So I have a political activity which very much derives from internal analyses, but that is not to transform my analyses into a law for others' (19). To legislate for others was to participate in the relationship that constructed the modern self – the 'pastoral power' he vehemently opposed. The point of analysing these practices was not to replace them with new regulations or decrees by a prophet or legislator. As Foucault said in the first lecture of his 1976 Collège series, his talks were

public reports on the work I am, in other respects, left to get on with more or less as I see fit. To that extent, I actually consider myself to be under an absolute obligation to tell you roughly what I am doing... and to that extent, I think that you are completely free to do what you like with what I'm saying. These are suggestions for research, ideas, schemata, outlines, instruments; do what you like with them. (*Society* 1-2)

In this regard, Foucault's practices as a lecturer can be seen as a function of his ethical practices as an intellectual. He was not an instructor, a source for incontestable truths, but an opener of spaces within which practices of freedom could be exercised. To act thus was to counter what Arnold I. Davidson calls the traditional mode of teaching in France: 'The traditional teacher first makes his audience feel guilty for not knowing a certain number of things they should know; then he places the audience under the obligation to learn the things that he, the professor, knows; and, finally, when he has taught these things, he will verify the audience had indeed learned them' ('Introduction' in Foucault *Society* xv-xvi). Davidson continues: 'Nowhere was culpabilization, obligation, and verification less present than in Foucault's lectures at the Collège' (xvi). In the exercise of his own freedoms and responsibilities as an intellectual, Foucault was concurrently opening an arena in which his audience could become, listening and acting freely in response.

This mode of engagement with the self and other continued the following year when Foucault presented his course 'Subjectivity and Truth'. Lloyd and Thacker note the significance of this course which, in Foucault's words, explicitly linked 'a history of subjectivity and an analysis of the forms of "governmentality"'. It was 'a self-reflection and critique of his own work' as well as the place where he introduced the term 'technologies of the self', shifting the focus of *The History of Sexuality* from utterances and representations to modes of subjectivity. The lectures explored how the individual made itself a subject of these technologies – a process Foucault termed 'subjectivisation'. Foucault then argued that an analysis of the changing mechanisms by which these technologies functioned might destabilise existing notions of the self and create the possibilities for an 'ethics of the self'. (47) Foucault's lectures displayed a commitment to the notion of transformation through an understanding of the mechanisms by which the self is formed. They also showed how this could lead to corresponding actions and practices.

Volumes two and three of *The History of Sexuality* dealt with the problematisation of ‘sexual activity by philosophers and doctors in classical Greek culture of the fourth century B.C.’ and ‘the same problematization in the Greek and Latin texts of the first two centuries of *our era*’ (Foucault *Use* 12 italics mine). These volumes did not ignore the complexities of modern life or advocate the return to a golden age. As Foucault remarked in his final interview: ‘All of antiquity seems to me to have been a “profound error”’ (qtd. in Gros, 515-6). Volumes two and three of *The History* were a significant exploration of how the modern self had been formed with a concrete purpose. In 1982 Foucault wrote:

The target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political ‘double blind,’ which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures.

The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state’s institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries. (‘The Subject and Power’ 336)

These new subjectivities would not be precisely delineated. It was up to Foucault’s readers and his interlocutors to determine how this individuality would be refused.

Why do we need to refuse this subjectivisation? Foucault argued that two ‘diseases of power’, Stalinism and fascism, had ‘used, to a large extent, the ideas and the devices of our political rationality’ in their practices of governance, which resulted in the concentration camps of Auschwitz and the labour camps of Siberia (328). The conversion from an ethics of the self to a Christian knowledge – the renunciation and subjugation of the self to pastoral

power – was instrumental in the emergence of the modern subject. It was this ‘fixed’ subject of the Enlightenment who was sacrificed to Hitler’s pursuit of racial purity and a greater Germany and Stalinism’s desire to create the ‘new man’. Such a subject, no longer possessing a mode of self-reflexive ethics, required a pre-determined other – a threat to the self, the State or the History in which this subject was founded.

In the 1977 foreword to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*, Foucault asked ‘How do we rid our speech and our acts, our hearts and our pleasures, of fascism? How do we ferret out the fascism that is ingrained in our behavior?’ (qtd in Bernauer and Carrette 227). Foucault’s ‘genealogies’ constituted the basis of his efforts to confront that fascism. He contended that we were susceptible to its totalising power of fixed identity. Resistance could be enabled by constantly problematising subjectivity and the normalisation of the self.

Interviewed in 1984, Foucault articulated the significance of problematisation in regard to his overall work. He claimed that the ‘notion common to all the work that I have done since *Histoire de la folie* is that of problematization, though it must be said that I never isolated this notion specifically’:

Problematization doesn’t mean representation of a pre-existing object, nor the creation by discourse of an object that doesn’t exist. It is the totality of discursive or non-discursive practices that introduces something into the play of true and false and constitutes it as an object for thought (whether in the form of moral reflection, scientific knowledge, political knowledge, etc.).

(‘The Concern for Truth’ 257)

In another interview the same year, he described thought as ‘what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and to question it as to its meaning, its conditions, its goals. Thought is freedom in relation to what

one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem' ('Polemics' 117).

Problematisation made this type of thought possible, responded 'to these difficulties, but by doing something quite other than expressing them or manifesting them: in connection with them, it develops the conditions in which possible responses can be given; it defines the elements that will constitute what the different solutions attempt to respond to' (118). Foucault's work, then, was a problematisation of the self: the circumstances by which it came to be formed and transformed; the role of sexual ethics and desire in its formation and the possibilities that were articulated and incorporated by subsequent practices.

In effect, Foucault's exploration of the problematisation of sex and ethics in Hellenic and Christian times was part of his much larger project – the problematisation of the modern self and the possibilities of its transformation. The project also encompassed the problematisation of Michel Foucault as an intellectual, and the practices and possibilities that he could develop in order to enact a transformation of his own self into something other. As he stated in the first chapter of *The Use of Pleasure*: 'There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all' (8). Reiterating his commitment to a practice that related to the times in which he was writing, he asked:

In what does [philosophical activity]... consist, if not in the endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known?... [I]t is entitled to explore what might be changed, in its own thought, through the practice of a knowledge that is foreign to it.... at least if we assume that philosophy is still what it was in times past, i.e., an 'ascesis,'... an exercise of oneself in the activity of thought. (9)

After outlining his commitment to the problematization of sexuality as an ethical concern in early Christianity and Greco-Roman cultures, Foucault argues that these concerns were linked to ‘an arts of existence.... those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria.’ These were the ‘arts of existence’ – the ‘techniques of the self’ – which absorbed Foucault (10-11). Foucault’s passage is clear and personal: ‘I would like to show how, in classical antiquity, sexual activity and sexual pleasures were problematized through practices of the self, bringing into play the criteria of an “aesthetics of existence”’ (12).

Foucault’s research methods, historical accuracy and the surrounding histories from which Foucault took his impetus have been acutely surveyed in Timothy O’Leary’s *Foucault and the Art of Ethics*. However, this chapter examines how Foucault’s work on the self (*travail*) worked on his self as an intellectual and his work (*oeuvre*). It explores the process of Foucault’s work and its practical consequences. It considers how the work is adopted, contested, misunderstood and reclaimed.

After his introduction to *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault quickly separates his notion of ethics from a broader, more widely-understood concept of morality. Initially he delineates the code of morality as ‘a set of values and rules of action that are recommended to individuals through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies’ and are diffused throughout society and its institutions (25). He moves to ‘the real behavior of individuals in relation to the rules and values that are recommended to them’: meaning that the ‘manner in which they comply’, their degree of compliance and their transgression of the code constitute ‘the morality of behaviors’ (25-26). Foucault’s subsequent argument that ‘the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject acting in reference to the prescriptive elements

that make up the code' is crucial to this delineation (26). This definition of the ethics of the self distinguishes his work from Levinas and Derrida. Foucault's concern is with the relationship of the subject with itself: the manner in which it constitutes itself as something to be worked upon and how it works on itself. In contrast, Levinas argues that by 'playing close and careful attention to the face of the other person... there could be a reorientation not only of ethics but also of human life itself, for our seeing of the other's face would drive home how closely human beings are connected and how much the existence of the other person confers responsibility upon us' (Roth *Ethics During* 70). Contrary to the views of his critics, Foucault's ethics were not absent of an engagement with society and a care for others. They worked through a sustained practice of the care of the self which would turn the self upon itself, becoming something and someone other. Foucault uses this second understanding of morality to elaborate his histories within a four-part framework.

The first category is the determination of the ethical substance: 'the way in which the individual has to constitute this or that part of himself as the prime material of his moral conduct'. Foucault provides as an example the mastery of one's desires to achieve fidelity: therefore 'the contradictory movements of the soul' are the 'prime material' to be worked on (*Use* 26). Second is the mode of subjection (*mode d'assujettissement*): 'the way in which the individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it into practice'. This can be defining one's self as a husband, a member of a religious community or an individual who gives 'one's personal life a form that answers to criteria of brilliance, beauty, nobility or perfection' (27). Third, one identifies the type of work to be done on one's self and how one does it (*travail éthique*) – by practicing abstinence, for example. Finally, one asks what is the *telos* of such a practice? This is the desirable goal of the work and Foucault lists the purification of the self and self-mastery of the passions as exemplary results (28).



Foucault begins to use this model by way of a comparison. Christian moralities tended to focus on a form of subjectivation producing the self-sacrificing subject – a participant in the relationship of pastoral power. Greek and Greco-Roman practices articulated different concerns which, for Foucault, created the possibilities of alternative forms of subjectivisation. The Greeks and Romans emphasised ‘the relationship with the self that enabled a person to keep from being carried away by the appetites and pleasures, to maintain a mastery and superiority over them, to keep his senses in a state of tranquillity, to remain free from interior bondage to the passions... the perfect supremacy of oneself over oneself’ (31). Foucault’s history showed ‘the way in which individuals [were] urged to constitute themselves as subjects of moral conduct... with the models proposed for setting up and developing relationships with the self, for self-reflection, self-knowledge, self-examination, for the decipherment of the self by oneself, for the transformations that one seeks to accomplish with oneself as object’ (29). Although these ‘ethics-oriented’ practices had been adopted by Christians, Foucault asserted that there had ‘been, at different times, juxtapositions, rivalries and conflicts, and compromises’ between them (30). These sites of engagement, adoption and differentiation would mark key points in Foucault’s genealogy of the self and its transformation ‘from Classical Greek thought up to the formulation of the Christian doctrine and pastoral ministry regarding the flesh’ (32).

Part one of *The Use of Pleasure* concentrates on ‘the moral problematization of pleasures’ in ancient Greece and discusses *aphrodisia* (the Greek term referring to acts, actions and practices of pleasure), *chrēsis* (the use of pleasures), *enkrateia* (the appropriate attitude towards the pleasures) and the freedom that was practiced by combining the three. The attitude and approach to these practices, and their effect, were privileged – not the ‘nature’ of the practices themselves such as sexual intercourse with boys. Consequently, for ‘a man, excess and passivity were the two main forms of immorality in the practice of the

*aphrodisia*'. Foucault is specific on this point: these techniques related to free men and the practice of their arts, not to the subjects of their attention such as 'women, boys, [and] slaves' (47). A free man could hardly participate in civil society and the governance of others if he could not govern himself. Passivity in sexual relations – the position as opposed to the action – was problematic: it reduced one to 'being the object of the other's pleasure' (46) and thus demeaned the free man's masculinity. Equally, excess showed an inability to control the self, to control the passions and one's self as the actor of those passions. It was to be possessed by the passions, not in charge of them. Therefore, the use of these pleasures was the ethical substance to be worked upon.

These ethical substances – their expressions and their quantity – were intricately related to the free man's position in society: correct practice was a balance of need and timeliness. A man had needs and sexual appetite was seen as similar to hunger and thirst (55). But in the same way one could over-indulge in eating and drinking, one could also have too much sex. Control of one's 'hunger' was well regarded: as the activity itself was not problematic, abstinence was not required. In terms of timeliness, one's age, the time of the day and the season had to be taken into account (57-9). Finally, one's status in relation to the practicing of these acts was important: 'the more one was in the public eye, the more authority one had or wanted to have over others, and the more one sought to make one's life into a brilliant work whose reputation would spread far and last long – the more necessary it was to adopt and maintain, *freely and deliberately*, rigorous standards of sexual conduct' (60 italics mine). This was the mode of subjection.

An appropriate form of relation to one's self, one's hungers, one's position in society and the fulfilment of one's duties was intricately linked to one's ethics of sexual practice. Moderation was of the highest value, 'particularly to those who had rank, status, and responsibility' (61). Those qualified to govern exercised this moderation in ways that

ordinary citizens and others (women, slaves and children) could not. This exercise was a personal choice with public consequences: the individual ‘made himself into an ethical subject... by means of an attitude and a quest that individualized his action, modulated it, and perhaps even gave him a special brilliance by virtue of the rational and deliberate structure his action manifested’ (62). The relationship was his *enkrateia* and it was often characterised by how the subject struggled with himself (his *travail éthique*). It was seen as ‘an active form of self-mastery, which enables one to resist or struggle, and to achieve domination in the area of desires and pleasures’ (64). One’s victory was a continual practice of self-mastery against excess, an acceptance of the presence of desires that needed to be controlled – not a renunciation of the desire itself as required by Christian practice (69-70). Constant training of the self was necessary. This form of care ‘which was a precondition that had to be met before one was qualified to attend to the affairs of others or lead them, included not only the need to know (to know the things one does not know, to know that one is ignorant, to know one’s own nature), but to attend effectively to the self, and to exercise and transform the self’ (73). Importantly,

self-mastery and the mastery of others were regarded as having the same form; since one was expected to govern oneself in the same manner as one governed one’s household and played one’s role in the city, it followed that the development of personal virtues, of *enkrateia* in particular, was not essentially different from the development that enabled one to rise above other citizens to a position of leadership. (75)

This constituted the practice of freedom (the *telos*): an active action rather than a passive state of being. A lack of moderation led to self-enslavement (79). Enslavement of the self cast doubt on one’s virility and one’s connection with the truth: ‘One could not form oneself as an ethical subject in the use of pleasures without forming oneself at the same time as a subject of

knowledge' (86). Knowledge of the self was part of the practice of caring for the self: it was not until later that Socrates's 'Know thyself' was transformed by Christian practice into a command to acknowledge and renounce the self. One knew one's self in order to be aware of the degree to which one could do battle with one's self; knowledge was essential to moderation (88). However, as Foucault argues, 'this relation to truth never took the form of a decipherment of the self by the self, never that of a hermeneutics of desire' (89).

Unlike Christian and modern discourses of the self, there was no true self to find: 'it was not an epistemological condition enabling the individual to recognize himself in his singularity as a desiring subject and to purify himself of the desire that was thus brought to light' (89). This later epistemology was critical to the conception of the self throughout the Christian ages. It also formed the basis of the modern self as the subject of psychiatry and the natural sciences.

The notion of a true self was critical in the conception of a racialised, acculturated Teutonic self and othered Jew in Nazi Germany. It was also central to the idea of a liberated proletariat and the invocation of the working man in a teleological History that supported Stalinism. The absence of the true self in history is pivotal to Foucault's argument that the self is not a residual essence but a constituted, contingent result of a set of practices. This aesthetic ethics of the self requires a 'how' of doing rather than of being and is multiple in its constructions and effects. It is produced by the action of the self upon itself. Foucault's model offers a type of self-reflexive practice that resists those fundamentalisms of the self articulated by totalising movements and thought-systems in our time.

The remainder of *The Use of Pleasure* details the ways that the Greeks used practices of dietetics and economics as forms of self-stylisation. Foucault considers how these practices related to the moderation of self, the governing of self and the governing of households and citizens. Modes of subjection are examined (174). So too are the elaborations

of erotic moderation for the free man. Foucault notes a strange duality in these ethics – they also provided guidance for the young boy and how he was ‘to achieve self-mastery in not yielding to others’ on his journey to the status of a free man (212). This was problematic in terms of a freely practiced ethics: the boy underwent tests in his training to prove himself strong in various fields yet he was expected to assume the subordinate position when engaged in sexual relationships with a man. Foucault resolves this, suggesting that dishonour was not conferred because of the passive position but rather in the subject’s acceptance of ‘the first comer’ – by allowing oneself to be ‘passed from hand to hand’ (211). These were inappropriate modes of subjection and elaboration. The youth – neither a child nor a man – ‘formed a “strategic” point around which a complex game was required’ (213). The boy’s practices were cared for by both him and the free men, masters of their own selves, who formed his community, with the *telos* being a becoming, the development of an elaborated work of art (213). This was difficult work with a clear goal: Foucault argues that it ‘is clear that philosophy is an asset that is necessary for the young man’s wise conduct; not, however, in order to guide him toward another form of life, but to enable him to exercise self-mastery and to triumph over others in the difficult game of ordeals to be undergone and honor to be safeguarded’ (212).

Why is this relevant? Foucault argues that this problematisation of the youth, his body and his practices, provoked changes in the ethics of the self. By exploring Plato’s *Symposium*, in which Plato shifts the discussion from the boy as the subject of love to love itself, Foucault discerns a profound change in ethical procedures: one that privileges knowledge over care. This change signals a practice that renounces ‘all physical relations with boys’ as a means of concern for both love and the ‘respect that is owing to the virility of the adolescent and to his future status as a free man. It is no longer simply the problem of a man’s becoming the master of his pleasure; it is a problem of knowing how one can make allowance for the

other's freedom in the mastery that one exercises over oneself and in the true love that one bears for him'(252). This marks a 'shift in emphasis' towards both sexual austerity and the mastery of others, including women, and a realigning of the relationship 'between husband and wife' (253). New subjects found themselves relating to a broader code: their *telos* changed from self-mastery to self-knowledge and, eventually, to self renunciation.

A different 'arts of existence' emerged, as did a different concept of the self and its relationship with truth. Volume three of *The History of Sexuality, The Care of the Self*, articulates how this ethics developed.

