

Retrieving a posthumous text-message; Nietzsche's fall: the significance of the disputed asylum writing, *My Sister and I*

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Abstract *This paper discusses the disputed asylum writing of Nietzsche's whose provenance is still unresolved. It argues that the marginalisation of this remarkable work is a further extension of Nietzsche's predicament, which was and is to be marginalised and rendered acceptable in merely conventional terms. Both this predicament and the work itself are of great interest to Psychotherapists and Post-modernists. Besides its compelling tragic story, and exposure of his relations with women including his incest with his sister, the significance which can be derived from the work itself (whoever it is by) is that it is one of the earliest examples of such positions as that of the later Wittgenstein, in relation to belief and fixed ideology, which release us from the constraint of the requirement of objective belief basis. The author of this book applies this not only to cognitive beliefs, but to whole genres of writing, ways of life and free existential positions.*

Introductory: the dilemma of the disputed text in the post-modern world

Nietzsche is arguably the first philosopher of the modern age, powerfully and actively influencing successors in both Anglo-Saxon and Continental European contexts, who thereby transcends the split 'Anglo-Saxon/versus Continental European'; he is also arguably (if Freud and Janet were the fathers) the grandfather of psychotherapy; and he is perhaps the most passionate and controversial of all philosophers.

His purported work *My Sister and I* is a work which is of profound interest to Psychotherapists in several ways. I have written of the story and provenance of the work in an earlier review, and it is addressed from some stylistic and factual aspects by Walter Stewart in a fine and careful introductory essay in the book itself (Stewart, 1986; Wilkinson, 1997), and therefore I shall not repeat this material here.

It marks the culmination of his identity as a 'posthumous man', that is, as a man who, in the main and culminating corpus of his writing, simply did not exist for his contemporaries (until, ironically, the very point he went mad, just after Georges Brandes had given the first public lectures on his later philosophy). In this, as a disputed work, this non-existence of his—the prototype, with Kierkegaard, and Dostoevsky's 'Underground Man', of deconstruction, post-modernism, 'writing', indirect communication—is *doubled* in a macabre and uncanny way. It becomes even less merely a metaphor; it becomes his essential mode of 'being'. 'Deferral' (in Freud's and Derrida's concepts), manifest in the relation to both death, and literary immortality, is woven into the very texture of his consciousness in this work. In Derrida's sense, he becomes 'writing' through and through, wholly, so to say infinitely,

absorbed in his text;¹ and its disputedness merely doubles the dilemma of ‘who is the author, who is the text?’ If one can show, as one can, that he is already totally aware of this dilemma—a dilemma so profound, recondite, and incapable of explanation in common-sense terms,² that it has hardly become accessible to us till the last 50 years or so—then the possibility of systematic forgery becomes remote. And, if it *were* forgery, then the forgery itself, and the reflexive awareness of the forger as a forger, would thereby pose as huge a problem, on a much greater scale than Freud’s very post-modern retrospective construction (including associations of events subsequent to the dream itself!) in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud, 1900), and the dilemma would then open into a post-modern quicksand of unprecedented proportions.

If, next, the subsequent response to the work were extreme marginalisation, making its authentication now next to impossible (as impossible as, for instance, to establish and win acceptance that the man from Stratford did *not* write ‘Shakespeare’), then this would already have been anticipated by Nietzsche himself, or the forger, and becomes part of the predicament. The boundaries between ‘fiction’ and ‘fact’ would have dissolved in an unheard of way—just as they do in the deepest layers of art and of psychotherapy. The theories of psychotherapy are full of reductive attempts to eliminate these dilemmas in favour of some or other model of ‘reality’ or ‘presence’; but these dilemmas, of the dissolution of the fact/fiction dichotomy, are essential to the core of our work.

Therefore, this work poses the profoundest challenge to Psychotherapists in their claims to enacting authentic values—and not only to Psychotherapists!

My Sister and I purports to have been written after Nietzsche’s becoming insane in January 1889, in the Jena Asylum (cf. Wilkinson, 1997). (*From now on I shall not mention the caveats, ‘if it is by Nietzsche’, ‘the purported text’, and so on, but they must be taken as read all through since, though I personally would bet on most of this being by Nietzsche, the objective provenance has to count as still undecided.*) It recounts (reflexively, and in the mode of Dostoevsky’s *Underground Man*): his claims of his boyhood incest with his sister, and his love affairs, including those with Cosima Wagner and Lou Salome, and how he contracted syphilis; his re-engagement with Christianity (through the medium of Dostoevsky in particular) and democracy, as well as with Buddhism and Jewishness (these latter already present in his official writings); his partial reevaluation of his power and *Übermensch* philosophy in the light of the ‘egalitarian reduction’ of his asylum experience; and many interwoven philosophical and autobiographical *aperçus* of a fine, subtle and witty order, including extensive reflections on law, political contractuality, and on what Derrida calls ‘the politics of friendship’. These mark a significant change in, and, I would hold, advance on, what might be regarded as the *Führerprinzip*, Leader-principle, element in Nietzsche’s earlier writings (in our post-Hitlerian awareness the milder 19th century partial equivalents being Bonapartism and Caesarism); for even though this is always offset by other, more anarchistic individualistic elements, the repudiation is never as nearly unequivocal as it is here.

Despite the greater rejection of autocracy here, none of this turns him into a good democratic liberal; but it does move him nearer the conservative Christian individualism and ‘culture hierarchy’ affirmation of such people as Augustine, Pascal, and T.S. Eliot, and also, in both interesting contrast and parallel, towards an anarchistic socialistic position, in respect of which we find him for the first time taking an interest in Marx. This latter trend continues the oft-noted affinity with Oscar Wilde; here he shows affinity to the anarchic socialistic individualism of *The Soul of Man under Socialism* (Wilde, 1992). Both of these are positions

1. No, it is not the world that is out of joint, but I, its great lover, I the lover of the natural—who never did a natural thing unless I could find an artificial act that would do just as well. Witness: I do not live, I write (*My Sister and I*, §10, p. 97).
2. Cf. for instance the ‘debate’, or rather failure of debate, between Derrida and J.R. Searle in *Limited Inc* (Derrida, 1988).

with a significant natural cross-connection and relationship to his earlier positions, yet representing a significant evolution and movement into dialogue by comparison.

The interest in Pascal and Augustine simultaneously extends to the style, which is aphoristically autobiographical, in a way which bears the marks of the influence of Pascal's *Pensées*, and Augustine's *Confessions*, as well as those of Rousseau. Perhaps this is why so much of this writing reminds us of the notebooks of Wittgenstein, on whom certainly Augustine's *Confessions* had a profound influence, especially the more personal communications of *Culture and Value* (Wittgenstein, 1980). The more personal utterance compounds the paradox of the 'retreat into posthumous text', for much of this writing is *testimony*, the personal testimony paralleling the 'public' testimony of *Ecce Homo* (Nietzsche, 1992), and through it manifesting the emerging themes and stylistic transformations of this work. Yet this 'unmasking' can be construed as in one sense *even more masked than the impersonal writings*, as we shall see.

The whole builds also into a cumulative love paean to Lou Salome (later Rilke's lover and Freud's friend and colleague, cf. Yalom, 1992), in which Nietzsche gradually and poignantly recognises his lost opportunity with the love of his life, in the face of the continued psychic dominance of his mother and sister, the 'real objections to the eternal recurrence, my true idea from the abyss' (Nietzsche, 1992), the Lutheran Naumburg cats who simply laughed at Friedrich Nietzsche the Zarathustran mouse (*My Sister and I*, §14, p. 153), and who, in their 'sane insanity', embodied the impossible collapse of a viable consensual reality, in the face of which a kind of bicameral mode (Jaynes, 1990; Wilkinson, 1999), a kind of madness, and eventually actual madness, were the only possibilities! Accordingly, there is here a most significant acknowledgement of, and coming to grips with his difficulty with, and fear of, women (cf. Derrida, 1979), which moves towards a new and deeply poignant acceptance, trapped outwardly and inwardly in the asylum as he may be.

This is a more than merely personal recognition; it is the recognition of the primal male fear and hatred of the primordial woman, and of the womb and the mystery of childbirth, which Goya expresses in the terrible painting, at the end of his life, of *Saturn devouring his daughters*, and which is surely the true significance of Freud's concern with castration anxiety, even though, characteristically, Freud embeds this oceanic insight in the tight medicine bottle of the limiting (though accurate in specific cases) concept of penis envy, conceived as a general paradigm. Nietzsche recovers the concept or experience, which had almost been destroyed in him, of Woman as the healing and illimitable, transcending but also grounding all social contractual concepts, and annulling the machismo of the Zarathustran *Übermensch* vision, and this becomes, with and in his madness, something beyond the collective nullity embodied in his mother and sister. That nullity was imposed on him to the roots of his being, in his childhood after his father died, of which he writes a good deal here; to claim, or reclaim, this healing vision in the asylum is no mean feat (cf. Derrida, 1979). In his struggle with all of this he persistently oscillates between misogyny and philogyny; but the battlefield remains always recognisable. The theme of the significance of Jewishness is interwoven with this theme, in a way we shall examine.

It is an extraordinarily characterful work, full of zest, tragedy, wry retrospection, insanity shot through with wisdom, and, for me, virtually every word carries the trade mark, 'Nietzsche!' Not only that but more: it is a work which combines the energy and vision of saga and myth with the intense cross-referencing and power of suggestion of poetry; it is elusive and draws one in indefinitely in the manner characteristic of the greatest works, like *Hamlet* (which may also be the hidden testimony of a 'concealed man', cf. Ogburn, 1988). That it sprawls and gropes for its realisations like *Hamlet* is not an objection (this is not to say it is to the same extent as *Hamlet* an achieved work, but it is not merely fragmentary either). It is not fully realised in the way works like *The Gay Science* (Nietzsche,

1974) are fully realised; in them guiding themes control the organisation of the whole work; here they are, rather, *emerging*, not always followed through in their full ramifications; to see what the themes are, and imply, an effort of reconstruction is necessary, though this may still end in a pluralism or a fragmentation of themes. This is the world of T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*: 'These fragments have I shored against my ruins.'

Pluralistic oscillation of the themes

But indeed this pluralism and *oscillation* of the themes is one of the post-modern aspects of the work; it is seemingly easy to see, locally and superficially, what Nietzsche is saying and doing, but harder to get any grasp of what it adds up to. And what I have said so far is therefore relativised. In 1997 I construed it in large part as a recantation, when all is said and done (Wilkinson, 1997). Well, there are elements of that, but it is far from being the whole, and is offset by aspects of reiteration and defiance, and also the modifications are often transformations not mere repudiations. And the same applies to all the other themes. Also, the apparent understandability of the local statements and remarks is misleading; they have a further dimension, which is that of their hidden links with, and their comment upon, the whole corpus and thought world of the Nietzschean vision and philosophy, something not obvious to the beginning reader, *and yet one of the major arguments for the authenticity of this work*. A myriad of small brief, sometimes cryptic sometimes dazzlingly clear, remarks, some (but only some), of which could equally have been written by the Wittgenstein of *Culture and Value* (Wittgenstein, 1980), communicate sometimes the most subtle revisions and transformations of Nietzsche's vision, and sometimes a stark sardonic pessimism hardly paralleled elsewhere than in Samuel Beckett. The Wittgenstein affinity is yet more testimony, to the authenticity of this material.