In contrast to the personalised introduction to *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault devotes the first three chapters of *The Care of the Self* to a reading of Artemidorus's *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Foucault writes that 'the analysis of dreams was one of the techniques of existence' (5); Artemidorus's dream-work provided 'indications concerning [ancient] modes of valuation and generally accepted attitudes' (9). Foucault's exposition recognises the 'different way of thinking about sexual acts and different principles for evaluating them... with a view to the actor, his way of being, his particular situation, his relation to others, and the position he occupies with respect to them' (35). Specifically, the focus in the dream-analysis was on 'the subject's "style of activity" and on the relation he establishe[d] between sexual activity and the other aspects of his familial, social, and economic existence' (35). This resulted in 'a closer attention, an increased anxiety concerning sexual conduct, a greater importance accorded to marriage and its demands, and less value given to the love of boys' and a change in 'the way in which ethical thought defines the relation of the subject to his sexual activity' (36).

Foucault asserts that these changes marked an intensification of the 'relations of oneself to oneself' in both Greco-Roman and early Christian societies:

[W]hat stands out in the texts of the first centuries – more than new interdictions concerning sexual acts – is the insistence on the attention that should be brought to bear on oneself; it is the modality, scope, constancy, and exactitude of the required vigilance; it is the anxiety concerning all the disturbances of the body and the mind, which must be prevented by means of an austere regimen; it is the importance attributed to self-respect, not just insofar as one's status is concerned, but as concerns one's rational nature – a self-respect that is exercised by depriving oneself of pleasure or by confining one's indulgence to marriage or procreation. In short, and as a first approximation, this added emphasis on sexual austerity in moral reflection takes the form, not of a tightening of the code that defined prohibited acts, but of an intensification of the relation to oneself by which one constituted oneself as the subject of one's acts. (41)

Foucault argues that these early texts contest the more-recent allegation that each code of morality was different to – more progressive than – what went before. Foucault also finds the summoning of man's rational 'nature' advocated by Enlightenment thinkers. These first-century texts also suggest the practice of austerity, promoted in later Christian teachings. Finally, he finds a preoccupation with vigilance and disturbance – a preoccupation haunting the practices of 'we Victorians' and their attitudes toward infant sexuality and psychology in the nineteenth century. This is Foucault's clearest problematisation of alleged differences between the subjects of Christian faith, the 'pagans' and the 'enlightened' subjects of modernity.

In Foucault's view, early Christian ascetics rejected 'any individualism that might be inherent in the practice of reclusion' (43). Their care of the self 'took the form of an attitude, a mode of behaviour; it became instilled in ways of living; it evolved into procedures,

practices and formulas that people reflected on, developed, perfected, and taught. It thus came to constitute a social practice.... [and contributed] to a certain mode of knowledge and to the elaboration of a science' (45). Foucault considered the first two centuries 'of the [Greco-Roman] imperial age' to be 'the summit of a curve' in the 'cultivation of the self'. He clearly notes that only 'the social groups, very limited in number, that were bearers of culture' could practice these freedoms (45). The universalisation of such practices had to wait until the Christian years.

Foucault foregrounds the importance of seeing the care of the self as an ongoing activity. Epictetus considered it a privilege: 'a gift-obligation that ensures our freedom while forcing us to take ourselves as the object of all our diligence' (47). This represented a subtle shift in the *telos* of the ethics and a binding to practice that altered the mode of subjection. There was no state of stasis in terms of the care one had to apply to the self. "'Spend your whole life learning how to live"' was an aphorism' cited by Seneca, Foucault contends, 'which asked people to transform their existence into a kind of permanent exercise. And while it is good to begin early, it is important never to let up' (48-9). One's self, one's life, was involved in perpetual combat: an active struggle against weaknesses, demanding time and effort. New practices were encouraged: one sought and confided in a guide or director; one wrote and contemplated one's thoughts and personal past. Finally, one discussed these insights with others. This 'constituted, not an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice' (51).

Foucault interprets this change as simultaneous with a view of the self as frail and imperilled. A fear of illness emerges from this preoccupation: a passivity to be defended against by active exercises (54). This approach was necessary for the foundation of a reflective philosophy:



Everyone must discover that he is in a state of need, that he needs to receive medication and assistance. ‘This, then, is where the philosophic life begins,’ says Epictetus, ‘in a man’s perception of the state of his ruling faculty.... [F]or when once you realize that it is in a feeble state, you will not choose to employ it anymore for great matters. But, as it is, some men, finding themselves unable to swallow a mouthful, buy themselves a treatise, and set about eating it whole, and in consequence they vomit or have indigestion. Hence colics and fluxes and fevers’ (57-8).

This can be read as an anti-fundamentalism: to maintain good health, one had to resist the wholesale adoption of another’s practices. Foucault argues further that the ‘body the adult has to care for, when he is concerned about himself, is no longer the young body that needed shaping by gymnastics; it is a fragile, threatened body, undermined by petty miseries – a body that in turn threatens the soul’ (57). This represents a shift from the material self that is becoming to the embodied self that struggles endlessly.

Practices were developed and encouraged to test the self. These tests were not designed to isolate or absent the self from society: the aim was to assist its resistance to social forces (58-60). Self-scrutiny and an attitude of constant vigilance to the self were championed (60-62). This marked a key change from the ancient understanding that ‘an unexamined life is not worth living’. The examination of the self in regard to its own ignorance was displaced by an inspection of how and what one thought of oneself, and whether or not it was acceptable (63-4). The result was to judge and adopt ‘only that which can depend on the subject’s free and rational choice’, not to reduce one’s own ignorance in the pursuit of becoming a better citizen (64). As Foucault argues, these procedures facilitated a ‘conversion to self’, a ‘rejoining’ or return to the self achieved by ‘escaping all the dependences and enslavements’ of the everyday and those irrelevant to everyday life (65). ‘If to convert to

oneself is to turn away from the preoccupations of the external world, from the concerns of ambition, from fear of the future,' he writes, 'then one can turn back to one's own past, recall it to mind, have it unfold as one pleases before one's own eyes, and have a relationship with it that nothing can disturb' (65-6). This was a form of pleasure in one's self, a pleasure taken in the interior experience of oneself and one's work on oneself.

At this point, Foucault offers a summary of the developments in the care of the self and ways of producing oneself as an ethical subject. The development of what he calls 'truth games' is integral to this advance. Foucault writes:

It was against the background of this cultivation of the self, of its themes and practices, that reflection on the ethics of pleasure developed in the first centuries of our era.... The change had much more to do with the manner in which the individual needed to form himself as an ethical subject. The development of the cultivation of the self produced its effect not in the strengthening of that which can thwart desire, but in certain modifications relating to the formative elements of ethical subjectivity.... a shift, a change of orientation, a difference in emphasis....

Sexual pleasure as an ethical substance continues to be governed by relations of force – the force against which one must struggle and over which the subject is expected to establish his domination.... the accent is placed more and more readily on the weakness of the individual, on his frailty, on his need to flee, to escape, to protect and shelter himself... [The art of living] refers more and more to universal principles of nature or reason, which everyone must observe in the same way, whatever their social status.... [T]hrough the exercises of abstinence and control that constitute the required *askēsis*, the place allotted to self-knowledge becomes more important.... [and] makes the

question of truth – the truth concerning what one is, what one does, and what one is capable of doing – central to the formation of the ethical self. (67-8)

In the space of just four centuries the mode of subjection, the type of work and how it was to be done, and the *telos* had altered significantly.

As Volume three progresses, Foucault charts these shifts in relation to one's wife, one's peers, one's own body, and the decline of the love of boys as a central preoccupation in 'a stylistics of existence' in the Greco-Roman world (192) The focus of the problematisation of the self and its sexual practices moves from excess to the frailty of the individual self: the change 'underscores the need to subject that activity to a universal form by which one is bound, a form grounded in both nature and reason, and valid for all human beings. It likewise emphasizes the importance of developing all the practices and all the exercises by which one can maintain self-control and eventually arrive at a pure enjoyment of oneself' (238-9).

These themes remain embedded in our conception of the modern self. However, as Foucault adds, anticipating *Confessions of the Flesh*, in the centuries in between, Christian moral systems adopted and modified these pre-existing practices. This produced

a characterization of the ethical substance based on finitude, the Fall, and evil; a mode of subjection in the form of obedience to a general law that is at the same time the will of a personal god; a type of work on oneself that implies a decipherment of the soul and a purificatory hermeneutics of the desires; and a mode of ethical fulfilment that tends toward self-renunciation. (239-40)

How 'we' had become 'ourselves' was, at last, becoming clearer. How we might become something other was yet to be determined.

Pierre Hadot's 'Reflections on the Notion of the Cultivation of the Self' is one of the most significant criticisms of Foucault's analysis. In the introduction to *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault thanks Hadot, a classical scholar and an influence on Foucault's approach to the

texts of Ancient Greece and Rome (8). As Todd May writes, Hadot's work served 'as a model' for Foucault's 'own orientation toward the ancient texts', hence the importance of Hadot's re-reading of Foucault's reading of his own work (117). Hadot's article argued that Foucault deprivileges spiritual exercises in the final volumes of *The History of Sexuality*. Hadot was concerned with the implications of this deprivileging in relation to the ways that the self was conceptualised.

Hadot begins with a consideration of Foucault's outline of Stoic practices in *The Care of the Self* – practices which Foucault called 'arts of existence' and 'technologies of the self'. He writes that 'it seems to me that the way Foucault describes what I had called "spiritual exercises", and he prefers to call "techniques of the self", is too much centred on the "self", or at least on a certain conception of the self' (225). Hadot then politely notes Foucault's 'inexactitude in his presentation' (226) of joy as another pleasure taken in the self. On this point, Hadot's critique differs from more traditional concerns about Foucault's approach to history. In Hadot's opinion, Foucault's lack of precision when using the term '*gaudium*' negates the demarcation the Stoics maintained between pleasure and joy. Joy was not a pleasure, which was connected with the more obvious *hēdonē*, but a virtue arising from the care of the self: 'the Stoics wanted jealously to preserve the purity of intention of the moral conscience' (226). Hadot continues: 'Seneca does not find joy just in "Seneca", but by transcending Seneca, by discovering that he has a reason in himself, a part of the universal Reason, which is within all men and the cosmos itself' (226).

Hadot argues that the correct interpretations of the ethics of the self, these technologies, are different to Foucault's. The notion of a 'universal Reason' is too close to both a Christian and an Enlightenment Reason for it to find favour as something connecting all subjects. Equally, the ability to somehow engage freely with or to return to something universal that constitutes the self is not concordant with Foucault's exposition. Similarly, the

concept of a cosmos within which Reason exists – and where Reason exists in all selves – suggests Foucault’s early conception of the power/knowledge nexus rather than the problematisations of his late works.

Hadot wrote that the ‘Stoic exercise aims in fact at going beyond the self, at thinking and acting in union with universal reason’ (226), and referred to exercises described by Marcus Aurelius to support this view. In contrast, for Foucault there was no ‘beyond the self’ – only beyond The Self. Reason, in its ancient, Christian and Enlightenment forms, was unlikely to be of assistance: it was useful for an analysis of truth games in the constitution of the self, but never as Reason outside of its own reach. Hadot suggests Foucault’s ‘glossing over’ is, in part, due to wanting ‘to offer contemporary man a model of life (which Foucault calls the “aesthetics of existence”)', which required the ‘parenthesising’ of both universal Reason and Nature (226-7). On the one hand, Hadot is correct – Foucault’s cauterisation of these notions is not properly historical. On the other, it is difficult to believe that Foucault was offering ‘a model of life’. Foucault was offering a parallel analysis that would enable the reader to see the self differently, thus providing the possibilities of his own self-transformation. Later in ‘Reflections’ Hadot writes that

the point [of reading and writing the self] was not to gorge a spiritual identity by writing but to free oneself from one’s individuality, to raise oneself to universality. It is therefore inaccurate to talk of ‘writing about the self’; not only is it not oneself that one is writing about, but also the writing does not constitute the self: as in other spiritual exercises, it changes the level of the self; it universalises it. The miracle of this exercise, practiced in solitude, is that it makes access to the universality of reason possible in time and space....

By formulating one’s personal acts in writing, one becomes part of the link

between reason, logic and universality. One is making objective that which is confused and subjective. (229)

Through such a practice, ‘one identifies oneself with an “other” which is Nature, universal Reason, which is present in each individual. In this there is a radical transformation of perspective, a universalist and cosmic dimension which Foucault, it seems to me, did not sufficiently stress: interiorisation is going beyond the self in a way which leads to universalism’ (230). Hadot eventually concludes that

by concentrating his interpretation to such a great extent exclusively on the interpretation of the cultivation of the self, on concern for the self and on conversion towards the self and, in a general way, by defining his ethical model as an ethic of existence, Foucault might have been advancing a cultivation of the self which was too purely aesthetic – that is to say, I fear, a new form of dandyism, a late-twentieth-century version. (230)

Hadot inimitably criticises Foucault’s account as ‘not, perhaps, totally accurate’ (232). Other critics such as Wolfgang Detel in *Foucault and Antiquity* have pursued this scholarly assertion concerning Foucault’s limited approach, a limitation Foucault himself admitted. But to diminish the work’s value on this point is wrong. Foucault was explicit in the contingency of his approach. He was adamant in his view that the ancient practices were not something glorious to be regained or reproduced: Foucault ‘describes their lives in such a way as to loosen the grip ours have on us’ (May 118). Foucault’s approach was always that of a late-twentieth-century intellectual critically reflecting on his own self, his inheritance from the ancients, the Christians and the moderns. Elsewhere he describes his work as a toolkit (O’Leary 88): Foucault’s work consists of using such tools – arguably in a manner not strictly in accordance with the disciplines of History or Classical Studies – but within the framework he outlines in his lectures and his works.

Michael Ure's essay 'Senecan Moods: Foucault and Nietzsche on the Art of Self' begins with an endorsement of how

Foucault's interpretation of Hellenistic self-cultivation sets it apart from individualism understood either as a solipsistic withdrawal into the private sphere, a crude exaltation of singularity, or, as indeed Augustine saw it, an inflamed self-love that blossoms into a love of power over others.... [An] intense labour of the self on itself can, as it did with the Stoics, fuse with fulfilling one's obligations to humankind, to one's fellow citizens and to a denunciation of social withdrawal. (23)

Yet Ure alleges that Foucault 'passes over such crucial distinctions [between classical Greek and Stoic practices of the self] in his pronouncements about the contemporary relevance of the arts of the self' (29) Does he? Doesn't he devote two volumes to their changing character and refuse to privilege either by declaring antiquity 'a profound error'?

As Ure's argument continues, he increasingly prefers Nietzsche's analysis of the Greeks in his middle works: 'Like his Hellenistic predecessors, Nietzsche obsessively returns to the idea that philosophy is a therapeutic art that heals the sufferings and diseases of the soul' (38). Ure counterpoints this to his critique of Foucault, asserting that

from the Stoic and the Nietzschean perspective (or at least the Nietzsche of the middle works), the limitless, perpetual self-transformation that Foucault champions must surely count as one of the pathologies that the care of the self is designed to cure, *viz.*, the restlessness that Stoics refer to as '*stultitia*', and which they argue derives from a lack of self-sufficiency. (47)

Unfortunately, Ure's understanding rests on a misunderstanding of Foucault's project. Ure argues that Foucault's 'own approach to self-fashioning as the continuous estrangement of the self from itself, as an *askēsis* aimed at *nothing* other than getting "free of oneself" or

“straying afield of (one)self”, also strays far from the Stoics’ and Nietzsche’s *therapeia*’ (47). He quotes *The Use of Pleasure* (pages eight to nine) as his source, yet Foucault never argues that the transformation of the self occurs purely to be free of oneself or to wander ‘afield of oneself’. In *The Use of Pleasure* Foucault actually writes: ‘There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all’ (8). This is not being free for the sake of it, nor straying afield for nothing else: it is the continuation of a long period of self transformation, a means by which one transforms in order to continue looking and reflecting, thinking and acting. Philosophy consists of this ‘endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently’. It is not an artistic form of dandyism grounded in the false foundation of its own self-transformation. This is ‘the living substance of philosophy... an “ascesis”, *askēsis*, an exercise of oneself in the activity of thought’. The purpose is ‘to learn to what extent the effort to think one’s own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently’ (9).

The aim is not the action as an end point. As Foucault argues, its results were not just ‘a different way of thinking’ but a journey that ‘rejuvenates things, and ages the relationship with oneself. I seem to have gained a better perspective on the way I worked... on this project, whose goal is a history of truth. It was a matter of analyzing... the *problematizations* through which being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought – and the *practices* on the basis of which these problematizations are formed’ (11). Ure is incorrect about the goal, the intent, the result and its relation to Foucault’s antecedents.

O’Leary’s *Foucault and the Art of Ethics* notes the importance of Hadot’s criticisms and those who address them. He concedes that although criticisms of Foucault’s historical weaknesses are many, ‘they fail to adequately address the logic that underpins Foucault’s argument’ (72). O’Leary defends the idea that Foucault’s histories ‘have always had the



distinctive characteristic of being avowedly motivated by present concerns rather than a disinterested curiosity about the past' (82). He highlights the point that it was important for Foucault to formulate 'a contemporary post-Christian ethics of self-transformation'. O'Leary suggests that Foucault is 'either deliberately misleading... or else he is inconsistent' in his reading of classical ethics and his histories (82, 85). But Foucault's real aim is to 'produce a shock-effect which will jolt [Foucault's] listeners (and ultimately readers) out of their habitual acceptance of a particular form of morality.... he is a rebel who uses beauty's name to advance the same cause which animated both Nietzsche and Wilde – the end of a particular form of modern, Western morality' (86).

Foucault's "concern for the present" and "concern for truth" is crucial to O'Leary's judgement that Foucault's problematic histories are nevertheless valuable. The histories make no claim to conventional historical 'objectivity'. They have value as histories by opening up a view, a space which allows Foucault's readers to appreciate their 'critical intervention in contemporary debates about ethical subjectivity' (88). Such a reading must be particularly nuanced – it dangerously suggests that the ends, or *telos*, justify the inadequate means. Foucault's histories do not require us to view the works as ends in themselves – they withstand charges that they are historically inaccurate and subjective. Like Camus's probing of the absurd in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Foucault's histories are starting points for the individual's work on the self: a way to alter one's point of view and reference to itself which creates the possibility of changing it. They have provided the basis for studies in other critical areas, often with mixed results.