Thus, a remark like:

No, art does not justify life, it does not even justify itself. Neither art nor life stand in any crying need of justification. (*My Sister and I*, §48, p. 106)

is a response to both the earlier 'aesthetic justification of the world' in *The Birth of Tragedy* (Nietzsche, 1993), and the later philosophy of art itself in, for instance, *The Twilight of the Idols* (Nietzsche, 1968). It marks the step, as we shall further explore, into a pure sense of life 'as is', without any residual attempt at a theology or theodicy—even a Nietzschean one!—upon the basis of which pure sense of life it would simply be possible to *live passionately in pure existence*, without any attempt to justify. This is not a recantation but an advance. It is a more ego-free, less posturing, position. And there are a multitude of such brief comments.

I shall return to these later.

All the way through, the writing is aware of the need for madness, in order to survive, when it is no longer possible to *be* in the consensual realm, where one's being has no authorisation in the contemporary realm, where *almost every scrap* of writing and being, even where most dazzlingly sane, is now conceived or bracketed at last within something like the communication-frame and style of the parable of the madman proclaiming the death of God in *The Gay Science*, because, in the breakdown of consensual insight,

This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars—and yet they have done it themselves! (Nietzsche, 1974, §125, p. 182)

The problem

How, then, could this work have been missed and still be missed? And why indeed is a dismissed work by a 19th-century philosopher of interest to Psychotherapists?

It has indeed been missed. And *My Sister and I* is indeed of special importance to Psychotherapists, to whom I shall return. Psychotherapists are mainly too absorbed in the technical presentation of their work to offer vision in its own right, yet here is vision deeply congruent with the alchemical journey implicit in much Psychotherapy (Rowan, 2001), yet not offered as mere adjunct to the technical matters. Here is the gap in the Psychotherapy framework which this work is uniquely fitted, potentially, to fill. More, it is enormously significant to anyone at all who is interested in one of the few supreme spirits, historical shapers, and philosophical innovators, since the Renaissance. Yet it is unknown, disregarded, taken for granted as being inauthentic, and I know of no well-known commentator on Nietzsche who has gone on record on its behalf, which means it is therefore likely to get me myself a few funny looks because of this advocacy ('yet another of his quixotic eccentricities!').

What would we not give to have a new major play by Shakespeare, an undiscovered substantial posthumous book by Sigmund Freud (as we did indeed have with *The Project*, Freud, 1950), or a major unpublished symphony by Beethoven? Yet here we have an unknown asylum writing, his final testimony, by Nietzsche, the supreme philosopher of the epoch, which is simply disregarded by the significant commentators of the time, a disregard which in turn, as a self-fulfilling prophecy, is taken to be witness that *there is no case* to be made for this book, and that it is merely a wishful product of such desire for unknown works of the great creators (a motivation which Eco turned into an intriguing thriller, 1984).

But on the other hand, *if* this work is indeed authentic, then such disregard—of such an important work—is itself a significant psychological problem, and it becomes indeed quite extraordinary, on reflection, that, in all the veritable libraries of commentary on Nietzsche, this amazing work of this amazing philosopher and psychologist has effectively been buried. There are of course serious questions about the work's provenance. But they do not eliminate the question (Stewart, 1986; Wilkinson, 1997).

So, in explanation of this phenomenon, we might pursue many lines of enquiry here, such as those of:

- i. whether we have here merely an extremely graphic instance of a *general* human unwillingness to accept anything which is not already vouched for by authority, or absorbed into consensus (something anticipated by Nietzsche in this text, and *this* theme is far from irrelevant to Psychotherapists!);
- ii. whether there is a *particular* recoil from, and unwillingness to recognise in our 'great' authors, such a degree of horrific descent (a descent only the Dostoevsky he felt such affinity with, could have done justice to) into several abysses as Nietzsche manifests here—remaining in touch nevertheless with his greatness and supreme wisdom, even, or especially, in his insanest moments (something which might have appealed, one would have thought, to anti-psychiatry!);
- iii. whether the post-modern abyss into which we are plunged if we come to grips with this work is simply intolerable to most people even now (cf. e.g. Roberts, 1999; Heath, 2000);
- iv. whether there is actually merely lip service paid to the human reality of great writers, so that anything at all 'off limits' is just not noticed;
- v. whether the disputed authorship of such a work places in sharp relief the question whether post-modernists themselves are genuinely serious in their according priority to 'text' over 'author', and what it seriously means to absorb the 'author' into the 'text', where we have such a work as this, which is right on the cusp of whether it is a 'true' production of the author or not; for is this post-modern prioritisation of 'text' one which *presupposes* an identified 'authorship', and hence, in a manner, 'begs the question' against a response which treats enquiries into the authorship itself, and as such, as in question?;

vi. and, for 'we Psychotherapists', whether our purported interest in depth autobiography, and authentic personal narrative, is genuine enough to tolerate such a test and confrontation with a naked selfhood as Nietzsche gives us here.

Again, this work—whether or not authentic—raises many questions of more general scope. We may place the book paradoxically in the context of the increasing *anonymisation* of our civilisation, evoked in Kierkegaard's 'crowd', Nietzsche's own 'last man' in Zarathustra, and Heidegger's *Das Man*. This is an anonymisation which can absorb the 'official' works of an author, but not those in which, even for a moment, the undiluted and painful reality of a writer might appear, and appear before the bar of a judgment, in which we ourselves might be implicated in an *actual decision* on a reality. For all our lip service to existential authenticity, in such a situation we are found wanting. Indeed, this anonymisation is arguably intrinsic to the requirement of the Foucauldian–Laingian *inversion* of 'common-sense consensual reality', which leads on to the post-modern bracketing of 'reality' within 'text'. The anonymisation is *itself* the dissolution of a founded consensuality, and therefore 'madness' becomes the only 'sane' response.

Again, our unwillingness today seriously to consider the importance of *the claims of the dead*, of which the case of this book is an acid test, the claims of our spiritual ancestors (including Nietzsche as the grandfather of Psychotherapy before Freud and Janet)—except in the cases where it is a matter of historic acknowledgement, or rectification, of atrocities, perhaps partly driven by political correctness, and imperial guilt—is perhaps an index of our near absolute loss of the concept of history (whether of the *sense* of history is more perhaps more equivocal) today (cf. Lukacs, 1968).

But, hold on, am I not in effect making these challenges and accusations in advance, begging the question? Who, especially among Psychotherapists, has *so much as come across* this book, to be honourably faced with the question of its recognition? How does one find it, when I, for instance, stumbled on it purely by accident in an 'alternative' bookshop in Sheffield, England? Well, here there is indeed room for genuine dialogue. It is certainly true that this book has been ignored and wilfully dismissed, by those who know of it. But the acid test is indeed whether someone who has *not* encountered it before, for whom it becomes a wholly new dilemma, is willing to take it seriously. With regard to the vast majority of Psychotherapists, most of whom in my experience, whose 'in-house' absorption in the specialist Psychotherapy literature, has not left them free to read the 'official' works of the grandfather of Psychotherapy, let alone the disputed one, we have nothing to lose; if this saga grips anyone who is in that position, this work in some ways is as good an introduction to Nietzsche's greatness as any other!

The challenge

So put this to the test! Journey with me through this strange and terrible work! Enter Nietzsche's Eighth Circle of Dante's Hell with me! To convey the sense of this work long quotations will often be necessary.

I begin with a long and beautiful quotation conveying his sense of his posthumous existence, and his reaching out to life and love, here (early in the book) associated with Cosima Wagner (it becomes more and more emphatically Lou Salome and Jewish-centric as the book goes on). It also illustrates the magisterial grandeur and poignancy of the style, embodying both a wealth of allusions to previous writings (e.g. 'zenith' and 'high noon' in *Zarathustra*), and the peculiar combination of madness and insight of genius which pervades this book. It also illustrates something of his altered sense of the cosmic place of womanhood, and his awareness of his posthumous 'appeal over the head of his sister and mother to posterity':

The great end of art is to strike the imagination with the power of a soul that refuses to admit defeat even in the midst of a collapsing world. Up to now my work has been artistic because of my refusal to cry out against my private doom. But now I bellow like a wounded bull who is tormented beyond animal endurance, and the Lama [his nickname for his sister] dreads such a revelation of me who have become synonymous with Stoic fortitude and indifference.

I have been broken on the wheel of Fate; I am dying in agony, but my dear sister already considers me dead and is only eager to save me for the deathless future, for the psychic immortality that Spinoza spoke about. She is already enjoying my immortality as famous men come here to pay their respects and to bring the flowers of flattery to my premature grave. She quotes my *Grave-Song* to them: *Hail to you, will of mine! Only where there are graves are there resurrections.*

I smile in approval, but my will to affirm life above all suffering has dried up like water in an empty well. I am strangling in the airless void of the age, without love, without life, without the song of the Sirens to recall me back to my vital being once crowned with the evergreen garland of bliss. O singing birds of my hopes—where are you now? Your throats are cut and your blood gushes out upon the dry desert sands. And the Sirens are quiet, buried in the Great Silence of the Abyss.

I have demanded of life that it shape itself in my broken image: life is whole and entire, only I am shattered and ready for the dust-heap. The divine Nietzsche is not even human or sub-human, he is merely a disembodied howl in the screaming chaos of our times. Once on Portofino Mountain divinity descended on me and I wrote the *fifth gospel* of Zarathustra. Now I cannot even seek shelter in my humanhood and brutehood; my body is paralysed, my brain is turning to rock and my pall-bearers discuss my greatness in my presence as if I were already laid out in my burial clothes.

This sun is in its zenith. It is high noon in Weimar and Elisabeth is serving tea in the garden to some distinguished foreigners who have come all the way from Brazil—or is it Peru?—to see me in the flesh. Like an Egyptian mummy who somehow has forgotten to die entirely, I am the spectator of my own death, feeling my eyes turned into dust.

Oh love, love, come back to me, bringing life on your healing wings! ... Ariadne, I love thee! I love thee Ariadne! Only my wife Cosima can carry me back to the love of the world where Dionysos and Jesus meet at the breast of the Eternal Woman, the Eternal Delight. (*My Sister and I*, §2, pp. 19–20)

This passage encapsulates many of the themes and motifs of this book, and I shall now draw some of them out. The intent to circumvent his sister's embalming of him whilst still alive in a conventional 'literary immortality' is still more strongly expressed in other places. He is incidentally massively inconsistent in opinions and positions here, even more than in his official works, but the preoccupations are always consistent. There is also the puzzle of his being supposed in Weimar where he was never in an asylum and could not have smuggled the writing out. There are many such puzzles in relation to the presented rationale for the provenance.

When Nietzsche here, and almost throughout this book, writes such things as 'the divine Nietzsche', or 'the *fifth gospel* of Zarathustra' he is *simultaneously* being ironical (or at least parodically self-aware), and also literally and concretely 'mad', 'psychotic' or bicameral (Jaynes, 1990; Wilkinson, 1999). He explodes the dichotomy between madness and sanity.

This is a characteristic of this book which comes out even more, with peculiar insight and sharper poignancy also, in the Diogenes passages later on in the book.

It is of course impossible to know whether the structuring of the text is Nietzsche's own, even provisionally, in any sense, or whether it has as little relation to anything Nietzsche planned as the text of *The Will to Power* (1968?). But in the book as it stands, about halfway through, Nietzsche moves to a stance in which *laughter*, defiant ridicule, enacted in buffoonery and burlesque, becomes his way of being, and he moves more and more into enacting it in a Hamlet-like way, which he gradually associates with Diogenes the Cynic (the man who walked through the streets of Athens in broad daylight carrying a lighted lantern, and remarked that he was searching for an honest man!), through whom Nietzsche conveys his profound state of communicating sanity through the role of madness, like Hamlet. This emphasis converges in the last half of the book with that of increasing focus on his love for Lou Salome; there is also a link with the theme of the historical-cultural role of the Jew (Lou was a Jewess), to which I shall return.