Foucault's histories have been criticised for their neglect of women and other minorities. Elois Buker's 'Hidden Desires and Missing Persons: A Feminist Deconstruction of Foucault' improves upon previous feminist critiques of Foucault. Buker asserts that 'it is my thesis that a feminist review of [*The History of Sexuality*] reveals that [Foucault]

examines male sexuality while leaving female sexuality invisible' (811). Buker argues that to 'complete this historical account of sexuality requires feminist critiques which extend and alter the analysis to include female sexuality' (811). However, the term 'female sexuality' indicates immediately that Buker's critique differs substantially from Foucault's focus on practices. Buker asks 'Can an androcentric perspective fully deconstruct Western patriarchy, or will it simply reinforce that tradition because it works from gender assumptions within it? Is the discourse *bound* to speak only from a male perspective?' In response, she suggests: 'If so, then Foucault's discourse in these texts might well serve as a critical commentary that ultimately gives symbolic sustenance to patriarchy by failing fully to critique its androcentric foundation' (812). It is regrettable that Buker sets up false binaries instead of exploring the spaces opened by Foucault's analyses or asking if a feminist approach can be found here. One might also ask at what point must Foucault's critique fully critique patriarchy in order to avoid an accusation of androcentricism? How much deconstruction of 'Western patriarchy' prevents one from being bound in a discourse? Finally, if Foucault's work is bound 'to speak only from a male perspective', how is Buker's work able to fully or even partially liberate itself?

These questions remain unanswered as Buker continues, noting the use of the universal 'we' in *The History of Sexuality*, whilst commenting on the absence of women in Foucault's work on the Greeks and Romans (813). Buker makes the familiar observation regarding the status of Foucault's histories and also suggests, contradictorily, that his 'we' contains feminist potentialities:

This Western male bias is not merely the object of his discourse but is constitutive of his discourse. The problem does not mean, however, that Foucault's sexual history [is that what it is?] is not useful for feminist analyses, although it is important to take account of how his linguistic choices

fail to deconstruct gender but instead re-present the Greek androcentric views.

(813)

Again, though Buker's point is valid, the context of Foucault's use of language is contingent – as is Buker's critical vocabulary. Though Buker's history is not written in *The History of Sexuality*, Buker has been interpellated: work is taking place on these materials in the work of the essay. Thus, Foucault's critique is productive and constraining, but certainly not silencing.

Buker's misunderstanding continues: 'Foucault's History of Sexuality searches Western culture to find the point at which it privileges heterosexuality and marriage over homosexuality' (814). This might be an effect but it is not the texts' main preoccupation. *The History of Sexuality* considers the problematisations of the desiring subject; how subjects became subjectified by discourses of hetero- and homosexuality and how they found themselves within institutions of marriage. It is not a history of marriage.

Buker admits that 'Foucault explores relationships in terms of the choices men make about the object of their love – women or boys. Because Foucault is aware of the influence of historical context on knowledge production, he does not make universal claims' (817). However: 'Foucault withholds this claim, which in some measure acknowledges the politics of his perspective. Even with his limited androcentric focus, his analysis of how Western culture privileges heterosexuality yields fruitful insights into the politics of marriage' (817). While this punning concession is adequate, it remains problematic – for Foucault to proffer a feminist analysis, he would have to adopt an anti-historical, anti-contextual universalist position: one caught in its own games of truth and knowledge production. According to Buker's reasoning, Foucault is to blame both for regarding women as subjects of the male as much as he is for not including his own liberational agenda in *The History of Sexuality*.

This critical mode persists: on the one hand, Foucault shows how ‘economic concerns encourage privileging heterosexual marital love over homosexual love’ in the first volume. Buker alleges that from ‘a modern feminist perspective, one could expand this argument to include the state’s regulation of birth through its powers over abortion, birth control devices and birth itself.... Through the state’s power over education and medical practices, it controls the knowledge that citizens receive about sexuality and birth’ (820). On the other hand, Buker laments ‘Foucault does not develop the rich detailed analysis of the mechanism of control which feminist scholars offer by exploring motherhood... patriarchy... and feminine sexuality’ (821). Yet Foucault is obvious about this – those concerns deal with relationships of power which produce the subject. His work on the self analyses the ways in which the subject can work on itself. For Foucault to suggest that men or women work on themselves in specific ways is to return to the prescriptive formula of the moral codes he wishes to avoid. The way to transformation is through the analysis of historical subjectivation, not by prescribing approaches.

Buker states that Foucault’s ‘texts offer no concrete models of women as actors’ (828) and continues: ‘This is consistent with Foucault’s desire to decenter the subject. However, to decenter the male subject in a male dominated discourse constitutes a very different project than decentering the female subject in a discourse in which women are already marginalized, decentered.’ The claim that Foucault ‘desires’ to decentre the subject is at odds with the process and methodology of his analyses. In fact, he wants to see how the desiring subject has been constructed, explicitly centred, by practices dating back to antiquity – not to decentre its apparent permanent position but to bear witness to its instability, its lack of essence. Considering the ways free men choose to do work on themselves is certainly different from detailing a history of women’s experiences. But this consideration carries with it the possibilities of upsetting the very figure that Buker claims remains centred in Foucault’s

discourse. As Buker articulates earlier, a genealogy of the male desiring subject includes by default the role of women as an object of that desire. The genealogy's effect is to promote new possibilities, not to reify or restore the old. Buker's argument relies on essentialised male and female subjects who experience their histories, rather than the notion of subjects discursively constituted by relations of power and knowledge. Foucault's work insists on its analysis of 'free' men: to include women as subjects capable of acting upon themselves in this genealogy undermines Buker's own argument that women only appear – can only appear – as objects of male desire.

Buker quotes Chris Weedon's assertion that 'it is crucial that women speak out for ourselves and occupy resistant subject positions while men work to deconstruct masculinity and its part in the exercising of patriarchal power' (828). It is as though Foucault's work does not do this, as if the histories do not open new places for interrogation. Buker ignores the new possibilities for women to view the contingencies and fault lines of contemporary subjectivities, informed by genealogies of the self. Weedon's historical genres make it impossible to speak to Foucault and his histories. In actuality, Foucault's histories are quite opposite – they encourage engagement and questioning. Foucault's texts prompt the interrogation of each of ourselves and create the possibilities of becoming something other than the normalised, heterosexual, male and masculine 'author of History' that Buker rightly despises. Eventually, Buker concludes:

A hidden desire within patriarchal discourse is the passionate commitment to keep masculinity at its centre without naming it and hence without subjecting it to scrutiny. For Foucault this manifests itself in the assumption that politics is constituted by males bonding with each other. The missing persons are women who can appear politically in Foucault's story through their relationships with men. A feminist analysis can both extend his argument and

politically enrich it by presenting accounts which offer models of masculine and feminine sexuality which are *not* built upon domination and asymmetrical power relations. (831)

An analysis like this disregards the detail Foucault provides: the history of women only as objects of desire rather than subjects capable of desiring. It also overlooks the positions and the ethics of the self in antiquity that utilised women as objects to be controlled. Furthermore, it fails to detail the ways that Greek and Hellenic practices were adopted by the Church in their androcentric forms and later universalised. This universalisation ‘allowed’ women to be included by co-opting them as equal possessors of original sin. They were required to renounce their temptress souls and maintain vigilance against the evil in their desires – often viewed as beyond the Church’s control. A better analytical mode would be a genealogy of the female subject, whose rights and equality were enshrined in the legal frameworks that constituted them as objects of repression. It would ask how contemporary female desire is co-opted, commodified, remarketed, remodelled and re-normalised in mass media. This genealogy would explore the history of women’s sexuality as written by men – a history that constitutes women as objects of reason and science’s legitimating gaze. Finally, it would examine the processes of marginalisation which form the female subject: decentred but empowered to speak to the centre, to the patriarchal discourses that constitute it.

Foucault’s death placed an existential and publishing limit on his work. Consequently, a study of his work on ethics is only possible through a reading of interviews, courses and the work done on Foucault by others. Such a study elaborates Foucault’s histories of the ethics of the self and also how they functioned upon his own self, as an intellectual and as a modern subject. This work is adopted in contemporary studies and practices and the ways in which it has been contested reaffirm the relevance of this project to the present. The benefits of adopting some of these processes, of subjecting ourselves, can be viewed in conjunction with

Camus's aestheticised self ethics. In this sense we can read Foucault through Camus and Camus through Foucault. This reading of the self working on the self, styling itself, is crucial to the crafting of a post-Holocaust ethics of the self. But these works cannot be read alone. They are the departure point on a path leading to a tree where two men wait, unable to move yet still capable of action.

An important though often overlooked place to begin this rereading is the text of a lecture Foucault gave to the French Society of Philosophy in 1978 titled 'What is Critique?'. Although the lecture is usually less valued than its counterpart 'What is Enlightenment?', it marks the beginning of Foucault's seminal re-engagement with the work of Kant. Foucault's re-engagement with the notion of Enlightenment, the role of the individual and the intellectual, and what it meant to be enlightened allowed him to connect his work on the practices of the self in antiquity to the practice of his own self in contemporary French and American life. In his introduction to the collection of Foucault's work on Kant, *The Politics of Truth*, John Rajchman writes that, for Foucault, enlightenment was a continual practice of and on the self. This task was 'something we must do to ourselves and to one another, for which we must constantly invent or reinvent the means, the techniques, the strategies, and the spaces.... Enlightenment is something we do... always in relation to historically determined forms of power' (14). Like the Greek training of the self towards its own mastery, enlightenment was an action, a series of practices, a way and a how of doing, not a permanent state of essentialised being.

Foucault begins 'What is Critique?' with a remark on critique's flexibility as both useful and virtuous. Critique operates as 'an instrument, a means for a future or a truth that it will not know nor happen to be, it oversees a domain it would want to police and is unable to regulate' (42). But it also corrects. Foucault's example is the 'Christian pastoral' model. In this extended quotation, the themes of his future work are apparent – governance, techniques

of the self, the connection between ancient and Christian practices and the subject's relationship with truth:

[E]ach individual, whatever his age or status, from the beginning to the end of his life and in his every action, had to be governed and had to let himself be governed, that is to say directed towards his salvation, by someone to whom he was bound by a total, meticulous, detailed relationship of obedience. And this salvation-oriented operation in a relationship of obedience to someone, has to be made in a triple relationship to the truth: truth understood as dogma, truth also to the degree where this orientation implies a special and individualizing knowledge of individuals; and finally, in that this direction is deployed like a reflective technique comprising general rules, particular knowledge, precepts, methods of examination, confession, interviews, etc. After all, we must not forget what, for centuries, the Greek church called *technè technôn* and what the Latin Roman church called *ars artium*. It was precisely the direction of conscience; the art of governing men. (43)

Again Foucault is careful to present the limitations of these practices – they were developed in monasteries and practiced by spiritual groups (43). However, their importance was not limited to those practitioners. As Foucault argues, ‘from the 15th century on and before the Reformation, one can say that there was a veritable explosion in the art of governing men’ (43). This explosion was not confined to the religious domain: it was precisely in emerging secular ‘civil society’ where this ‘theme of the art of governing men and the methods of doing it’ proliferated. The proliferation was also not limited to the self: new methods of governing children, armies and one's family developed, as did ‘the art of pedagogy, the art of politics, the art of economics’ and institutions of government. In the very development of the modern world, Foucault shows that the tensions between these new forms of government and



the old revolve around the axis of government, or rather ‘how not to be governed’ (44). This was the beginning of a critical attitude which critiqued modes of governance and created its own model: ‘the art of not being governed like that and at that cost’ or ‘the art of not being governed quite so much’ (45).

This development influenced the philosophers of the Reformation, the Enlightenment and modernity – how one was externally governed was articulated in the works of Martin Luther, Rousseau and Marx. Critique ‘means putting forth universal and indefeasible rights to which every government, whatever it may be, whether a monarch, a magistrate, an educator or a pater familias, will have to submit,’ Foucault writes. ‘To the question, “how not to be governed?” it answers by saying: “What are the limits of the right to govern?”’ (46). Thus, the law and the subject are intricately related. So much so, Foucault argues, in a manner that anticipates his future work, that

the core of critique is basically made of the bundle of relationships that are tied to one another, or one to the two others, power, truth and the subject. And if governmentalization is indeed this movement through which individuals are subjugated in the reality of a social practice through mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth, well, then! I will say that critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth. Well, then!: critique will be the art of voluntary insubordination, that of reflected intractability. Critique would essentially ensure the desubjugation of the subject in the context of what we would call, in a word, the politics of truth. (47)

Through reflection, distancing, questioning, utilising the very mechanisms by which power, truth and subjectivity construct the subject, the subject finds a way to critique itself – to commence again the process of becoming something other.

Foucault regards this process as proximate to Kant's definition of the *Aufklärung*, or Enlightenment, in relation to 'religion, law and knowledge' (48). Kant's key question to knowledge and reason is: Do 'you know up to what point you can know? Reason as much as you want, but do you really know up to what point you can reason without it becoming dangerous? Critique will say, in short, that it is not so much a matter of what we are undertaking, more or less courageously, than it is the idea we have of our own knowledge and its limits' (49). Rather than endorsing claims that the Enlightenment promoted blind subservience to science and the elevation of humanity to Man, Foucault demonstrates the traces that problematise the development of the modern subject and the practices available to question its relation to truth, power and knowledge. Similarities to Camus's project are apparent. Camus's insight that to 'an absurd mind reason is useless and there is nothing beyond reason' is a reminder of the limits of knowledge and reason. This reminder enables the self to question itself, its formation and current practices – to subject the self's normalising practices to a critique of its own. Camus's description of the process by which we become aware of the absurd is a recognition of governance and, paradoxically, a demand to not govern that way. To say no to nihilism, to live 'without recourse' to salvation through leaps of faith, to exist meaningfully in an absurd existence are *arts par excellence* of voluntary insubordination. Remaining in flux, transforming ourselves, resisting the demands to be the subject of one fundamental truth are *arts par excellence* of reflected intractability – a perpetual and necessary critique of our being ourselves.

As Foucault elaborates, Kant's critique was practiced very differently. This practice was manifest in three identifiable manners. First was 'positivist science, that is to say, it basically had confidence in itself, even when it remained carefully critical of each one of its results'. Second was 'the development of a State or a state system which justified itself as the reason and deep rationality of history and which... selected as its instruments procedures to

rationalize the economy and society.’ Finally these two united into ‘a science of the State, or a statism’ (50). This relationship led to ‘the development of productive forces’ and ‘state-type powers... exercised through refined techniques’ (50). Thus Foucault asks, for ‘what excesses of power, for what governmentalization, all the more impossible to evade as it is reasonably justified, is reason not itself historically responsible?’ (51).

In light of nineteenth- and twentieth-century history, Foucault understood that German thought, particularly in the Frankfurt School, had constructed a leftist critique of the connection between rationalisation and reason. In France, it manifested on the Right (51-53). The two spheres were rejoined in the second half of the twentieth century ‘through the question of meaning and what can constitute meaning. How is it that meaning could be had out of nonsense? How does meaning occur? This is a question which clearly is the complement to another: how is it that the great movement of rationalization has led us to so much noise, so much furor, so much silence and so many sad mechanisms?’ (53). These were questions that also permeated Camus’s and Beckett’s work. Rather than delve into a phenomenology of the subject, Foucault argued that the combination of a problematising of reason in the sciences and the formation of the subject by models and institutions was the connection to ‘the deep undertow of our history for the past century’. The problem of the twentieth century was not ‘too much or too little reason, but in any case surely facing too much power’. Fascism and Stalinism were ‘like two brothers’ (54). It is by asking the question

What is *Aufklärung*? that we encounter the historical scheme of our modernity.

The point is not to say that the Greeks of the 5th century are a little like the philosophers of the 18th or that the 12th century was already a kind of Renaissance, but rather to see under what conditions, at the cost of which modifications or generalizations we can apply this question of the *Aufklärung*

to any moment in history, that is, the question of the relationships between power, truth and the subject. (57)

Thus, in response to the questions of Foucault's new practices of genealogy and their relevance to the contemporary, it can be argued that by 1978 he had already specified some of the problems which would be analysed in his later work and his motivation for undertaking such a critique.

Foucault's analysis of the techniques of the self – how the self was produced and worked upon itself, and how it related to truth, knowledge and power – was not a glorification of a golden age or a retreat into the self. It was a targeted, historically-relevant response to the totalising discourses of the twentieth century and their disastrous appropriation of Man, reason and rationalisation.

Although the remainder of 'What is Critique?' centres on the power/knowledge axis, this early lecture presents key questions to which Foucault demanded answers: By what modes of relationship are we governed? How do those modes connect to each other in the formation of ourselves? By what modes of governance do we demand to be governed less? Hadot's earlier criticism of Foucault is also related to Foucault's re-engagement with the Enlightenment. Hadot finds Foucault's production of a new self – the dandy – profoundly distasteful and he is not alone in criticising the foregrounding of the dandy in Foucault's project. But Foucault's elucidation of Baudelairean practices is not a blanket endorsement of dandyism, just as his exposition of Greek and Roman practices do not promote them. In 'What is Enlightenment?', Foucault refers to Baudelaire across less than five pages in a lecture that runs to almost thirty. This discussion highlights only one of modernity's attitudes: 'a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era' (109). Foucault shows how the Baudelairean attitude demonstrates that 'Enlightenment and humanism' were 'in a state of tension rather than identity' (112). Foucault was not endorsing

a formalised group of practices that were to be universally encouraged in the refutation of the modern self. Dandyism was a fault line revealing the tensions of the modern self: if such an identity could exist then, according to a Foucaultian analysis, so could other possibilities. Dandyism was a way of the recent past, not *The Way of the Present* – an attitude that Foucault’s work refused to provide.

Michael Ure makes a similar error in arguing that ‘Foucault clouds the true nature and significance of the Hellenistic and Stoic care of the self insofar as he presents it as a purely aesthetic project akin to nineteenth-century Dandyism’ (22). Ure writes:

Once we suspend Foucault’s misleadingly aestheticised rendering of the Hellenistic and Roman tradition, therefore, we can use his historical excavation of the practices of the self to clarify the ethics of subjectivity (or agent-centred ethics, to use analytical parlance) that lies at the heart of Nietzsche’s middle works. Indeed, in his 1981-82 lectures, Foucault himself suggests in passing that it might be possible and fruitful to re-read Nietzsche’s thought as a difficult attempt to reconstitute the ethics of the self. (22)

Ure cites page 251 of *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* as his reference for this assertion.