Diogenes and the question of feigned madness

In this second long quotation, where the 'reality' of his madness is centrally in question, he veers back first to misogyny, and then to philogyny again, ending in the last paragraph with (in very insane, bicameral mode) an expression of his erotic Kabbalistic William Blake-like cosmic affirmation of a content of which there are repeated and increasingly clarified expressions in the latter part of the book:

I must remember to resurrect myself by fixing my attention on Diogenes of Sinope whose cynic's cry, *Remint the coinage*, gave me the clue to my own transvaluation of all values. By demonstrating to intelligent men that the cultural currency of the West was counterfeit, I lifted myself out of the grave of mediocrity and was resurrected in the mind. Now I must resurrect myself in the body and spirit by breaking through the grave of my self-contempt—a Pascalian disgust at the thought that a creature in petticoats can pull the nose of Zarathustra until it looks as big and bulbous as Cyrano's.

In this noble endeavour Diogenes can help me. What did he say when the people of Sinope condemned him to exile? *And I condemned them to remain in Sinope*. This madhouse is a refuge for the truly sane: I condemn my enemies to live in the lunatic asylum—the world of the Philistines! What did Diogenes say when, captured by pirates, he was bought by a fatheaded Moneybags at an auction? *Come buy a master!* Being a philosopher he maintained his human dignity to the end. No wonder he became the exemplar, the paragon of all the virtues to immoralists and Antichrists like Julian the Apostate, even though he fornicated in public and spat in the face of his snobbish, effeminate host!

Falsify the common currency! I must remember that! Socrates the Bourgeois ape, obeyed the mob-law of Athens and took poison rather than defy the mob.³ Not so Diogenes! He thumbed his nose at tradition and convention—the bait of fools who prefer the company of the unprotesting dead and dare not live dangerously in the perilous future! He tied Solon's laws like tin cans to a donkey's tail and heard their

3. Earlier in the book he has much more tenderly remarked, in continuity with earlier writings, 'I have loved Socrates with an affection I have given no other human being in recorded history. I have even forgiven him his one great sin—the turning of reason into a tyrannous force' (*My Sister and I*, §85, p. 51).

idiotic rattle as he laughed in his tub. He bowed to a single law—the law of his own free being. And he knew, as all philosophers should know, that the contempt for pleasure is the truest pleasure of all.

I shall imitate Diogenes, my great exemplar, Nietzsche himself on the great wheel of Eternal Recurrence. I shall live in his moment of time, repeated over and over again to all eternity. I shall write to all the harlots—married and unmarried—what Crales wrote to his wife Hipperchia: *Virtue comes by training and does not insinuate itself into the soul automatically as vice does*. Cosima, the Lama, and Lou—how they will howl when the great immoralist teaches them morals by stripping them down to their nude skins marked with incestuous and adulterous sores. Every mask will be ripped off, every purpose, every pretense—to the amusement of the Philistines whose masks are so tightly glued to their countenances that their faces no longer exist.

Yes, Ulysses in hell shall follow the path of the sun into the kingdom of Helios, the sun-god, where Diogenes and Julian the Apostate shall greet him with bright dawn music, the music of Dionysos the Redeemer. I shall break out of this madhouse and live in a tub with Lou, and over the door-post shall be written: *Heraclēs Callinicus, son of Zeus, dwells here; let no evil enter*. [Ancient inscription over door of married man]

Ah, Diogenes, how well you knew the hollow emptiness of Socratic word-mongering! The voice of thought squeaks like a cornered mouse; it is but the feeble echo of the Cosmos, while the reverberation of a beautiful body is more powerful than all the choruses of heaven. (*My Sister and I*, §8, pp. 213–215)

The ‘bicameral’ aspects of all this are part of the whole burlesque—tongue in cheek and not tongue in cheek, simultaneously. To the agonising remark about masks we shall return.

In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche was critical of Diogenes in the name of friendship, alluding to a famous encounter between the Cynic and Alexander the Great as follows:

In antiquity the feeling of friendship was considered the highest feeling, even higher than the most celebrated pride of the self-sufficient sage—somehow as the sole and still more sacred sibling of this pride. This is expressed very well in the story of the Macedonian king who gave an Athenian philosopher, who despised the world, a talent [a very large sum] as a present—and promptly got it back. ‘How is that?’ asked the king; ‘has he no friend?’ He meant, ‘I honor the pride of this independent sage, but I should honor his humanity even more if the friend in him had triumphed over his pride. The philosopher has lowered himself before me by showing that he does not know one of the two highest feelings—and the higher one at that.’ (Nietzsche, 1974, §61, p. 124)

At the point he has reached by the time of *My Sister and I* Nietzsche realises that friendship and love are even more beleaguered than he had assumed at the time of *The Gay Science*. He implies at times that such conditions for friendship are no longer possible. In his implicit repudiation of his Bonapartism, for which Waterloo had been construed as a disaster, in this book, he writes poignantly:

And yet the need for intellectual and emotional companionship is rooted deep in our human nature; *to lose a friend is a catastrophe greater than Waterloo* [my italics]. As I have written: *My whole philosophy wavers after an hour’s sympathetic conversation with utter strangers; it seems so foolish to be right at the cost of love*.