However, Foucault’s ‘suggestion’ is more extensive than Ure indicates. The full text reads:

*a whole section* of nineteenth-century thought can be reread as a difficult attempt, a series of difficult attempts, to reconstitute an ethics and an aesthetics of the self. If you take, for example, Stirner, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, dandyism, Baudelaire, anarchy, anarchist thought, etcetera, then you have a series of attempts that are, of course, very different from each other, but which are all more or less obsessed by the question: Is it possible to constitute, or reconstitute, an aesthetics of the self? At what cost and under what conditions? Or should the ethics and the aesthetics of the self ultimately

be inverted in the systematic refusal of the self (as in Schopenhauer)?....

[W]hen today we see the meaning, or rather the almost total absence of meaning, given to some nonetheless very familiar expressions which continue to permeate our discourse – like getting back to oneself, freeing oneself, being oneself, being authentic, etcetera – when we see the absence of meaning and thought in all of these expressions we employ today, then I do not think that we have anything to be proud of in our current efforts to reconstitute an ethic of the self. And in this series of undertakings to reconstitute an ethics of the self, in this series of more or less blocked and ossified efforts, and in the movement we now make to refer ourselves constantly to this ethic of the self without ever giving it any content, I think we may have to suspect that we find it impossible today to constitute an ethic of the self, even though it may be an urgent, fundamental, and politically indispensable task, if it is true after all that there is no first or final point of resistance to political power other than in the relationship one has to oneself. (251-2 italics mine)

It is important to note that in this passage Foucault does not present a ‘purely aestheticised’ understanding of ethics. The ethics to which he refers are situated in a lived philosophy of practice, and his references to Baudelaire, dandyism and Nietzsche are set beside a recognition of other philosophers’ work and practices addressing the same issue. Nietzsche alone does not and cannot bear the entire weight of Foucault’s attempts to explore the genealogy of the ethics of the self.

Ure insists that Nietzsche’s ‘conception of the self and self-fashioning must in fact be distinguished from Foucault’s Baudelairean fantasy of “unrestricted”, open-ended self-invention’ (48). However he never cites a text in which Foucault argues that this mode of self-invention might be possible – let alone practical or enviable. Ure quotes Foucault’s

argument: ‘the idea that the self is not given to us’ has ‘only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art’. For Ure, this is proof that Foucault’s stylisation ‘eschews the possibility that the material it shapes has an intrinsic *telos* and that is independent of all external and objective norms’ (48). But Foucault’s argument is indeed that the self is formed by practices. Possibilities emerge in the practices of a genealogy of the self and the self-reflexive critical processes that surface from an understanding of one’s self. This understanding develops from a variety of practices, hence Foucault’s assertion that action upon this self can occur.

Ure follows his point with a criticism of Foucault’s ‘normative judgement that we *have* to (or “*must*” as he says elsewhere) create ourselves as a work of art’ (48). He argues the justification of this judgement is unclear. But in the introduction to *The Use of Pleasure*, and in his interviews and presentations, Foucault was clear: the imperative rested on the idea that we must become something other than modern subjects capable of being subjectified by the biopower of totalising organisations. We also had to discover the means to resist the fascisms within that tempted us to willingly subjectify ourselves to these interpellations.

Finally, Ure argues that ‘by presupposing rather than critically probing the feeling of powerlessness and restlessness that fuels the transgressive drive to flee from oneself or tear oneself from oneself, Foucault transforms what the Stoics and Nietzsche conceive of as a compulsive malady, explicable in terms of narcissistic wounding, into a virtue’ (51). Whilst it may be correct that the Stoics and Nietzsche viewed this condition as a malady, it is hardly the case that Foucault’s privileging of transformation is free from a self-reflexive analysis that critiques this presupposition. Foucault argues for a transformation away from the reified self: a subject either so wounded that it clings to belonging or so transcendent that it replaces God. This transformation favours the movement away from what one is defined as by society and the movement comes about through self-recognition – through an identification of the

discourses one is part of – which is far from the glorification of the self implied in ‘narcissistic wounding’.

While Ure’s work focuses mostly on a comparison of Foucault and Nietzsche’s interpretations of the Greeks and Stoics, he does devote some attention to Foucault’s use of Baudelaire’s ‘consciousness of modernity’ (Foucault ‘*WIE?*’ 106). But Ure makes the common critical error by insisting that

Foucault’s recasting of the work of the self in terms of Baudelarian Dandyism or the freedom of undefined, unrestricted self-invention, elides something fundamental to this ethics: *viz.*, the fact that it addresses the *pathos* that arises from mortality and loss, and that it does so in order to identify, temper and overcome the individual and political pathologies that arise from these wounds to our narcissistic wish for immortality and omnipotence.... Foucault’s Baudelairean aesthetic self-fashioning is merely a symptom of narcissism. (25)

It is mistaken to suggest that Foucault presents his work on the self as a ‘purely aesthetic project’ that proffers a Baudelairean dandyism as its preferred example.

Ure is not alone in using this criticism as a foundation for a critique of Foucault’s ethics. In *Foucault: A Critical Introduction*, Lois McNay mounts a sustained campaign against Foucault’s work on a number of fronts. Her criticism pivots on two points: Foucault’s ‘heroization of the self derived from Baudelaire’ and ‘the underdeveloped notion of aesthetics’ which leads to ‘a fetishization of a notion of aesthetic practice’ (134). The examination of these points leads McNay to write of ‘the centrality that is accorded to the figure of Baudelaire that undermines the radical force that is claimed for the notion of an ethics of the self’ (149). Baudelaire’s misogyny ‘permeates his work’ (149). McNay reads him as epitomising ‘masculine self-determination and power’ (150), which is at odds with Foucault’s overall project in *The History of Sexuality*. Furthermore, Foucault is ‘indifferent to



the implications of gender on his work' (150): he 'fails to consider the dissonance that arises from a contemporary morality that addresses itself to women as ethical subjects but draws, nevertheless, on a tradition in which woman has historically been positioned as the "beautiful object"' (151). According to McNay, he relies on 'an unexamined and nostalgic fantasy of masculine agency.... [favouring] a "disembedded and disembodied" notion of the self, which in fact covertly represents aspects of a specific male experience' (153).

As this chapter has already explored, Foucault's recourse to Baudelaire is not hagiographic. He does not suggest that readers adopt the aesthetics of a foppish dandyism in order to challenge the techniques of the self available in contemporary times. The most Foucault asserts is that 'Baudelairean modernity is an exercise in which extreme attention to what is real is confronted with the practice of a liberty that simultaneously respects this reality and violates it' ('*WIE?*' 108). This emphasis shows that 'the thread that may connect us with the Enlightenment is not faithfulness to doctrinal elements, but rather the permanent reactivation of an attitude – that is, a philosophical ethos that could be described as *a permanent critique of our historical era*' (109 italics mine). The self is neither disembedded nor disembodied, but embedded within its temporality and embodied, quite literally, by its constitutive subjectivities.

Dandyism was not privileged but subjected to critique. Its practices were analysed in terms of 'the intensification of power relations'. This meant that the role of the dandy or *flâneur* exemplified the nouveau-individualism of city dwellers that spread to the United States, producing the liberal individualism that shaped its subjects in the twentieth century.

What is frequently absent from criticisms of Foucault's ethos is the self-reflection at the core of these practices: the 'critical ontology of ourselves' that had to be 'conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the

same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them' ('*WIE?*' 118).

In "'How is It, Then, That We Still Remain Barbarians?": Foucault, Schiller, and the Aestheticization of Ethics' Jane Bennett outlines and then responds to the criticism of Foucault's aesthetics. Commencing with Terry Eagleton's accusation in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, she argues that he and fellow critics 'tend to imagine aesthetics as the province of a reactive, undisciplined sensuality. To allow *this* aesthetics to mingle with ethical and political life is to whet the appetite and impair thoughtfulness, or, at least, it is to confine ethics and politics to their spectacular, rhetorical and dramatic dimensions' (654). Bennett replies that these arguments overlook 'sensibility',

the quality or character of sensuous experience, a character that is culturally encoded and temperamentally delimited, but also educable (to some degree) through careful techniques of the self. A sensibility is a *disciplined* form of sensuousness. *This* aesthetics – aesthetics as sensibility-formation – has implications for ethics that are irreducible to fascism, hedonism, or indiscriminateness. For a form of *ascesis*, a sensibility establishes the range of possibility in perception, enactment, and responsiveness to others. (654)

Bennett's reference to the work of Friedrich Schiller is pertinent to the concerns of this thesis. Writing in 1794, Schiller pondered if 'the spirit of free inquiry has... undermined the foundations upon which fanaticism and deception had raised their throne,' 'how is it, then, that we still remain barbarians?' (654). According to Bennett, Schiller encouraged the development of an 'ethico-aesthetic sensibility', 'cultivated by disciplining and refining one's sensitivity to beauty. Schiller's central claim is that ethics is not solely a matter of a *code*... but also requires a sensuously engaged responsiveness to others' (655). Again, deep in the heart of Enlightenment, is the call to critique: an understanding that reason is not enough.

Schiller posits the value of an aestheticised ethics half a century before Baudelaire, Nietzsche and others. For Bennett, such an understanding rejects the criticisms proffered by ‘Wolin, Nirris, and Eagleton, [for] who[m] the aesthetic is an autonomous “realm” whose criteria of value are nonrational, amoral, and apolitical matters of beauty and style’ (658). Foucault’s aestheticised ethics enunciates ‘the more complex thesis that there is no self without discipline, no discipline that does not also harbor opportunities for artistic practice, and no ethics, and no ethics without aesthetics’ (656). This aesthetics is inherently political and engaged with the discourses of its times. It fosters the possibilities of ‘one of the means through which we improve the quality and generosity of our connectedness to others’, not hermetic individualism (661).

The remainder of Bennett’s article is equally insightful. Reminding us of Foucault’s ‘admiration for the Greco-Roman ideal of a well-balanced self, an artistic arrangement of its parts’ (663), the article challenges those such as Eagleton who claim Foucault’s aesthetics privilege style over substance and are ‘profoundly ambivalent’ towards power (664). Bennett responds to the criticism that Foucault’s ethics lack detail by directly quoting him on the role of the intellectual: it ‘is not to tell others what they must do.... And remember the prophecies, promises, injunctions and plans intellectuals have been able to formulate in the course of the last two centuries and of which we have seen the effects’ (665). Agreeing ‘with Foucault’s critics that an artistic approach to ethics should include a self-critical analysis of the relation between power and aesthetics’ (666), Bennett refutes the concurrent assertion that a code-centred morality is necessary. In fact, ‘code-only moralities have lost their hold on many people today, and thus in search of an audience, they are devolving into fundamentalisms of parity and self-certainty – and hatred and violence against nonbelievers’ (667). We must reject this barbarism which has persisted since the Enlightenment, through the age of revolutions and the unfolding phenomenon of modernity.

Foucault's ethics do not involve a totalising examination, an adoption of past practices or an ahistorical pursuit of utopian visions. They are a constant, critical examination of the self – what and how it is, who it was and how it emerged from its past. This puts into play the possibilities of who and how the self might become something other. Foucault's responses inform the central problem of this thesis: How might we elaborate an ethics of the self that allows us to govern ourselves differently to those models that have shaped our modernity? Subsequently, the model developed must critique itself, questioning how it develops its understanding of the self and the positions it allows the self to occupy. Such a critique prompts further questions: How has Foucault been critiqued? What positions has his position opened up? What spaces have been occupied by him and those who critique him? Finally, how does an ethics of the self allow for the non-prescriptive generation of these critiques?

In contrast to claims that Foucault's work is ambivalent to power, Foucault's work on the self has its own productive power which can be seen in the range of work that claims and uses it. John Drummond takes the term 'knowledge economy' and employs Foucault's four-pronged approach to ethics (*mode d'assujettissement, substance éthique, pratiques de soi* and *telos*) to demonstrate the types of processes – atomisation and transversality – that allow the subject of economic rationalism to appear. He also suggests ways in which that subject might work on itself to become something other, including 'the preservation of... educational pursuits that have little obvious economic value' (65). Drummond endorses the processes of teaching as a site of care, self-reflexive questioning and encourages the 'enculturation' of knowledge techniques (66) in order to recognise and, where possible, resist any unitary type of subjectivation (67).

Similarly, Jacques Donzelot's 'Pleasure in Work' plots a genealogy of French worker subjectivities, charting the ways workers have been encouraged to see work 'perceived not just as a matter of pure constraint but as a good in itself; as a means towards self-realization

rather than an opportunity for self-transcendence' (251). He considers how, during the twentieth century, the meaning of 'work' was taken up by workers in its changing forms. The genealogy critiques the practices of the self encouraged by 'neo-corporatist' approaches whereby 'each individual understands his place in the enterprise, and the enterprise itself attains the status of an institution seen as serving a common idea which transcends the individual – employer and employee alike.... This discourse on "joy through work" is not a Nazi monopoly' (259). These adoptions of Foucaultian methods have an obvious critical and political element. Their focus on how subjectivities are formed problematises a naturalised view of the subject, demonstrating how productive technologies of the self can be. Consequently, the work of writers like Drummond and Donzelot is not self-absorbed. They promote new possibilities of the self, contingent and intimately related to the society in which the self is shaped.

Some of the most interesting and challenging implementations of Foucault's ethics can be found in their encounter with contemporary practices of the self. One of the best of these appears in Cressida Heyes's *Self Transformations: Foucault, Ethics, and Normalized Bodies*, a work that questions 'the genealogy of the subjectivities we are invited to embrace as having an inner origin' (5). For Heyes, these subjectivities are situated in the areas of 'aesthetic [read cosmetic] surgery', feminist solidarity politics and Weight Watchers. The last of these reveals the tensions, inconsistencies and possibilities of a contemporary ethics. Heyes, using herself as the subject, considers her own constitution by both feminist discourses (67) and dieting industries, explicitly rejecting a notion of docile bodies and/or false consciousness that marks previous critical work on this intersection (64). Looking at weight-loss dieting through 'the minutiae of its practice, its everyday tropes and demands, its compulsions and liberations', Heyes seeks to 'understand that we have reason to embrace the increases in capacities it permits without acceding to the intensification of disciplinary power

it currently requires' (64). This is not the study of an abstract mode of being. The subjects of Heyes's critique are self practices performed throughout a ten-month period:

Over these ten months, I collected written materials, regularly visited the Weight Watchers Web sites, attended weekly meetings, and took every opportunity to talk to other participants.... My focus... is on the way my experience in the organization embodied the paradox Foucault highlighted so well: that normalizing disciplinary practices are also enabling of new skills and capacities that may exceed the framing of the original activity. On the one hand, deliberately losing weight by controlling diet involves the self-construction of a docile body through attention to the minutest details. On the other hand, becoming aware of exactly how and what one eats and drinks, realizing that changing old patterns can have embodied effects, or setting a goal and moving toward it, are all enabling acts of self-transformation. (67)

Superficially, it might seem bizarre to use Foucault's treatment of historical sexual models as a framework for a contemporary engagement of the self with the weight loss industry. However, Heyes's approach employs the cultivation of a docile self as a process of normalization to detail how the productive system of Weight Watchers functions. These ways of viewing the self as 'always be[ing] a Weight Watcher' (74) allow subjects to be interpellated, self-subjecting themselves to techniques such as measuring and scrutinizing their bodies, their food, their food choices and their emotional relationships to themselves and the role of food in these. By highlighting these practices, Heyes directs her argument towards an ascesis informed by Foucault's work on the self. This recognises some of the pleasures produced by adopting the Weight Watchers techniques, including the constitution of a site of work upon which women can take action and show pride – an opportunity that class and occupation may not provide (78).

Heyes highlights how *Weight Watchers* uses both the care of the self and the knowledge of the self to produce the possibility of an ‘ever-transforming’ self: ‘Here the weight-loss discourse is particularly shrewd, sometimes invoking the authentic self, while other times turning back on itself to claim that the self we seek to liberate is always developing – always, of course, positing the telos of weight loss and thinness in a way that sets bodies into a hierarchy’ (82). By documenting her own and others’ reactions to weight-loss discourse (87), Heyes shows how individual practices of resistance develop within these encounters. Above all, Heyes reveals how interwoven these practices are with the subject produced by self-work: in taking up some of the productive tools of ‘observing and documenting self-limiting and self-destructive behaviors’, we are able to observe the internalisation of practices and their use for the production of new practices of the self. Heyes never settles for a docile version of the self. The account argues explicitly for an understanding of ‘the needs of contemporary women... for sites in which we can develop care of the self and an aesthetics of existence without further entrenching our own docility’ (88). The analysis of self-practices is self-reflexive and questioning, designed to problematise normative views of women who diet as well as the author’s relation to herself. The conclusion displays how an analysis of the self can have a contemporary, social and transformative process at its core.

This type of self analysis is not always successful. Jan Goldstein’s ‘Foucault’s Technologies of the Self and the Cultural History of Identity’ is a case in point. Goldstein writes that

the concept of a technology of the self seems to refer to the subject’s own, intimate elaboration of a subjectivity that was in the first instance founded or constituted through interpersonal mechanisms of power/knowledge necessarily involving an element of coercion. Subjectivation then refers to the individual’s

conviction – ultimately an illusory conviction – that he or she is acting autonomously and is engaged in a ‘purely’ reflexive act of self-fashioning on the basis of values freely assented to. Through its linkage to the power/knowledge regimen, the concept of the technology of the self thus shares in the great advantage of Foucauldian historical logic: it bridges theory and practice, completely and forcefully elides sophisticated intellectual systems and routinized social practices. (44)

While Goldstein’s analysis begins even-handedly, it drifts into a false conception of Foucault’s ethics. The absolutism of autonomy, the sense of liberty involved and the unspoken conviction of a ‘false consciousness’ – none of these figure in Foucault’s work. Foucault was aware of and careful to present the contingencies of freedom, continually referring to a series of practices that one does or chooses, as opposed to ‘freely assenting to’. Goldstein’s approach also suggests a super-Foucault, one whose work can ‘elide intellectual systems’. Yet Foucault’s work elided neither the systems of his times nor the criticisms of those who came after. In an equally illusory manner, Goldstein claims that Foucault bridges the chasm between theory and practice. But Foucault shows that this ‘chasm’ is a recent invention of a particular approach to Enlightenment philosophy, and one that was not present in the lives of thought practitioners like Sartre, Camus, Wittgenstein or Derrida. The philosophical was intrinsically personal as was the knowledge that constituted the subject and the actions the self took to transform itself through actions. The idea of a chasm belongs to a logic that is particularly and peculiarly non-Foucauldian. While Goldstein legitimately uses an understanding of technologies of the self to cast new light upon practices such as phrenology, the danger remains in forgetting that, even in works that favour a Foucaultian approach, the work on the self begins at home – on itself and how it came to be.



There is one further area in which Foucault is legitimately rebuked. Hans Herbert Kögler recognises that for Foucault ‘the aesthetic prospect of relating to oneself autonomously is not something that can be pursued in “private”, but presupposes a critical and shared understanding of how power functions in society (and in oneself!)’ (34-5). However, the

aesthetico-ethical move tends to ignore the actual social conditions that put agents in a position freely and autonomously to create themselves as artworks (or as anything else). Cultural and educational resources that enable subjects fully to pursue this aesthetic care for the self are, at least in current societies, restricted to very specific social groups: to those, for the most part, with the economic resources that provide access to the relevant cultural and educational means. Foucault’s failure to thematize the economic background of the self-formative games of the ‘aesthetics of existence’ ignores the unequal structures of distribution which are due to social class position. (25)

Kögler’s point is cogent and powerful. Though Foucault emphasised that his work on the aesthetics of ethics promotes practices of liberty, the practices of an educated male with access to cultural capital differ significantly to those available to a migrant woman with dependants, for example. It is possible that the latter will find moments and methods in her everyday practice that legitimately challenge the limitations of the positions she has previously inhabited, just as it is possible that the man, because of his position, may never challenge his own subjectivities. A question that remains unanswered in this thesis is: How can one provide wider access to the methodological and reflective practices that Foucault elaborates? Do we, as readers and inheritors of these practices, if we take them up ourselves, have an obligation, a responsibility and an entitlement to make them available to others who are less able to access them?

One final work of criticism is worth considering for its erudition and playfulness. In ‘Why Foucault No Longer Matters’, Daniel T. O’Hara maintains an ironic engagement with the criticisms of Foucault, critiquing both the current state of the world and Foucault’s critics. O’Hara begins by favourably and insightfully exploring the meaning of the self and the possibilities of transformation. He writes:

This situation is ever open to potential shifts, reversals, dissolutions, and renewed formations. In other words, one can really know – only oneself as the past subject of a belated knowledge. One can really will – only oneself as the present subject of a pervasive power. One can really hope for – only oneself as the future creation of an aesthetics of existence. (141)

Few others have so succinctly summarised the paradigms and paradoxes of Foucault’s work. Likewise, O’Hara excels in his explanation of what oneself may mean:

‘Oneself’ is plural, mobile, unstable.... Oneself is neither so particular and dense with detail as to be unnameable, nor is it universal and so purely formal and empty of material contents. Rather, it is contingently representative. And it is made so by the ways in which the work of thought repeatedly constructs and construes certain issues and themes as conflicts and problems to be produced and reflected on as ethical predicaments within the diverse histories making up Western culture. Oneself, as in Foucault’s late formulation *rapport à soi*, would be usefully characterized, I think, as a contingently representative site of cultural enunciation, a recurring influential figure, persona, or mask in the Western cultural imaginary as it (re-)enacts its symbolic economy of destructively empowering abjection and repression with its scapegoat rituals of mimetic rivalry. (142)

However O'Hara believes that Foucault's moment has passed, and that through a complex web of misunderstanding and identity privileging, what might have been gained from Foucault's work has been lost. O'Hara states that 'the open secret of Western culture is that it already practices... an aesthetics of existence for everyone under the guise of a normalizing rationality and its empowering repression of some designated extreme cases but not of all individualizing differences. In fact, knowledge – precise, comprehensive, analytic – of such differences grants effective power over subjects' (146). Rather than reclaiming ancient practices, Foucault has removed the blindfold from our times.

Nevertheless, according to O'Hara, many prefer to remain blind. Oppositional critics including Nancy Fraser, Richard Rorty, Habermas and Charles Taylor 'want... what Foucault has always refused to supply... a fixed and predetermined, necessary connection of cause and effect, a clear and distinct idea of the grand design holding together, for good or ill, all aspects of human existence' (148). Sadly, he continues, Foucault's

aesthetics of existence, of difference, could not be ethically further from the identity politics dominating our time, which is another reason why Foucault no longer matters. Feminists, Afro-Americanists, Neo-Conservatives – all sorts of critics appear now, to retrieve their own histories, again and again to secure their common identities, in opposition to other groups, and not to learn to break old habits of thought by improvising, by experimenting with losing themselves in the thinking of others, and so re-make their souls by overcoming, if they can, imaginative inertia and suspicious resentment. (155)

O'Hara's merit here is his restating the danger Foucault himself saw in speaking of the self: wary of the connotations of 'the self' in Western parlance, Foucault repeatedly warned against the reification of the cult of the self. Without self-reflexive questioning of ourselves and our times, our efforts at transformation will repeatedly reproduce nothing but the same –

an endless production line of identities simultaneously clamouring for an individuality without responsibility and an identity without an understanding of the fascisms it contains. O'Hara's work reminds us of Foucault's roles in the games of life: Foucault's final two volumes of *The History of Sexuality* are 'his commonplace books of unfinished self-fashioning, which sensitive like-minded readers can choose to complete in their own ways via the similar reading/writing/listening/responding activities. This is why the style of these spiritual exercises is so lucid, succinct, and transparent in its sparing use of rhetorical flourishes' (150-1). They stand as 'an open game of friendship for the reader able and willing to use these "books of life" as tools in the production and performance of his or her own *rappor*t à soi, which is simultaneously, given the composite structure of the subject, a complex socializing form of human agency practiced via reading/writing/listening/responding and the principal precondition for the work of thought' (151).

Foucault's final works testify to the dedication of the practice of an aestheticised ethics of the self as an intellectual: one that, taking oneself as the material, opens a space. It provides a continual commitment to self-reflexive questioning which allows access to a means by which we can see our role in the games of truth, knowledge, power and subjectivity. As O'Hara summarises, as much to refute Foucault's critics as to remind us why Foucault still matters:

The ethical substance can be seen as the material from the collective archive; the mode of subjection can be seen as the intellectual rationale for its transformation into another text; the practice of self can be seen as the professional disciplines of the scholar-critic-theorist-teacher – reading/writing/listening/responding – that one performs for oneself and for others. And the ethical goal can be seen as the self-mastery of the aesthetics of existence as

work of thought repeatedly open to the possibilities of becoming another as oneself. (153)

However, if society already encourages an aestheticised ethics of being, what remains lacking in Camus's and Foucault's projects is a means by which the self can attest to the sufferings created by existence and inherent to a modern self. As producers and restrainers of freedom, subjectivation and self-reflexivity form part of the process of self-identification in modernity. These processes lead to the disintegration of the idea that the self is unitary or can be firmly attached to the discourses that produced it.

But this is only the beginning. The journey requires the self to look outwards after looking within. This journey leads to a path where two men stand in a wasteland. They are strangers, perhaps, to themselves though not necessarily to others. Who they are, their past and their present occupations are never completely known. What can be seen, and what can be seen that matters, is what they do and therefore become while waiting for Godot.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ‘THE OTHER, PIG’: WHAT HAPPENS WHILE WAITING FOR GODOT

Yesterday is not a milestone that has been passed, but a daystone on the beaten track of the years, and irremediably part of us, within us, heavy and dangerous.

We are not merely more weary because of yesterday, we are other, no longer what we were before the calamity of yesterday.

– Samuel Beckett, *Proust*

For more than fifty years the enigma of Beckett’s first successful play has been debated in both the popular press and academic writings. *Waiting for Godot* infuriates audiences on the one hand with the absence of Godot whilst appealing to others for precisely the tale it tells of two dispossessed men – waiting for salvation from their waiting for salvation from their waiting.

‘Nothing to be done.’ This is the phrase often emphasised in traditional approaches to *Godot*. They are the opening words of Estragon, who sits attempting to remove his boot without success. Conventional readings also emphasise the play’s conclusion: Estragon and his companion Vladimir agree ‘Yes, let’s go’ while neither moves. These critical views highlight the repetition of the play – the popular idea first espoused by Vivian Mercier in 1956 that in *Godot* ‘nothing happens twice’ (Cornwell 228). Frequently there is an obsession with the question of Godot’s identity and its connection to the play’s meaning. Godot’s identity is supposedly revealed by a successful decipherment of ‘hidden’ textual clues.

This chapter does not speculate who or what Godot is or why he does not arrive. It is not concerned with the validity of Godot’s promise, delivered by the young messenger, that he will come tomorrow. It rejects the idea that the characters of the play are deprived of their

capacity to choose movement or stasis. *Waiting for Godot* does not offer its audience or reader enlightenment; however, this is not to argue that the play is meaningless. Finally, the chapter refuses the critical opinion that nothing happens – twice – and, therefore, that nothing is to be done. As Beckett’s text reminds us, *Waiting for Godot* begins with:

ACT 1

*A country road. A Tree.*

*Evening.*

*Estragon, sitting on a low mound, is trying to take off his boot. He pulls at it with both hands, panting. He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again. As before.*

*Enter Vladimir. (5)*

and ends with:

*Curtain (87)*

It is in between, while waiting, that matters.

*Godot* summons readers of the text and audiences of the play to bear witness to what occurs within these two points. They are provoked to continue to reflect long after the curtain has fallen. The play asks what it means to see someone: to tell others of having been seen. It also asks how might one testify to the possibility of others through retelling their narrative, opening ‘us’ and ‘them’ to the possibility of change. By moving across the variety of critical encounters with Beckett’s play, this chapter demonstrates that *Waiting for Godot* offers no universal lessons but nevertheless provides specific moments of ethical choice and textual questioning – enough to ask, in a landscape stripped of national and cultural identity, how do people act towards each other? What can be learnt by watching two characters whose own identity appears stripped as they encounter themselves and others in this rocky outpost? Finally, with only the questions and the art of living made from that questioning, what

possibilities *Godot* expose us that might assist in understanding the effects of totalising belief systems as they operate on the self? How might our contemporary selves avoid these systems in our own wasteland, as we wait, while we wait together?

A variety of approaches have struggled for interpretive dominance since the play's first performance. Peter Boxall analyses these competing critical narratives, noting that on the one hand critics viewed the play as 'being ultimately recuperable in the figure of a transcendent humanity' and, on the other, read Beckett's 'negativity as a powerful and unparaphrasable critique of the collapse of post-war European culture'. Subsequently, 'Theory' as a category of critical thought emerged, engaging with the play by foregrounding the increasing instability of language and representation. According to this theory, Beckett's play demonstrates the ways 'subjects live out the eternal process of the invention and projection of selfhood' (7), offering a political and philosophical challenge to traditional understandings of subjectivation. Despite James Acheson's view that the play attempts 'at all times to avoid definition because it is meant to reflect the infinite complexity of the world at large', many competing critical approaches seek 'to impose an allegorical or symbolic explanation on a play which was striving all the time to avoid definition' (142).

This chapter explores political, language-based and philosophical approaches to the play, explaining why David Toole reads Foucault's later works as an attempt to craft a politics of tragedy emerging from the French philosopher's encounter with *Waiting for Godot*. This politics can be interpreted as building upon the 'two or three slight distinctions which may have no other value than to help some among us to die more nobly' that Camus argued grew from 'the soil of Europe reeking with millions of corpses of its sons'(qtd in Toole 204). Toole insists that Foucault's work gathers 'round these two or three slight distinctions', offering 'the difficult hope of a tragic politics' (204) grounded in a 'profound



instinct of resistance against the reduction of the poet and the man who is the poet' (Wendell Berry qtd in Toole 203).

The earliest and, to an extent, the most enduring approach to Beckett's play is a humanist existentialism that links *Waiting for Godot* and its situations with the philosophy of the absurd outlined in Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Although Martin Esslin was the first to do this in *The Theatre of the Absurd*, published in 1961, earlier criticism had developed the idea of *Waiting for Godot* as both 'a modern morality play on permanent Christian themes' and 'an atheist-existentialist play' (Kennedy 32). The dominance of these interpretations prompted Lawrence Harvey to write in early 1960 of the necessity of somehow uniting the competing views by exploring their underlying links to art and theology (*Art* 137). Harvey's understanding of art is useful: it 'is here thought of as both destruction and re-creation, as a reordering of reality or breaking of surfaces that leads to an imitation of what is discovered at deeper levels of existence' (137). Though Harvey's view is obviously cast in the terms of depth and reality derived from Sartrean concepts of authenticity, it also encompasses the Nietzschean (and Camusian) understanding of art as transformative – of aesthetics containing the possibilities of new means to explore the interface of the self and the world.

For Harvey, Beckett's use of stage direction, dialogue and ridicule of reason (exemplified in Lucky's speech) reveals modern life as empty and alienating. In particular, the 'myth of progress falls [and fails?] in Lucky's speech, in which we learn that man, in spite of vitamins, sanitation, penicillin, and physical education, is in the process of shrinking'. Harvey argues that this shrinkage can be traced back to Voltaire 'who stands, here, for the century that believed too naively in the dream of human progress and probably, as well, for a time of surfaces, surfaces that Beckett is out to destroy' (139). In line with Camus and Foucault, Beckett's critique of the Enlightenment is directed at the type of positivism that portrayed humanity as triumphant over its ignorant predecessors. Harvey suggests that *Godot*

shows that our 'sex life leads to venereal disease; our laughter is silenced in pain; our fashionable clothes turn into rags, our lithe youth into stumbling old age, and our busy lives into a solitary waiting for death' (139). Finally, 'into the void left by the destruction of the patterns comes thought, drawn as a magnet toward the idea of man's fate.... Into the void too come some feelings, however mixed, of charity and fraternity, and the small hope that, aided sometimes by fear, keeps men either waiting for Godot or struggling on toward Saint-Sauveur' (141).

Harvey's understanding of the play was unique for its time – by his account, neither of the two couples, Pozzo and Lucky or Vladimir and Estragon, is absolutely saved, yet neither is totally condemned. In the void, and the abyss, it seems that there are ways and ways of waiting. While Harvey considers 'the liberal, humanistic' interpretation of *Waiting for Godot* as 'extreme' (142), he proposes that in 'Godot, there is really only one character, Man, but here too he is divided into two halves, the idealist or intellectual and the materialist, the man with the hat and the man with the shoes. However, Vladimir is reflected in the mirror of Lucky, while Pozzo is the counterpart in the social order of Estragon' (143). This interpretation presents a different understanding of the central characters than the one favoured by Esslin and others at the time, where Vladimir and Estragon are seen as 'clearly superior to Pozzo and Lucky' (*Theatre* 58). In shifting these axes of connection, Harvey bears witness to the complexities of Beckett's play: there is no facile moralising, no easily-identifiable other. This situation suggests that 'there, but for the grace of Godot, go I'.

Like Esslin, Ruby Cohen's 1960s scholarship reads Beckett's work as 'concerned with man's situation in the cosmos' (208). She observes that the play 'leaves us more aware of the monotonous infinitude of time, the repetitive indeterminacy of place, and the absurd discontinuity of action' (224-5). This establishes 'an equation of plot with human situation, and the major meaning of the play lies in that equation, rather than in digressions upon God-

ot' (211). Cohn, described by Peter Boxall as a 'founding parent of liberal Humanist Beckett studies' (83), supplies one of the earliest audience-focussed interpretations of *Waiting for Godot*. Her 1962 article 'The Dramatic Shift to Waiting' notes how 'we... begin as the "betters" of Vladimir and Estragon, but our "better" actions and aspirations are aped and mocked by the waiters for Godot, until we see how futile and frivolous they are' (211). A subtle shift in interpellation takes place – the farce before us reveals the audience as its key participants. In the progress of the play's 'unprogression' the audience comes to understand why Beckett subtitled the English version of his play a 'tragicomedy'.

Perspectives on the nature of time and its passing in the play combined with Cohn's focus on the existential critique presented in *Waiting for Godot*. Unsurprisingly, with the word 'waiting' in the title, attention is paid to the constant repetition of the phrase 'we're waiting for Godot' and the inhibitive function it plays as the narrative progresses (or, as some might argue, it does not).

Günter Anders argues that Vladimir and Estragon 'are merely alive, but no longer living in a world' (141) and are thus incapable of action. For Anders, the two characters stand for millions of people who 'are active without themselves deciding on the objective of their action, without even being able to discern the nature of their objective' (142-3). Accordingly, the characters are like 'mass men' who 'go on living merely because they happen to exist, and because existence doesn't know of any other alternative but to exist' (143). Beckett's characters do not personify the absurd hero of Camus's *Myth*. In what Anders terms a 'negative fable', Vladimir and Estragon 'like the millions whom they represent... neither recognise their own existence as contingent, nor think of abolishing this contingency, of transforming it into something positive with which they can identify themselves' (144). Arguably, the language of the two tramps suggests their inability to escape the ties that bind them to Godot but it also refuses to strengthen the belt with which they could hang

themselves. It is always ‘We can’t’ (*WFG* 8), ‘we weren’t’ (9), ‘Let’s wait and see what he says’ (12). The possibility of choice is deferred indefinitely, at least from the perspective of an audience, and as they become more and more convinced that Godot will not come.

Time itself later fails Pozzo. His grandfather’s watch – the marker of his passage and progress – disappears (38-9). When Pozzo appears in the second act his memory is suspect and he warns Vladimir: ‘don’t count on me to enlighten you’ (81). Pozzo’s almost frantic insistence on moving, his repetition of ‘On!’ (81-2) and his famous outburst that begins ‘Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time!’ and ends with a final ‘On!’, pushes him, literally and figuratively, closer to ‘night once more’ (82). For Anders, the now-blind Pozzo represents ‘blind history... already in motion’ (150).