Only an Antichrist like me can appreciate the agony of being hard and pitiless for the sake of principle, robbed of the free-group companionship of Augustine's dream-refuge where the hermits of the intellect and the heart laughed and talked together, combining *sweetness and light*, as the Englishman, Matthew Arnold put it, and enjoyed the supreme happiness of being integrated, made whole through the friction of mind on mind and soul on soul. Because there are no free groups in our age, because we can find nothing to belong to and nothing to cling to—except the Devil's tail, of course—we have fallen out of the magic ring of our humanity and are collapsing into the beast ... (*My Sister and I*, §5, pp. 210–211)

Revaluation of Augustine and the philosophy of existence

This reference to Augustine is one of many, no longer hostile to Augustine as he previously had been. Nietzsche is implying that the kind of creation of a stable foothold of monastic civilisation, in conjunction with an ideological command and disciplining of the denizens of the political realm, to enable humanity to retain its soul as it traversed the dark ages, which Augustine pioneered, is no longer possible. Here we have to reconstruct a thought he was only groping towards, but undoubtedly he here places himself with radical conservative thinkers like Burke, Johnson, Coleridge, T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, and John Lukacs, drawing on such kinds of thought in thinking about the total shift in institutional modes facing us in industrial and post-industrial epochs. He himself connects this with all the elements in this late thought of his which are moving in a sheerly existential direction (the allusion to Pascal, who said the heart has its reasons which reason itself cannot understand, is also significant in this quotation):

Just as Saint Augustine abandoned pseudo-reason to fall back upon society, ravaged, smashed and awaiting his magic touch to organise it back into life and hope, our nineteenth century world, dissolving in blood and madness, awaits the great Augustinian organisers. They will put existence before thought, the body of life before the frail, thinking reed which Pascal identified as the mind, and build the twentieth century on the firm foundations of social need and necessity. (*My Sister and I*, §42, p. 198)

Our 20th century indeed moved in the directions of philosophies of existence, but they have helped us little politically, being themselves pulled around by the threefold whirlwinds of Nazism/Fascism, Soviet Communism, and a depleted liberalism which is now, aided and abetted by thinkers of 'the end of history' like Fukuyama, reinventing itself as the new imperialism and covert neo-fascism in the guise of political correctness and anti-terrorism. There seems indeed little chance of wise historical thinkers like Lukacs and Derrida having the kind of systemic influence an Augustine could have. And that belongs to the predicament of the age, as Nietzsche's own gropings here half intimate.

Existence, women, and the Jews

Nietzsche himself, oscillating between Diogenesian Stoicism and affirmation of life, at the end of the 'life' polarity, now identifies 'existence' with the conjunction of 'woman' and 'the Jew':

Like George Sand, too, she was a law unto herself, but only a woman can defy the laws of man and nature without suffering the vengeance of the gods. Women, like Jews, have never been allowed the status of mortality [should this be 'morality', in

the light of what follows?]: they are either angels or demons, or both, thronging the Jacob's ladder between heaven and hell. They do not will to exist because they are existence itself, embodying the eternal principle of good and evil. Since woman is an elemental force it is as ridiculous to accuse a woman of bad morals as it is to indict the lightning for striking a church and thus making a mockery of God. (*My Sister and I*, §15, p. 92)

Of course there is a mythology of both women and Jews here; but they are more benign than the mythologies which Nietzsche is opposing here, such as anti-semitism. And the view of Jewishness is certainly congruent with those like Buber's and Levinas' in the 20th century. An even more graphic twining of these themes is the following:

And because I had fallen into the Pyrrhonic pit of absolute doubt like Descartes, I eagerly grasped the helpinghand of Lou, who at twenty already could dissect the basic fallacy in Cartesian thought. *I think therefore I am*, places the cart before the horse, as every woman knows who has felt life stirring in her womb, or who in the midst of her erotic frenzy hungers for conception, even though, like Lou, she has no conscious desire for children. *I am, therefore I think*—this existential fact which the Jews in their great wisdom understood when they called their God the great I AM—this is what Lou taught me with the naked ritual of her passionate body. (*My Sister and I*, §16, p. 224)

Leave aside the question whether this is fair to the almost invariably misrepresented Descartes (Derrida, in *The Cogito and the Question of Madness*, in *Writing and Difference*, 1978, Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*, 1969, and Michel Henry in *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, 1990, are the main exceptions I know), we take the point. Here is an existential philosophy of sacred carnal embodiment analogous to that of the D.H. Lawrence of *Women in Love*, Levinas' *Totality and Infinity* (Levinas, 1969), and (Buber's, 1970) *I and Thou* (Buber). Now we are nevertheless curious how 'the woman herself', as opposed to her myth, might have answered, and in one or two extracts we indeed get a glimpse of this—in one of which Nietzsche significantly invokes one of Buber's main predecessors, Feuerbach (so important for Marx also):

Why did Lou never give herself completely to me? Because her body was her own property; I could borrow it in our mutual need for erotic expression, but it remained her own—her body and her soul! Men become little Caesars in the love-act; they exert their will to power in the bedroom because they dare not mount the barricades or storm heaven with the fury of Napoleon, Bakunin, Proudhon, Marx—and the rest of the sky-stormers of the century. I have been a heaven-stormer myself and what did a Jewess of twenty-four say when I became too arrogant in my demands? *Go visit a street-woman; you cannot have me except on the basis of mutual love and understanding!*

I understand her only too well. Every human being is God, not merely Jesus, Caesar or myself. Every person is an 'unconquered being' in Feuerbach's sense, ready to smite Hegel's *absolute thinking* with the bludgeon of his Almighty Ego. But if every human being is God, what remains of my *pathos of distance*, the social distance between the genius and the idiot? ... Perhaps there is no social space between them: witness the case of Professor Nietzsche, the greatest genius of the nineteenth century, crumbling into the gibbering idiocy of a mindless paralytic ...