Ross Chambers, also writing in the early sixties, asserted that ““the whole problem”” of life is in that moment between the womb and the tomb when “we have time to grow old, and to suffer”” (165). It is only Vladimir who is aware of what it means when neither Pozzo nor Estragon remembers the visit of Pozzo and Lucky the day before (*WFG* 82). Vladimir says ‘It seemed to me he saw us’, yet Estragon insists it was a dream. The doubt propels Vladimir to his poignant soliloquy, the time and place in the play where he is most self-reflexive, interrogating his own situation:

Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today? That with Estragon my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with his carries, and that he spoke to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be?... Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. [*He listens.*] But habit is a great deadener. [*He looks again at Estragon.*] At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is

saying, He is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on. [*Pause.*] I can't go on! [*Pause.*] What have I said? (83)

Throughout the play, what is spoken, what is intended, does not exactly correspond with what we can read or see. Some metaphoric value appears, albeit a slippery one, for there are no cries, and though we watch Vladimir, he is hardly asleep. Vladimir appears the closest he may be to an awakening to the absurd as delineated by Camus. But such an escape is impossible for the characters as Godot's messenger boy arrives to announce another deferral. Referring to Eva Metman's Jungian understanding of Beckett's plays, Esslin writes that 'Godot's messenger arrives, rekindles [Vladimir's] hopes, and plunges him back into the passivity of illusion' (*Theatre* 59).

By the late 1960s, the limits of a purely existential humanist approach were evident, as Lawrence Harvey makes clear in his review of *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Esslin. Though contemporary criticism now tends to separate the humanist and the post-structural developments in the study of Beckett's work, Lawrence was already arguing that Beckett's 'work is as deeply concerned with the nature and possibility of art as of existence, which makes either existential or aesthetic criticism by itself less than adequate' ('Review' 502). In his comments on the afore-mentioned article by Ross Chambers, Lawrence presciently argues that 'Beckett points up the inescapable absurdity of the ineradicable human belief in a principle of inner life – call it what you will: essence, self, personality or soul – for whose autonomous existence there is no shred of existence beyond our belief in it, while establishing a basic image of life as endless exile from and pursuit of an infinitely unattainable self' (503). He continues, arguing that this dilemma consists of 'how to make non-self and the self, object and subject, time and eternity coincide through the use of language. Art, then, becomes on the one hand a painful punishment and on the other, as Beckett once said, "the oxygen" that makes existence possible' (503). Language, the

autonomy of the self, and their role in the re/un-veiling of meaning in *Godot* became the dual foci in studies that followed. They moved ‘away from the suggestion that Beckett dramatises a “human” predicament’ and towards a view of ‘Beckett’s stage as a site on which meaning, identity and subjecthood, were put radically into question’ (Boxall 7).

If Beckett’s tramps were considered representative of millions in a world of uncertainty, the millions were about to lose even the security of representation in *Godot*. In 1982, Jan Bruck can be seen ‘doing the undone’, writing that ‘the existential tramps... have lost the essential capacity to tell their story – memory.’ She continues: ‘Beckett’s creatures have been stripped of all the elements which identified the bourgeois individual as the subject and center of the world: possessions and property, social relations and human ties, knowledge and rationality’ (160). This view accords with Peter Boxall’s analysis of Beckett studies, where a political interpretation of the plays emerged from work in the German language, grounded in both Georg Lukács and Adorno’s critique of Beckett (138). Therefore Bruck’s publication in *New German Critique* positions *Waiting for Godot* as decidedly political (170). According to Bruck, Beckett parodies ‘the most important discourses that provided the ideological backing of Western society – the Bible, Science and Philosophy – whose failure in explaining the world and in providing a useful knowledge of the self and of society became drastically apparent in the historical moment of fascism and the War’ (160-1). No heroism is possible because ‘the essential elements necessary for the formation of an experience are lacking’ (161).

Using Walter Benjamin’s theories of mass production and incorporating the burgeoning discourse of cultural studies, Bruck outlines the failure of narrative itself: we ‘have to contend with competing discourses, as disparate and contradictory as the reality we live in, and it seems hard to imagine that the world will ever agree on any discourses which it can share collectively as a common medium of communication’ (165). If the earlier

humanists found tenderness in the abyss, Bruck sees Beckett's work as an alienation of art and reality, an expression 'in the aesthetic/epistemological sphere of the atrophy of experience and the privatization of the individual that occurred in the social sphere. It is this dilemma of communication and aesthetic representation to which Beckett's work gives meta-fictional expression' (165). Interestingly, the concept of Godot as allegory remains, its truths about human existence transferred now to greater truths about language and its lack. Thus, 'Beckett's vision of crisis and destruction presents a serious warning: that the individual could be engulfed and communities destroyed by the oppressive and contradictory forces of mass-society' (171). Consequently, even Bruck's reading positions Beckett's text as governed by modernism's approach to Art and Life: the masses were beating down the door.

If Bruck's work revealed the oppression inherent in 'the catastrophic impact of mass-society and war on consciousness and memory' and therefore Beckett's work as 'expressing the meaninglessness of discourse', a parallel exploration of Beckett's connection to repression and meaning was taking place. *The World of Samuel Beckett*, Volume 12 in the series *Psychiatry and the Humanities*, was published in 1991. In the opening paragraph of his introduction, editor Joseph Smith declares that Beckett's world 'is ours as much as his. Beckett's words – "austere, hermetic, and constrained," Herbert Blau says, "like a vow of poverty" – refer to aspects of ourselves and our world that we perpetually cover, and to an inner and surrounding real that is not even a part of our linguistically constituted selves and world' (xv). Again, the particular represents something more: 'The "oddities" of Beckett's characters always also portray the particular embodiment of universal issues' (xv). This time, however, the issues 'are usually splitting, fragmentation, isolation, nothingness, and death, presented in a fashion that appals, while at the same time, posing the question of how moments of laughter, liveliness, love, grace, and consolation occur' (xv-xvi). This position speaks to the pathology of the series' title – *Psychiatry and the Humanities* – and the

perceived common interests of the two disciplines. It also speaks to the intended outcome, as Smith notes when he writes of ‘thoughts of cure, not only of Beckettian characters but also of their author’ (xvii).

The slippage from ‘Beckett’s characters’ to ‘Beckettian characters’ may also speak to the medico-scientific approach, but Smith quickly qualifies: ‘Cure is not getting around, over, or away from all the darkness of which Beckett writes; it is the product of a turn toward darkness and nothingness within’ (xvii). Thus, Vladimir and Estragon’s inability to perceive themselves as anything other than subjects waiting for their object to appear perpetuates the type of fable of modern man we have become familiar with: a modern man now in need of a cure.

In the same volume of *Psychiatry and the Humanities*, Robert Winer’s ‘The Whole Story’ develops a type of psychoanalytic analysis that suggests ‘Beckett’s writing is never symbolic for symbolism occurs in time’ (76). Through an exploration of the role of time in memory, Winer argues that as ‘psychoanalysts we are physicians to disordered narratives’ and that identification is dependent on a recollection of the past. Consequently, the selves ‘of Beckett’s characters are profoundly fractured. As clinicians, we know this rupturing as a way of avoiding pain’ (77). Winer’s approach privileges the autonomous observer and yet paradoxically he reveals himself as caught up in a play: Beckett’s plays evoke ‘so compellingly this destruction of connection in contemporary life, in my life and the lives of my patients’ (73). The revelation continues with Winer writing that ‘we can only meet our patients with memory and desire – we are, after all, particular human beings’ (84). For Winer, the ‘heart of the psychoanalytic process is not the archaeological uncovering of the past. It is the refinding and reinterpretation of the past, made possible by new experience’ (76).

Winer is not bold enough to directly say that, as subjects, Vladimir and Estragon, in their loss of time, memory and self, cannot even find their present let alone reinterpret their



past. But the argument is implicit and Winer's science is helpless in the face of such helplessness. And yet we discover two points of serious and symbolic consequence. First, Winer's argument ignores Beckett's specificity: the two characters do have a history – in the the Eiffel Tower and the Rhône (*WFG* 4, 46) – and they are aware of the extraordinary tricks the mind plays (43). The second consequence is found in Winer's citation of Hans Loewald: 'the fact that the individual not only *has* a history that an observer may unravel and describe, but that he *is* history and makes his history by virtue of his memorial activity in which past-present-future are created as mutually interacting modes of time' puts us 'on the path to becoming a self' (77). Loewald notes that 'an observer may unravel and describe'. Someone *is* watching *Vladimir*: the play transforms the watchers into witnesses. Despite Winer's reduction of the anal analysand, the audience becomes an impotent analyst for it can never interfere with the characters on stage. The audience/reader can only watch and understand that they too are now at play, in the play. If the characters are intent on presenting their fractured narratives, unable or unwilling to reconstruct them for the sake of their coherence. The question must be asked: Who then does the audience become as it waits for *Vladimir* and *Estragon* to understand in the second act that *Godot* will not be coming today? Winer's objective psychoanalyst becomes a subjected participant in the repetition of meaninglessness. In distinction to Winer's theory, the only option is to witness until and after the curtain falls, incorporating the ethical interpellation of the play into the narrative of the self – the one that makes us the self 'by virtue of' its 'memorial activity'. Waiting for *Vladimir* and *Estragon* as they are waiting for *Godot* means that the audience and reader must ask: 'What will we do?' (12).

This reversal is pivotal to the remainder of this chapter. From here, the importance of seeing is highlighted. The play's meaning is returned to its viewers and readers: it is possible

to focus on what is being seen and what the importance of being seen is to the characters on stage.

The turn towards watching while waiting was well-understood even by long-term advocates of other critical approaches to *Godot*. Martin Esslin presented a version of his paper 'Beckett and the Mass Media' at a conference in 1989, subsequently publishing it in 1991. Reassuring his audience that Beckett remained a poet and an artist, Esslin added that Beckett was also an explorer. For Esslin, Beckett 'starts at zero: we can know nothing of the world except through our consciousness' (204). Linking Beckett to, among others, Camus and Sartre, Esslin suggests that Beckett moves through an existential view to one of the split self, 'but the very fact of being conscious, being aware of one's own being as a stream of words, already implies a split: into an observer on the one hand and that which is being observed on the other' (207). Esslin proceeds from what might be termed a realist vision of Beckett's works to a pseudo-psychoanalytic approach, comparing Beckett's characters with mental states such as schizophrenia (208). He considers language's inability to fully express the complexities of being, noting an apocryphal story. Responding to a student who questioned Beckett's paradoxical commitment to literature and his pessimism about its ability to communicate, *Godot's* author supposedly replied 'words, that is all we have!' (209). Going further, Esslin situates Beckett's conversion to writing drama rather than prose as part of an on-going attempt to deal with the perils, possibilities and failure of language. Why is drama so important? For Esslin, Beckett's 'visual elements supplement and undermine the word', best exemplified in the endings of both acts of *Godot* where the two leads, despite saying, 'Let's go', are textually or theatrically followed by the stage direction 'They do not move' (210). The spectator, the reader, the audience are now participants, 'confronted by an image' that provides an 'experience'. They 'must unravel that experience, make of it what [we] will, evaluate its impact, which is immediate' (210). *Godot* becomes a series of 'images that may

be built up over a certain span of time.... only complete when the audience realizes that the second act has the same structure as the first and that the play is, among many other things, an image of the relentless sameness of each day of our lives' (210-1). In less than ten pages Esslin traverses forty years of interpretation, once again returning the reader to the moment of awakening to Camus's absurd whilst acknowledging the plurality of what the play signifies. Some meaning-making is possible, but that meaning is the audience's responsibility. Esslin's conclusion reclaims the territory of 'compassion, pity, and love for our fellow human beings' (216). But his conclusion reveals what he attempts to conceal: 'Beckett has the courage to confront the world and to tell us "how it is"' (216). It is up to the audience and the reader whether they listen, what they listen to, and what meaning they have made while waiting for Godot.

A certain clarity emerges when considering that, according to biographer Anthony Cronin, the French title of *Godot* was *En attendant Godot* which 'more exactly meant "While Waiting for Godot"' (449). For an ethics of the self, meaning – is taken and made from the play – must be contained in the play, gleaned from what occurs *while* waiting, not from the meaning of Godot's identity or anticipated appearance. The importance of the intercourse between psychoanalytic theory and *Godot* appears at its most powerful here: the audience watches while it waits, bearing witness to the experiences of the characters on stage.

On this point, Herbert Blau argues that 'every look is the law... the subtlety of Beckett's idea of theatre arises from the conjunction of language and the look'. He continues: '[W]ith a sense of the air full of our cries, Didi is gazing at the sleeping Gogo – who is always disturbed by his dreams, the *specularity* of his dreams – while we are gazing at the gazing Didi'. Blau cites Nietzsche's aphorism that 'God is in the grammar' (3), especially when the words 'slip slide decay, the syntax sprawls, the modifiers squint... as it is in Lucky's speech' (4). Here, Blau reminds the reader of language's power to name and not name – only

in reading, re-viewing the play, can the reader know that Vladimir and Estragon never call each other by their Beckett-given names. They are others to their written selves; their memories are deficient. It as if Beckett is asking ‘*Who* has been seen?’ as much as what – which, in other words, means *how* have they been watched?

As the audience leaves the theatre, the reader closes the book, what can they do with this knowledge – except, when asked, to say that they ‘saw’ and did not forget. What did they see? For Blau, it is ‘the omnipresent subject and the surreptitious operations of the look’. Blau writes of ‘that seeing body on the theatrical scene, the specular accretion called the audience, which materializes in the space between the look and the gaze’ (12). Referring to Beckett’s *Play*, but of equal significance to the audience of *Godot*, Blau argues that ‘we are trapped by the repetition [on stage], like the disarticulated creatures in the (im)memorial urns. Thus, we find ourselves, uncannily, in an archaic and familiar part, as audience, forced to play it again but not quite knowing how to do it, and still very much in the dark’ (13). As Blau concludes, ‘who/what is it that remains remains an open question, which partially depends... on whether *you* are still there in the audience’ (15). *Godot*’s pseudo-repetition draws the audience and reader in, making them complicit in the so-called repetition presented in Act II, silently watching. But to escape this endless play, they must know the difference, see the difference, incorporate the difference after their departure, or there is ‘nothing to be done’.

In the essay ‘Vitality and Deadness in Beckett’s Plays’, Michael Goldman argues two points that need to be critically refuted if this line of argument is to continue. First, he declares that ‘*perhaps* or the idea of’ perhaps in *Waiting for Godot* is ‘a cruelly damaging word, another little fissure that does the universe in. For reason is forced to admit that any conclusion is perhaps true.... Perhaps it is the day Godot appointed and perhaps not’ (71). Whilst it is correct to say it is the possibility of Godot’s arrival which the two central

characters await, the cruelty of the ‘perhaps’ occurs only in relation to the arrival, or non-arrival, of Godot. That same ‘perhaps’ allows for the beauty of possibility in the play. ‘Perhaps’ provides the characters with choices, limited though they may be. It is by making these choices that the characters ‘become’, as much as by choosing not to act. As witnesses to the play, it is the ‘perhaps’ that allows the audience to see otherwise – what Vladimir and Estragon might (not) be if they were to choose differently. For it is by their actions, the difference of their actions from the others, that the audience and reader come to know the characters. It is from the difference in their actions that the audience and reader can create their own ‘perhaps’. It is the ‘perhaps’ and the possibility contained within Vladimir’s soliloquy that adds to its poignancy. As fellow watchers and waiters in a play that holds actor and viewer alike captive to what never comes, the audience and reader nonetheless are seized by the moment when Vladimir asks: ‘What have I said?’ (*WFG* 83). This interpellation is as valuable as the laughter that occurs at the repetition of that end of possibility implied in ‘We can’t’, when the audience or reader begins to fully understand who is waiting at every utterance of ‘We’re waiting for Godot’.

Goldman’s second point is that action in *Godot* is ‘associated with death’; explicitly: ‘in grasping the shape of the second act, we are forced to acknowledge that action is dead’ (78). For Goldman, Vladimir’s appeal to the messenger boy is ‘a desperate attempt to put the two acts together, to convert what he and Gogo have been doing from a pointless passing of the time into an action’ (78). Why does Vladimir fail? Because, according to Goldman, ‘the idea of action depends on the existence of meaningful links between self and world, and Beckett’s characters cannot establish such links’ (79). Yet Goldman contradicts himself on the following page, arguing that ‘everything that the characters do, no matter how inconsequential, turns out to have the force of action. The deadness of the landscape and the absence of essence have the effect of promoting all activity to the significance of action

because even the smallest piece of business presses instantly against the void, against the idea of the action's meaninglessness.' Consequently, all actions, even the smallest, 'are as significant as the greatest undertakings because for Beckett, every attempt at action is a metaphysical encounter between human restlessness and the fact that there is nothing to be done' (83).

But the view that there is nothing to be done, that all action is equal in significance, ignores the choices made by the characters in *Godot* and suggests that all action, when related to the play in its totality, is both useless and repeated. For Goldman, no way out of waiting means nothing to be done. Yet, as the remainder of this chapter shows, nothing is not done: all action and inaction is not equal. A play takes place before an audience. By understanding the differences in the text, that audience may be able, even in the 'immense unfriendliness of our [human] condition' (83), to seize upon something of the nothingness in the void.

Seizing that nothingness requires the view that Act I is not the same as Act II. It is not the mere presence of leaves on the trees that conveys this. Though Beckett writes, '*Same time. / Same Place*', this is preceded by '*Act II / Next Day*' (49). This time, neither Vladimir nor Estragon are there. They have gone, and yet they return. Though Estragon's memory remains unreliable, Vladimir is able to testify – to the change in the foliage (58) and to the visit of Pozzo and Lucky the day before (53). Lamentably, and as opposed to his language in Act I, Vladimir is also able to recall the language Pozzo used with Lucky, hence he orders Estragon to pull up the opposite trouser leg with the command 'The other, pig!' (59). This language continues until Pozzo and Lucky appear again. Yet, as Beckett unequivocally states for the reader: '*Pozzo is blind*' (69). Pozzo, the character with most accoutrements of power – enough to confuse him with Godot – has his power to see and testify removed. However, Vladimir's memory remains: he *sees* that Pozzo is not Godot (70).