To prove my philosophy false, was it necessary for Lou Salome's God to smite me into madness? How hath the mighty fallen! I cannot even raise my right arm in defiance—for it is paralysed! (*My Sister and I*, §29, p. 190)

Here again, beside the touching and pointed moment (one of several) of Lou's own presence in the text, is a most poignant expression of love, and of Nietzsche's personal tragedy, which in 1997 I took as the core expression of the 'true' meaning and tendency of this work. It is the kind of thing, to be sure, which makes this work, in some ways, even more compelling and evoking of our love and wonder than Nietzsche's earlier works, since there is a softness, a frank openness, a freedom from the elements of bravado and one-sided self-perception which limit our complete relish of the incandescent scimitar sharpness of those earlier works.

The beyond beliefs vision in Nietzsche and Psychotherapy

Yet with that openness also goes the fluctuating inner availability, without constraint and without the fierce (though still partial) attempt to achieve consistency which characterises the earlier works, to the many phases of his sense of himself. Despite his greater caution, here than earlier, about Buddhism as a practice and a way of life, this is in some ways his most Buddhist work, in its perception of momentariness and impermanence, of its lack of a centre and a final identity; 'who is Friedrich Nietzsche?' is a question both Friedrich Nietzsche himself, and ourselves as his readers, are asking all the way through this book. He moves through the permutations like the reversibilities of AmerIndian myths in a Levi-Strauss structural survey; all the options are present, and this is part of what makes the book so difficult to apprehend.

In this sense the work has some of the profound promiscuousness in relation to belief options, which I have gradually come to believe is the hallmark of Psychotherapy in relation to ideology, that which makes it potentially *a laboratory for the examination of the genesis of religious, scientific, aesthetic, and philosophical beliefs* (cf. Wilkinson, 2000). This is something which is compatible with the fact (which follows or is to be predicted from the analysis) that constantly Psychotherapy ossifies into ideological forms, and then has to deconstruct itself all over again. In this it is potentially even ahead of the most advanced modern views of how religious belief may be held pluralistically—something which of course will never satisfy the bulk of believers (and no doubt the same applies to the bulk of jobbing Psychotherapists), but which is none the worse for that, in terms of how the core holding of belief-constructs may be experienced. The holding of belief (including scientific belief) purely in the 'as if', in terms of internalised models and existential myths and narratives, is a way of thinking about belief now reasonably familiar from, for instance, the later Wittgenstein; the *playing creatively and episodically with such belief narratives* is the prerogative of Psychotherapy; and the freedom which Nietzsche manifests in this work is pioneering material in precisely this!

So here Psychotherapy can potentially help us not to look for single ideological themes in this work of Nietzsche's, but to glimpse more freely the truth that somehow or other he has found his way to an ideology-free condition! And it is one which includes the dimension of insanity and the bicameral as a belief dimension. *In this work all beliefs and positions are in the alchemical melting pot.* Nietzsche's characteristic emphatic ways of communicating may mask this. Here he may say with Walt Whitman, 'Do I contradict myself? Why then I contradict myself. I am large. I contain multitudes.' But it is more than that. It is a freedom not to be constrained, not to be caught in any one position, not to be constrained *to believe*.

Nietzsche's philosophy of masks and the aphoristic communication

And there are hints that the self-masking which goes with this position has become even more profound than in the earlier works. He had indeed always, like Yeats and Oscar Wilde, and

Erving Goffman, emphasised 'the truth of masks'. Somewhere previously he writes that he is brief and that he writes short notes where others write a book—or rather do *not* write a book. Here the emphasis has subtly altered, and is also more nakedly revealing—or silent:

Where other philosophers write books I write tiny paragraphs. Where a book is really needed I find it necessary to keep utterly silent. (*My Sister and I*, §8, p. 132)

In *The Gay Science* he had written on the subject of masks:

Skeptics.—I am afraid that old women are more sceptical in their most secret heart of hearts than any man: they consider the superficiality of existence its essence, and all virtue and profundity is to them merely a veil over a pudendum—in other words a matter of decency and shame, and no more than that. (*The Gay Science*, §64, p. 125)

We have already noted his remark on masking in the Diogenes passage. Here now he writes:

Every occupation of man requires of him the wearing of a mask symbolising his peculiar trade. These masks are in no way assumed, they grow out of people as they live, the way skin grows, the way fur develops over skin. There are masks for the merchants as well as the professors, there are masks that fit thieves and there are masks that look natural only on saints. *The greatest of all the masks is nakedness* [my italics]. If I believed in God this is the mask I would conceive him in. (*My Sister and I*, §61, p. 109)

This is not a new position but certainly a profound radicalisation of the one he already holds. And the freedom we are talking about here can perhaps most vividly be illustrated through the small aphorisms, whose freedom of both *genre* and of belief-position manifest so profoundly the multiplicity of his mind in this late and tragic, yet triumphant, phase of his creativity. They are by turns:

Sardonic

Cosima will outlive all of us. Where other children were baptised she was vaccinated. (*My Sister and I*, §41, p. 174)

Pessimistic in a Beckettian way

All these tragic interruptions in the solemn journey from one hole to another. (*My Sister and I*, §6, p. 96)

Sombre self-awareness

If the world was as bad as Schopenhauer left it, I, Friedrich Nietzsche, did very little to improve it. (*My Sister and I*, §35, p. 103)

Gnomically philosophical in a way reminiscent of Wittgenstein

Being and becoming, night and day, black and white, continue to order and befuddle our limited understanding; it is in fact these simple differentiations which are responsible for most of our tragic misunderstandings in human conduct. (*My Sister and I*, §17, p. 134)

**(This aphorism, in the light of this book, might need to be extended to include the antitheses between madness/and sanity and between fact/and fiction.)*

A quarrel between philosophers should be taken as seriously as a philosophical argument between two bricklayers. (*My Sister and I*, §39, p. 63)

Poignantly personal or reflective

Schumann and Schopenhauer are the two poles of my existence. Between them I am borne up into wonder. Between them I am crushed as between millstones. (*My Sister and I*, §18, p. 57)

Semi-bicameral or 'crazy' (with mythic/biblical resonances)

If I have one talent it is to make people angry. I make a rainbow of urine over the world and, in such matters, the world is never slow to reciprocate. (*My Sister and I*, §30, p. 102)

Sheer existential wisdom

True understanding is not in the kernel of the atom, or in the kernel of the golden rule, but in what we happen to be digesting for the moment and finding it good. (*My Sister and I*, §51, p. 107)

A Lacanian wisdom about language

To stop an animal from moving forward in the course laid out for it by its natural instincts you have at least to hit it on the head with something hard. To obtain the same result with a man you have only to talk with him. (*My Sister and I*, §45, p. 41)

Burlesque humour with bicameral aspects [this one also ran in the Soviet Union about Stalin!]