Estragon is also suddenly blessed with the power of recall. After being reminded that Lucky gave Estragon a bone and kicked him the previous day, Vladimir and Estragon begin a discussion that forms the basis of the profound ethical complexity in Beckett's play. Pozzo and Lucky lie '*helpless*' in a heap (69). Pozzo is calling out for help. As Eric Levy writes, 'the moral notion of "something to be done" collides with that of "Nothing to be done"' (628). For the first time in the play, Vladimir and Estragon are faced with a real choice: a position in which they find themselves in an ascendant relationship with the other, now-more unfortunate characters. They are neither passive spectators to Pozzo and Lucky's game nor passive subjects of the ever-absent Godot. Here they are challenged: exactly what will they do while waiting for Godot and what effect will that have on others?

Vladimir initially shows pity ('Poor Pozzo') while Estragon, after being made aware of Pozzo's horizontal incapacitation, expresses his desire to leave ('Let's go') (70). As they discuss the bone, silently given to Estragon by Lucky in Act I, the two begin to explore what they can do and why, with Vladimir mooting 'Perhaps we should help him first'(70). Meanwhile, Estragon suggests that some type of reward should be sought before helping: '[I]f he refuses we'll leave him there' (71). Vladimir considers this the 'intelligent' thing to do but is afraid of the possibility of Lucky's violence. The memory of the kick prompts Estragon to ask 'suppose we gave him a good beating the two of us?' Vladimir considers this a good idea before stunning Estragon with the proposition that they might help Pozzo: '*We help him?*' (71). Altruism is not the goal. Vladimir thinks that the help might be in 'anticipation of some tangible return' (72).

Beckett then presents Vladimir at his most Churchillian: in the midst of the confusion and Pozzo's calls for assistants/assistance, Vladimir appears to reverse the order of the play's manifest progression, declaring: 'Let us not waste our time in idle discourse!... Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed.' He then

personalises the speech: ‘Not indeed that we personally are needed. Others would meet the case equally well, if not better. To all mankind they were addressed, those cries for help still ringing in our ears! But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not’ (72).

It appears that Vladimir is choosing to answer to his summons, choosing an interpellated action as opposed to a mute ignorance. The contrast is made more apparent by Estragon’s response: ‘*[Estragon says nothing]*’ (72). Further discussion is required. Vladimir asks, only somewhat rhetorically, ‘[H]as it not long been straying in the night without end of the abyssal depths?’. Pozzo attempts to reassert his power by offering to pay Vladimir and Estragon; Vladimir reacts by moving as if to help Pozzo and Lucky, ruminating about ‘the midst of nothingness’ (73). As he finally responds to an offer of two hundred francs, Vladimir falls. Estragon attempts to leave and this time it is Vladimir’s turn to fear his partner’s departure – in contrast to the earlier incident, it is Vladimir’s turn to plead for help (73). Estragon himself is dragged down onto the pile: by lending assistance, they have involved themselves and neither Estragon nor Vladimir can be absolved. It is only by collective agreement that the two get up (76). For once in the play, an action, rather than a repeated response, is given to the question ‘What are we waiting for?’: ‘*[They help Pozzo to his feet]*’ (77).

However, the help does not deter the thought of revenge, only delaying it until Estragon has a chance to check on Lucky’s discomfort, with Vladimir urging him on: ‘It’s even an opportunity to revenge yourself’ (80). Estragon proceeds to kick ‘*Lucky, hurling abuse at him as he does so*’; it is only when he hurts his own foot that the kicking stops. The revelation that Lucky is mute follows soon after: ‘He can’t even groan’ (81). The audience and reader become aware of what Vladimir is only beginning to realise – the only one able to bear witness is incapable of speaking. It is no wonder that Vladimir is so emphatic in his



pleading to Godot's messenger boy, especially after the boy responds to a question regarding Pozzo and Lucky: 'I didn't see anyone, Sir' (84). Though Vladimir begins haltingly, 'tell him you saw me and that... that you saw me', a mixture of dawning fear and '*sudden violence*' seizes him. He demands: 'You're sure you saw me, you won't come and tell me tomorrow that you never saw me!' (84). The boy does not answer; Vladimir moves closer but the boy flees. Estragon, asleep throughout the soliloquy and encounter, awakens. The two resume their discussion about waiting which, by a disquisition on suicide, leads them to *Godot's* conclusion: both stand on stage although '[t]hey do not move'. But Beckett does not end with this stage direction. The final word is '*Curtain*' (87). The reader and the audience are given the closure of theatrical possibility, but must take with them an understanding of what and who they have seen. This understanding goes some way in answering the question of how they have waited while watching others wait.

First, they have seen. Second, they have seen that even in the abyss, where 'nothing is certain' (46), where there is 'no lack of void' (58), it is 'the way of doing it that counts, the way of doing it, if you want to go on living' (52). Beckett never provides the audience or reader with a simple explanation of what has taken place. He also refuses to construct a form of distancing by which the audience can feel removed from the play and its action. As Rosette Lamont claims in the 1975 essay 'Beckett's Metaphysics of Choiceless Awareness', the audience is drawn in by Vladimir and Estragon's apparent 'superior form of existence' (217). But this identification works only to illuminate the absurdity of waiting along with those who passively wait on stage. The disturbing ability of Vladimir to use his reason to support methods of violence and Estragon's brutality against Lucky prevent their elevation over Pozzo and Lucky. If there is meaning in the final act of *Waiting for Godot*, it is not an absolute that promotes the supremacy of the human spirit against the darkness. Nor is it one that reduces the individual actor to a passive participant in one's encounters which determine

the fate of other people. To reduce the complexity of interactions to a single meaning is to insist on a fundamental, unerring meaning that resides in the text. Meaning is elusive in Beckett's world within the play and in the world outside the play. What can be discovered by watching and waiting is that existence demands a far more complicated response to its complexity. Vladimir and Estragon's own concept of self and identity is contingent, fleeting, in flux as they encounter the possibilities of their aloneness: what it means to exist alongside another; what other possibilities abound in their universe and what are the repercussions of their choices and actions.

The only certainty where nothing is certain is that possibilities appear in the assistance that Vladimir and Estragon finally provide to Lucky and Pozzo. It may be temporal, it may be contingent and qualified, but the two characters, the only ones who hear and are able to bear witness and speak of the distress of Pozzo and Lucky, give the reader and audience this to take away – they have seen Vladimir, they have seen suffering, and almost certainly, their own possibilities to act in the abyss are imminent.

The degree to which *Godot's* characters have choices or the degree to which their previous choices have resulted in their circumstances is uncertain. What is certain, however, is that they continue to make choices based on their circumstances. Some of those choices create possibilities: the continuation of the game and the pleasures of company and dialogue instead of loneliness and monologue. Staying gives the tramps the chance to be seen, to be spoken of. And not just by the messenger boy. Their reluctance to move, their irreducibility to plot and narrative device, exhort the reader and audience as witnesses to think and to will: to search for possibilities that allow the characters to go on. In an existence 'without recourse', where suicide is not an option, Vladimir and Estragon's actions provide a valuable example of what to do while waiting. *Godot* does not contain a universal humanist message about the durability of the human spirit. It is not an eternal truth about the inevitable failure of

language to fully account for humanity and it does not enable us to fully account for ourselves. Even in the abyss, where memory, language and certainty fail us, *Godot* demands that the ability to open ourselves to possibilities must remain possible.

**CONCLUSION**  
**‘I IS AN OTHER’**

To be free one must give up a little part of oneself

– Hedwig

Decorating the Abyss is, by its ‘nature’ and its contingencies, unfinished and incomplete. To offer a literary project addressing an ethics of the self in modernity is to recognise clearly how previous attempts at total solutions have failed. For the work presented in this dissertation to exist ‘in the world’ – not purely as an exercise in theory – it must acknowledge the conditions that produced it and allow it to function. Therefore it must also be open to the possibilities of changing itself. Like Camus’s absurd, decorating the abyss is a starting point.

As with the possibilities Foucault detailed in Greco-Roman and late-19th century Paris, we cannot reify this ethical framework. Any practices that result must respond to the challenges of our time and yet create and sustain the idea that another time, another mode, may be possible without this possibility becoming a *telos* unto itself. And despite, or perhaps because of its success in responding to the mechanisms that produce both the modern and fundamentalist self, the framework must, like Estragon and Vladimir, bear witness to its inadequacies. This project cannot offer itself as the only road that leads away from the situations of contemporary life explored within it. But it can and does allow for an articulation of suffering, a mode of engaged concern and therefore an opening in the abyss. The possibility of possibilities exists in that space.

If a space has been opened by the conversation between this dissertation, the techniques of othering and the texts offered for application to the problems of fundamentalist

systems, it is also appropriate to identify the silences. These silences do not represent refusals to speak but rather opportunities for future dialogue and engagement.

This dissertation has offered a genealogy of the Western, modern, individual self and used the tools available to suggest sites of work that destabilise the notion of fixed identity that so often accompanies it. It has not offered suggestions for those who do not or cannot identify with or participate in that identity. Although Camus's work on the absurd emerged from and responded to a position of poverty, an ethics of existence driven by a critique of literature is, in its dissertation form, a product of educational and cultural privilege that is unavailable to many. Access to this ethics and the material that informs it is equally restricted.

The privileged position that enables and is produced by 'Decorating the Abyss' is, as Herbert Kögler found in his essay on Foucault, 'restricted to very specific social groups: to those, for the most part, with the economic resources that provide access to the relevant cultural and educational means' (25). However, the strategies outlined in this thesis attest to a responsibility that is correspondent to these practices of freedom and those who practice them. That responsibility develops from each of the works.

Camus's absurd demands an awareness of and scepticism towards dogmatic and totalising practices of the self. It highlights the importance of self-reflective approaches in daily life and thought. Even in the abyss – especially in the abyss – there is no place for the indulgence of self-pity. In recognising the conditions of the absurd, one becomes aware not just of one's solitude and eternal estrangement but also one's connection to all those who are alone and estranged. In his lecture at Uppsala, Camus argued: 'Let us not look for the door, and the way out, anywhere but in the wall against which we are living'. He concluded that the only respite for the creator was 'awakened, revived, nourished by millions of solitary individuals, whose deeds and works every day negate frontiers and the crudest implications

of history'. This respite contained 'the ever threatened truth that each and every man, on the foundation of his own sufferings and joys, builds for all' (272). An awareness of the absurd, a practice of revolting against it, must lead to an engagement with the world in which the self exists.

Similarly, Foucault's rereading of critique and his exposition of the ethical framework that can be used to craft genealogies of the subject are not solitary, individualist endeavours – ethics for the sake of ethics. Foucault insists that in performing one of the principal practices of the modern self – a perpetual critique of itself – the concept of the cult of the self has developed. Along with the fascisms of the self that inspired Foucault's 'ethical turn', this reification must be contested by utilising genealogies to remind the modern self that it is neither the opposite of its other nor ever stable and united with itself. To paraphrase Arthur Rimbaud, I is an other but not the other. These genealogical and self-reflexive practices, when maintained, lead to prioritising a social engagement and dialogue through an understanding that the self is formed by a relation of power, knowledge and truth. As a result, the possibilities of resisting that formation – of becoming something other – emerge. Foucault's professional engagement with non-traditional methods of teaching and his socially-important presence as a public intellectual attest to the responsibilities he recognised as part of his freedoms. The freedom to practice this freedom and the responsibilities inherent to it are ours as well.

Finally, *Godot* too speaks to the responsibilities of social presence: of bearing witness to the lives of others and, in doing so, acknowledging one's involvement as part of that life. Though it is impossible to envision a future where the long-term effects of one's engagement are apparent before that engagement, it remains absolutely possible to address the possibilities of one's own circumstances. Consequently, one is also able to analyse the motivations of one's conduct in the company of 'another'.

There may be no choice concerning the fact that one is interpellated by fundamentalist discourses. There may be no choice as to whether humans must share the planet with those whom they appear to have nothing in common. But as Camus, Foucault and Beckett's work attests, in a post-Holocaust existence and as a Western individual self, there is a choice about how one lives and thus how and who one becomes.

### Works Cited

- Acheson, James. *Samuel Beckett's Artistic Theory and Practice: Criticism, Drama and Early Fiction*. London: Macmillan 1997.
- Ali, Tariq. *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*. London: Verso, 2003.
- Alter, John. 'The Myth of the "Values" Voter'. *Newsweek*. 23 Oct. 2006. Web. 29 Nov. 2006.
- Aly, Götz, and Susanne Heim. *Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction*. 1991. Trans. Allan Blunden. London: Phoenix, 2003.
- Anders, Günther. 'Being without Time: On Beckett's Play *Waiting for Godot*'. Martin Esslin. *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*. 140-51.
- Aslan, Reza. *No God but God: The Origins, Evolution and Future of Islam*. London: William Heinemann/Random House 2005.
- Associated Press. 'The New GOP Buzzword: Fascism'. *CNN.com*. 30 Aug. 2006. Web. 14 Mar. 2007.
- . 'Harris Clarifies Comments on Religion'. *Florida Baptist Witness*. 2006. Web. 14 Mar. 2007.
- Bantock, G. H. *Education, Culture and the Emotions*. London: Faber & Faber, 1967.
- Barone, Michael. 'Our Covert Enemies'. *Townhall.com*. 21 Aug. 2006. Web. 22 Jul. 2007.
- Barber, Benjamin. 'Democracy and Terror in the Era of Jihad vs. McWorld'. *Worlds in Collision: Terror and the Future of Global Order*. Eds. Ken Booth and Tim Dunne. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. 245-262.
- Baumant, Zygmunt. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity, 2000.



Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot. Volume 3: Dramatic Works*. Ed. Paul Auster. Vol. 3.

*Samuel Beckett: The Grove Centenary Edition*. NY: Grove, 2006. 1-87.

Bennett, Jane, “‘How Is It, Then, That We Still Remain Barbarians?’ Foucault, Schiller, and the Aestheticization of Ethics.’ *Political Theory* 24 (1996): 653-772. *Jstor*. Web. 18 Dec. 2007.

Beinart, Peter. ‘Only Liberals Can Win the War on Terror?’. *FrontPageMagazine.com*. 4 Jul. 2006. Web. 15 May 2007.

Bernauer, James. *Michel Foucault’s Force of Flight: Towards an Ethics for Thought*. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1990.

--- and Carrette, Jeremy. *Michel Foucault and Theology: The Politics of Religious Experience*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

Blanchard, Mark. ‘Before Ethics: Camus’s *Pudeur*’. *MLN* 112.4 (1997): 666-682. *Project Muse*. Web. 18 Nov, 2007.

Blau, Herbert. ‘Quaquaquaqu: The Babel of Beckett’. *Smith* 1-15.

Boxall, Peter, ed. *Waiting for Godot / Endgame*. Cambridge: Icon, 2000.

Boyarin, Daniel, and Elizabeth A. Castelli. ‘Introduction: Foucault's the History of Sexuality: The Fourth Volume, or, a Field Left Fallow for Others to Till.’ *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10.3/4 (2001): 357. *Ebscohost*. Web. 1 Oct. 2007.

Bradbury, Malcolm, and James McFarlane, eds. *Modernism: 1890-1930*. London: Penguin, 1976.

---.’The Name and Nature of Modernism.’ Bradbury and McFarlane 19-55.

Brée, Germaine, ed. *Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962.

Brown, Michelle. ‘Setting the Conditions for Abu Ghraib: The Prison Nation Abroad’. *American Quarterly* 57.3 (2005): 973-997. *Project Muse*. Web. 18 Feb. 2008.

Bruck, Arthur Moeller van den. 'Germany's Third Empire, 1923'. Stackelberg and Winkle 76-82.

Bruck, Jan. 'Beckett, Benjamin, and the Modern Crisis in Communication'. *New German Critique* 26 (1982): 159-71.

Buker, Eloise A., "Hidden Desires and Missing Persons: A Feminist Deconstruction of Foucault." *Western Political Quarterly* 43 (1990): 811-832.

Burleigh, Michael. *The Third Reich: A New History*. London: Pan, 2001.

Bush, George W. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. *The Information Clearing House*. 2002. n.p. Web. 23 Jun. 2007.

---. *We Will Prevail: President George W. Bush on War, Terrorism, and Freedom*. NYC: National Review Books Continuum, 2003.

Buss, Robin. 'Luxury Camus'. Rev. of *Oeuvres Completes, Vols. 1 and 2*. By Albert Camus and *Albert Camus Ou La Naissance D'Un Romancier* by Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi. *Times Online*. 13 September, 2006. Web. 19 Dec, 2007.

Butler, Judith. *Giving an Account of Oneself*. NY: Fordham UP, 2005.

Callil, Carmen. *Bad Faith*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2006.

Camus, Albert. *Carnets, 1935-1942*. Trans. Philip Thody. London: Hamilton, 1963.

---. 'Create Dangerously'. *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*. Trans. Justin O'Brien. NYC: Vintage, 1974. 249-72.

---. 'Essay on Music'. *Youthful Writings*. Trans: Ellen Conroy Kennedy. NYC: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976. 130-55.

---. *Lyrical and Critical Essays*. Ed. and Trans. Philip Thody. NY: Vintage, 1970.

---. *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Trans. Justin O'Brien. London: Penguin, 1975.

---. 'Albert Camus. The Nobel Prize in Literature 1957. Banquet Speech'. *Nobelprize.org*. n.d. Web. 18 Oct. 2008.

- Carlson, Eric W. Rev. of *Albert Camus: A Study of His Work; Albert Camus: The Invincible Summer; The Thought and Art of Albert Camus; Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt*. *Comparative Literature* 13 (1961): 268-72. *Jstor*. Web. 22 Jan 2007.
- Chambers, Ross. 'Beckett's Brinkmanship'. Esslin. *Samuel Beckett* 152-68.
- CNN.com. 'You Are Either With Us or Against Us'. *CNN.com*. 6 Nov. 2001. Web. 8 May 2007.
- Cohn, Ruby. *Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut*. NJ: Rutgers UP, 1962.
- Coleman, Simon. 'Conservative Protestantism, Politics and Civil Religion in the United States'. Westerlund, David. ed. 24-47.
- Cornwell, Neil. *The Absurd in Literature*. Manchester: MUP, 2006.
- Cronin, Anthony. *Samuel Beckett: The Last Modernist*. London: HarperCollins, 1996.
- Davidson, Arnold. 'Introduction'. *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1981-1982* by Michel Foucault.. xix-xxx..
- D'Souza, Dinesh. 'God Knows Why Faith is Thriving'. *SFGate.com*. 22 Oct. 2006. Web. 19 Dec. 2007.
- Dean, Carolyn J. 'Against Grandiloquence.' *History & Theory* 45.2 (2006): 276-87. *Jstor*. Web. 19 Oct. 2007.
- Derbyshire, John. 'The G-word and the C-word'. *New English Review Online*. 2006. Web. 22 Apr. 2007.
- Derian, James Der. 'In Terrorem: Before and After 9/11'. *Worlds in Collision: Terror and the Future of Global Order*. Eds. Ken Booth and Tim Dunne. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. 101-117.
- Detel, Wolfgang. *Foucault and Classical Antiquity: Power, Ethics and Knowledge*. Trans. David Wigg-Wolf. *Modern European Philosophy*. Cambridge: CUP, 2005.

- Dingo, Rebecca. 'Securing the Nation: Neoliberalism's U.S. Family Values in a Transnational Gendered Economy'. *Journal of Women's History*. 16.3 (2004): 174-86. Project Muse. Web. 9 Apr. 2006.
- Dobbs, Michael. 'Papers Illustrate Negro's Role'. *Washington Post Online*. 12 Apr. 2005. Web. 18 May 2008.
- Donzelot, Jacques. *The Foucault Effect*. Eds. G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller. Chicago: UCP, 1991. 251-80.
- Doubrovsky, Serge. 'The Ethics of Albert Camus'. Brée 71-84.
- Dreyfus, Robert. *Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam*. The American Empire Project. NY: Metropolitan, 2005.
- Drummond, John. 'Care of the Self in a Knowledge Economy: Higher education, Vocation and the Ethics of Michel Foucault'. *Educational Philosophy & Theory* 35.1 (2003): 57-70. *Jstor*. Web. 15 Nov. 2005.
- Duvall, William E. 'Albert Camus against History.' *The European Legacy* 10.2 (2005): 139 - 47. *Jstor*. Web. 18 Mar. 2008.
- Elden, Stuart. 'The Problem of Confession: The Productive Failure of Foucault's History of Sexuality.' *Journal for Cultural Research* 9.1 (2005): 23-41. Ebscohost. Web. 12 Nov. 2007.
- Eribon, Didier. *Michel Foucault*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1991.
- Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. NY: Vintage, 2004.
- . 'Telling It How It Is: Beckett and the Mass Media'. Smith 204-216.
- , ed. *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1965.

- Eubanks, Cecil L., and Peter A. Petrakis. 'Reconstructing the World: Albert Camus and the Symbolization of Experience'. *The Journal of Politics* 61.2 (1999): 293-312. *Jstor*. Web. 22 Nov. 2005.
- Euben, Roxanne. 'The New Manicheans'. *Theory & Event* 5.4 (2001). *Project Muse*. Web. 18 Apr. 2008.
- Euraque, Darío A. *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972*. North Carolina: UNCP, 1996.
- Featherstone, Mike. *Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism and Identity*. Theory, Culture & Society. London: Sage, 1995.
- Fontana, Alessandro and Bertani, Mauro. 'Situating the Lectures'. Foucault "*Society Must Be Defended*". 273-294.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality, Vol 3*. Trans. Robert Hurley. NY: Vintage, 1988.
- . 'The Concern for Truth'. Interview by F. Ewald. *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*. Ed. Sylvère Lotringer. NYC: Semiotext(e), 1996.
- . *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth. Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Vol. 1*. Rabinow, Paul, ed. 1997. London: Penguin, 2000.
- . *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1981-1982*. Ed. Frédéric Gros. Trans. Graham Burchill. NY: Picador, 2005.
- . 'Polemics, Politics and Problematizations'. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. 111-120.
- . *The Politics of Truth*. Ed. Sylvère Lotringer. Trans. Lysa Hochroth and Catherine Porter. NYC: Semiotext(e), 2007.
- . "*Society Must Be Defended*": *Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975-6*. Eds. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana. Trans. David Macey. NYC: Picador, 2003.

- . 'The Subject and Power'. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*.  
Eds. Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. Chicago: UCP, 1982.
- . *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. Eds. Martin, Luther H, Huck  
Gutman and Patrick H Hutton. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.
- . *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2*. Trans. Robert Hurley. London:  
Penguin, 1992.
- . 'What is Critique?'. *The Politics of Truth*. 41-82.
- . 'What is Enlightenment?'. *The Politics of Truth*. 97-120.
- Friedländer, Saul. *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939*. NY:  
Harper Collins, 1997.
- Friedman, George. *America's Secret War*. NYC: Broadway Books, 2004
- Fukuyama, Francis. 'A New Type of War'. *Worlds in Collision: Terror and the Future of  
Global Order*. Eds. Ken Booth and Tim Dunne. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan,  
2002. 37-47.
- Giddens, Anthony. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Oxford: Polity, 1991.
- . *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford: SUP,  
1991.
- Giroux, Henry. 'The Terror of Neoliberalism: Rethinking the Significant of Cultural Politics.'  
*College Literature*. 31.1 (2005): 1-19. *Project Muse*. Web. 18 Aug. 2007.
- Goldman, Michael. 'Vitality and Deadness in Beckett's Plays'. *Beckett at 80/Beckett in  
Context*. Ed. Enoch Brater. Oxford: OUP, 1970. 67-83.
- Goldstein, Jan. 'Foucault's Technologies of the Self and the Cultural History of Identity'.  
*Cultural History After Foucault*. Ed. John Neubauer. NYC: Aldine Transaction, 1999.  
37-54.

- Golomb, Jacob, and Frederick Charles Copleston. *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus. A History of Philosophy*. London, New York: Routledge. Continuum, 1995.
- Gordon, Lois G. *Reading Godot*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2002.
- Grayling, A. C. 'Reason Lost'. *The Guardian Online*. 15 Aug. 2006. Web. 23 Mar. 2007.
- Hadot, Pierre. 'Reflections on the Notion of the Cultivation of the Self. *Michel Foucault Philosopher*. Trans and Ed. Timothy J. Armstrong. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992.
- Hallencreutz, Carl F, and David Westerlund. 'Introduction: Anti-Secularist Policies of Religion' Westerlund 1-23.
- Hannity, Sean. *Let Freedom Ring: Winning the War of Liberty Over Liberalism*. NYC: HarperCollins, 2004.
- Harvey, Lawrence E. 'Art and the Existential in *En Attendant Godot*'. *PMLA* 75.1 (1960): 137-46. *Jstor*. Web. 9 Jan. 2007.
- . Rev. of *Samuel Beckett, A Collection of Critical Essays* by Martin Esslin. *The Modern Language Journal* 51.8 (1967): 500-3. *Jstor*. Web. 9 Jan. 2007.
- Heyes, Cressida J. *Self-Transformations: Foucault, Ethics, and Normalized Bodies*. NYC: OUP, 2007.
- Higgins, Andrew. 'Texas Preacher Leads Campaign to Let Israel Fight'. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. 27 Jul. 2006. Web. 12 Mar. 2007.
- Hochberg, Herbert. 'Albert Camus and the Ethic of Absurdity.' *Ethics* 75 (1965): 87-102. *Jstor*. Web. 18 Dec. 2005.
- Humphries, Michael L. 'Michel Foucault on Writing and the Self in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius and *Confessions* of St. Augustine'. *Arethusa* 30.1 (1997) 125-138. *Project Muse*. Web. 19 Oct. 2008.

- Isaac, Jeffrey C. *Arendt, Camus, and Modern Rebellion*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1992.
- Jenkins, Peter. 'The Vainglorious Vulnerable Style of Mrs Thatcher'. *The Guardian Online*. 3 Oct. 1983. Web. 17 Oct. 2008.
- Jorstad, Erling. 'The New Christian Right'. *Theology Today*. 38.2 (1981):193-200. Web. 15 Mar. 2007.
- Jones, Ernest. *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*. Eds. Lionel Trilling and Steven Marcus. NYC: Basic, 1961.
- Judt, Tony. 'The New World Order'. *The New York Review of Books Online*. 14 Jul. 2005. Web. 19 May 2008.
- Kennedy, Andrew. *Samuel Beckett*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Klausen, Jimmy Casas. 'Imperial Histories/Imperial Tragedy; or, America's Middle East'. *Theory & Event* 8.4 (2005). *Project Muse*. Web. 21 Sep. 2007.
- Knopp, Josephine. 'Wiesel and the Absurd.' *Contemporary Literature* 15.2 (1974): 212-20. *Jstor*. Web. 15 Mar. 2006.
- Knowlson, James and Elizabeth Knowlson. *Beckett Remembering, Remembering Beckett: A Centenary Celebration*. NYC: Arcade, 2006.
- Kogler, Hans Herbert. 'The Self-Empowered Subject: Habermas, Foucault and Hermeneutic Reflexivity.' *Philosophy Social Criticism* 22.4 (1996): 13-44. *Jstor*. Web. 9 May. 2007.
- Lamont, Rosette. 'Beckett's Metaphysics of Choiceless Awareness'. *Samuel Beckett Now: Critical Approaches to his Novels, Poetry and Plays*. Ed. Melvin J. Friedman. Chicago: CUP 1970. 199-218.
- Lang, Berel. *Post-Holocaust: Interpretation, Misinterpretation, and the Claims of History*. Jewish Literature and Culture. Bloomington: IUP, 2005.



Larrain, Jorge. *Ideology and Cultural Identity: Modernity and the Third World Presence*.

Cambridge: Polity, 1994.

Lazere, Donald. *The Unique Creation of Albert Camus*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1973.

Lefebvre, Henri. *Introduction to Modernity*. Trans. John Moore. London: Verso, 1995.

Lloyd, Moya and Andrew Thacker. 'Still Thinking Differently: Foucault Twenty Years On'.

*New Formations* 55.1 (2005): 45-53. *Ingenta*. Web. 28 Jun. 2007.

Lottman, Herbert R. *Albert Camus: A Biography*. Corte Madera: Gingko, 1997.

Lyons, John O. *The Invention of the Self: The Hinge of Consciousness in the Eighteenth*

*Century*. Michigan: Southern Illinois UP, 1978.

Lyotard, Jean-François. 'A Postmodern Fable.' *Postmodern Debates*. Ed. Simon Malpas.

New York: Palgrave, 2001. 12-21.

Macey, David. *The Lives of Michel Foucault*. NYC: Vintage, 1995.

Martin, Raymond, and John Barresi. *The Rise and Fall of Soul and Self: An Intellectual*

*History of Personal Identity*. NY: Columbia UP, 2006.

Marx, Karl. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*.

Ed. and Trans. Martin Nicolaus. London: Penguin Classics, 1993.

May, Todd. *The Philosophy of Foucault*. Continental European Philosophy. Ithaca: McGill-

Queen's UP, 2006.

Mazza, Rabbi Bernard. *With Fury Poured Out: The Power of the Powerless During the*

*Holocaust*. NYC: Shapolsky, 1989.

Miller, James. *The Passion of Michel Foucault*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993.

McFarlane, James. 'The Mind of Modernism.' Bradbury and McFarlane 71-93.

McMurtry, John. 'Understanding Market Theology.' *The Invisible Hand and the Common*

*Good*. Ed. Bernard Hodgson. Berlin: Springer, 2004. 151-82.

McNay, Lois. *Foucault: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Continuum, 1994.

- Mohrt, Michel and Warren Ramsey. 'Ethic and Poetry in the Work of Camus'. *Yale French Studies* 1. Existentialism (1984). 113-118. *Jstor*. Web. 27 May 2005.
- Mort, Frank and Peters, Roy. 'Foucault Recalled: Interview With Michel Foucault'. *New Formations*. 55. 9-22. Web. 22 Oct 2008.
- Nagel, Thomas. 'The Absurd.' *The Journal of Philosophy* 68.20 (1971): 716-27. Web. *Jstor*. 18 Jul. 2009.
- Nazi Party, The. 'Program of the National Socialist German Workers Party of 1920'. Stackelberg and Winkle 64-66.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. The Portable Nietzsche*. Ed. and Trans. Kaufmann. NY: Penguin, 1976. 103-449.
- *Twilight of the Idols. The Portable Nietzsche*. Ed. and Trans. Kaufmann. NY: Penguin, 1976. 463-564.
- Noor, Farish A. 'My Interview with Abu Bakar Bashyir - Part II'. *Opinion Asia Online*. 30 Aug. 2006. Web. 21 Feb. 2008.
- O'Hara, Daniel T. 'Why Foucault No Longer Matters'. *Reconstructing Foucault: Essays in the Wake of the 80s*. Eds. Ricardo Miguel-Alfonso and Silvia Caporale-Bizzini. Rodopi, Amsterdam: 1994
- O'Leary, Timothy. *Foucault and the Art of Ethics*. London: Continuum, 2002.
- Orme, Mark. 'Retour aux sources: Crisis and Reappraisal in Albert Camus's Final Pronouncements on Justice'. *Modern and Contemporary France* 11.4 (2003): 463-74. *Taylor and Francis*. Web. 18 Nov. 2007.
- Paxton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Fascism*. NY: Alfred A Knopf, 2004.
- Petras, James and Henry Veltmeyer. *Unmasking Globalization: The New Face of Imperialism*. London: Zed Books, 2001.

- Peters, Michael. 'Writing the self: Wittgenstein, confession and pedagogy'. *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 34. 2 (2000): 353–68. *Jstor*. Web. 15 Dec. 2007.
- Rajchman, John. 'Introduction: Enlightenment Today'. *The Politics of Truth* by Michel Foucault. 9-28.
- Rappa, Antonio Leopold. 'A Critique of Modernity: On Positivism, and Phenomenology'. *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*. 2.3/4 (2003): 220-242. *Ebscohost*. Web. 3 Aug. 2008.
- Raum, Tom. 'Iran-Contra Figures Get Jobs in Bush Administration'. *The Independent Online*. 13 Mar. 2002. Web. 15 Jan. 2009.
- Roth, John K. *Ethics During and After the Holocaust: In the Shadow of Birkenau*. NYC: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- . 'Introduction: Ethics after Auschwitz'. *Ethics After the Holocaust: Perspectives, Critiques, and Responses*. Ed. John K. Roth. St Paul: Paragon House, 1999. vii-xvi.
- Raw Story. 'Bin Laden, Terror Imagery Focus of Latest GOP Ad'. *Raw Story*. 19 Oct. 2006. Web. 15 Dec. 2007.
- Rundle, Guy. 'Flagging Passions'. *theage.com.au*. 1 Apr. 2006. Web. 26 Jul. 2007.
- Ruthven, Malise. *Fundamentalism: The Search for Meaning*. Oxford: OUP, 2005.
- Sagi, Avi. *Albert Camus and the Philosophy of the Absurd*. Trans. Batya Stein. Value Inquiry Book Series. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2002.
- Schabert, Tilo. 'A Note on Modernity in Recent Years'. *Political Theory*. 7.1 (1979): 123-37. *Jstor*. Web. 8 Jul. 2007.
- Schwarz, Daniel R. *Imagining the Holocaust*. NY: St Martin's, 1999.
- Sefler, George F. 'The Existential Vs. The Absurd: The Aesthetics of Nietzsche and Camus.' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 32 (1974): 415-21. *Jstor*. Web. 15 Mar. 2007.

- Seigel, Jerrold. *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge: CUP, 2005.
- Sim, Stuart. *Fundamentalist World: The New Dark Age of Dogma*. Cambridge, UK: Icon, 2005.
- Smith, Joseph H., ed. *The World of Samuel Beckett. Psychiatry and the Humanities 12*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1991.
- Sonnenburg, Penny M. 'United Fruit Company'. *Colonialism: An International, Social, Cultural, and Political Encyclopedia, Volume 1*. Eds. Melvin Eugene Page and Penny M. Sonnenburg. Oxford: ABC-CLIO Inc, 2003. 600-1.
- Spero, Rabbi Aryeh. 'Israel Could Have Trounced Hezbollah, but Its Prime Minister Wouldn't Allow It'. *Caucus For America*. 26 Aug. 2006. Web. 19 Jul. 2007.
- Stackelberg, Roderick and Sally A. Winkle, eds. *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Steingart, Gabor. 'Dueling Workforces: How Globalization Drives Down Western Wages'. *Spiegel Online*. 16 Oct. 2006. Web. 28 Nov. 2008.
- St Aubyn, F. C. 'Albert Camus and the Death of the Other: An Existentialist Interpretation'. *French Studies*. 16.2 (1962): 124-141. *Jstor*. Web. 23 Jul. 2006.
- Steyn, Mark. 'It's the Demography, Stupid'. *Wall Street Journal Online*. 27 July, 2006. Web. 15 Mar. 2007.
- Thody, Philip. *Albert Camus: A Study of His Work*. London: Hamilton, 1957.
- Todd, Olivier. *Albert Camus: A Life*. Trans. Benjamin Ivry. NY: Carroll and Graf, 1997.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *Hope and Memory*. London: Atlantic, 2005.
- Toole, David. *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo: Theological Reflections on Nihilism, Tragedy, and Apocalypse*. Radical Traditions: Theology in a Postcritical Key. Boulder: Westview, 1998.

Touraine, Alain. *Critique of Modernity*. Trans. David Macey. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995.

United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. 'Poland Seminar/Israel Pilgrimage'. *USY.org*.

n.d. Web. 14 Aug. 2008.

---. Religion/Education. *USY.org*. n.d. Web. 14 Aug. 2008.

Ure, Michael. 'Senecan Moods: Foucault and Nietzsche on the Art of Self'. *Foucault Studies*

4: 19-52. Web. 19 Feb. 2007.

Webster, Paul. *Pétain's Crime*. London: Pan, 2001.

Westerlund, David. ed. *Questioning the Secular State: The Worldwide Resurgence of*

*Religion in Politics*. London: C. Hurst & Co., 1996.

White, Keith. 'Chickenhawk Down: Realists Respond to the Neocons World View'. *Campus*

*Progress*. 12 Oct. 2006. Web. 23 Jan. 2007.

Wills, Garry. 'A Country Ruled By Faith'. *The New York Review of Books Online*. 16 Nov.

2006. Web. 16 Oct. 2007.

Winer, Robert. 'The Whole Story'. Smith 73-85.

Wistrich, Robert S. *Hitler and the Holocaust*. London: Phoenix, 2003.