A half-witted attendant here has caused considerable laughter by pretending he was St Peter and telling his doctor that God has gone mad.

'What is his trouble?' asked the conniving medico.

'The Lord thinks he is Professor Nietzsche.'

If God were alive this would not be a joke but an obvious fact. (*My Sister and I*, §13, p. 153)

And bicamerally intimating his ambiguity about the man who might make publication possible [the allusions are to Zarathustra's animals!]

The man who is to take these notes to my publisher is becoming particularly friendly. But I don't know whether he thinks I am a philosopher or just a lunatic. This morning he found me near the window and asked me what I was searching for in the outside world.

You have only to follow my eyes, I told him. *If you see me looking into the sky you must know that it is an eagle I am looking for. But if my gaze goes downward the quarry I am hunting is a lion.*

But can you really expect to see a lion on a street in Jena? He asked.

If you have the eyes to see him with, why not? I replied. (*My Sister and I*, §28, p. 171)

There are many such indications like this where he indicates an ironical relation to his own external communications. For instance he double-bluffs Peter Gast by telling him about the incest with his sister paralleling Byron's and then kicking an attendant, *so that Gast should not believe him. Gast had formed the impression Nietzsche was feigning his madness in the asylum (Stewart, 1986). We no longer know what is true and what is feigned here also. We can only infer from the huge stylistic and problem-concern continuities that it is indeed probably Nietzsche's writing. We do not know the truth of his claims about his sexual history. And the whole *Ecce Homo* question of who is Friedrich Nietzsche? dissolves in *My Sister and I* into a subtle post-modern dilemma.

Final words: importance of the work whatever its provenance

The work shifts kaleidoscopically before our eyes. What matters is no longer what opinion we definitively come to about it but that it becomes a work we wrestle with. It opens up too much to be neglected further, it expresses, even were it fiction, too deep and awesome a tragedy, on too great a scale, for us not to engage with it, whatever it is and whoever wrote it. My own view is that there are far too many convergences and subtle unreplicable idiosyncrasies for it not to be by Nietzsche, but there is clearly still room for much argument. What matters is that at least it enters the consensual frame of discourse and enquiry. 'Nietzsche' here (to return to the language of suspension of attribution) *extends* the realm of discourse and consensual communication in unique and amazing ways, as did Joyce and Beckett and in analogous ways. We are impoverished if we deprive ourselves of supreme alterations in the frames of our discourses and their possibilities.

This book summons us towards a new freedom, a freedom in which we are no longer caught in the fear of our own madness, and in the attempt to shore up the antithesis between madness and sanity, or indeed fact and fiction. We no longer need to think in terms of *fixed identity*.

We glimpse the possibility of being freed, both theoretically and existentially, from the constraint of either/or belief systems which terminate the possibility of pluralistic *playing* with beliefs.

Let us at least welcome *My Sister and I* into the post-modern, if not the classical, canon. And let we Psychotherapists then give ourselves the opportunity to put our own ideologies into its melting pot.

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Résumé *Les écrits de Nietzsche depuis l'asile d'aliénés dont la provenance n'est toujours pas confirmée sont discutés dans cet article. On souligne que la marginalisation de ce travail remarquable est preuve de plus de la position de Nietzsche comme marginal, acceptable seulement en termes purement conventionnels. Sa situation personnelle ainsi que son travail ont beaucoup d'importance pour les psychothérapeutes et les post-modernistes. Mis à part la compulsion de cette histoire tragique ainsi que l'exposition de ses relations avec les femmes y compris l'inceste avec sa sœur—son travail est interprétable par tous comme un des exemples les plus précoces d'une position qui sera prise plus tard par Wittgenstein en regard de croyances et d'idéologies fixées et qui libère de la contrainte de l'exigence d'un fondement objectif des croyances.*

L'auteur de ce livre applique cette approche non seulement aux croyances cognitives mais aussi aux genres d'écriture, aux styles de vie et aux positions existentielles indépendantes.

Zusammenfassung *Diese Arbeit befaßt sich mit den umstrittenen Anstaltspapieren Nietzsches, deren Herkunft bis heute ungelöst ist. Der Autor bemerkt, dass die marginalisation dieser bemerkenswerten Arbeit eine Erweiterung zu Nietzsches Dilemma bildet, das marginalisiert wurde und akzeptiert werden muss, wenn auch nur auf konventionellem Hintergrund.*

Sowohl das Dilemma als auch die Arbeit selbst sind für Psychotherapeuten und Postmodernisten von großem Interesse. Abgesehen von der tragischen Geschichte und der Entblössung seiner Beziehungen mit Frauen einschliesslich der inzestuösen Beziehung mit seiner Schwester besteht die Signifikanz dieses Werkes (wer auch immer der Autor ist) darin, das es eines der frühesten Werke mit einem Standpunkt ähnlich dem Wittgensteins ist in Bezug auf Glauben und Ideologie, die uns von der Notwendigkeit einer objektiven Glaubensbasis befreien. Der Autor dieses Buches bezieht dies nicht nur auf kognitiven Glauben, sondern auf ganze Genres von Werken, Lebensstile und freie existentielle Standpunkte.