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# The Evolution of Indifference: Locating Stoic Influence in Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly's "Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell" and Charles Baudelaire's "Le Peintre de la vie moderne"

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts

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The Evolution of Indifference: Locating Stoic Influence in Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly's "Du Dandysme et Georges Brummell" and Charles Baudelaire's "Le Peintre de la vie moderne"

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Aurie Zeran

Graduate Program in Comparative Literature

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
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## Abstract

This thesis surveys the relationship between late Roman Stoicism and nineteenth century dandyism. This correlation is based on comments within the Barbeyan and Baudelairean dandyist theories as expanded in “Du dandysme et de Georges Brummell” (1845) and “Le Peintre de la vie moderne” (1863) respectively. In both of these texts, several references are made to dandies as Stoics or possessing stoic qualities, primarily an attitude of indifference. Though Stoic influence is a recurring theme throughout dandy practice and theory, both nominally and performatively, few literary critics have addressed the dandy’s particularly modern use of ancient Stoic doctrine. This thesis argues that the dandy’s adoption of ancient Stoic influence is ironic, using both appropriation and parody to interpret ancient Stoic behavioural practice. By comparing and contrasting approaches to emotional and behavioural strategies – impressions, judgment and rationality, and preferred indifferents – I demonstrate the shift from ancient Stoic *apatheia* to the modern apathy.

Keywords: Jules Barbey d’Aureville, Charles Baudelaire, Dandyism, Stoicism, Neo-Stoicism, Apathy, Indifference, Ennui, Modernity

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## **Introduction**

A new form of celebrity emerged in the nineteenth century: a well-dressed and impeccably groomed, indifferent and intellectual man. This man was known as the dandy. A persona that existed mainly in the cultural hubs of Paris and London, the dandy gained unprecedented social recognition for his role as an ambassador of elegance. As the authority on the era's manifestations of beauty, these individuals came to epitomize the tastes of the times with their clothing, mannerisms, and social lives. At the same time, however, an undercurrent of irony has been identified in the performative practice of dandyism. The recognition of the dandy's use of irony substantially alters the perception of the dandy's appropriation of trends, leading to a reconsideration of his echoing actions as social critique. Following this line of thought, Benjamin detailed the Baudelairean dandy's ironic heroism, but one aspect which has not been sufficiently discussed is the dandy's alleged Stoicism. This thesis sheds light on the dandy's self-ascribed relation to the ancient philosophy of Stoicism, especially as seen in the theoretical dandy treatises by Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly and Charles Baudelaire. The trajectory of this thesis pursues the following assumption: if the dandy appropriates trends ironically, and there is a dialogue within his nineteenth century contemporaries with ancient Stoicism that creates a specific kind of neo-stoicism, then the version of neo-stoicism found in dandyism should be treated ironically as well. Tracing the presence of Stoicism in these two dandies' works will enable me to infer broader implications for dandyism and its progression after mid-nineteenth century. The dandy has often been misinterpreted, but it is a testament to his appeal that he continues to be studied to this day. Overall, this thesis hopes to present a fuller understanding of this elusive cultural figure.

The first dandy was George ‘Beau’ Brummell (1778- 1840). With his legendary starched cravats, polished boots, and acid wit, he reigned supreme over British society from the 1790s until his exile to France in 1816. In Calais, safe from his creditors, he continued to fascinate both French and English societies alike until his death in 1840. With Brummell, the practice crossed into France, though it did not garner immediate attention in France. Dandyism began to appear in French literature in 1830 with Honoré de Balzac’s *Traité de la vie élégante* and slowly gained traction as “Musset, Balzac, Barbier and Stendhal himself all started introducing dandies as characters in their work” (Godfrey 25). Dandyism continued to be developed in the works and lives of French authors, especially Jules Barbey d’Aureville and Charles Baudelaire, two of dandyism’s major adherents in France. At the turn of the twentieth century, the focus would shift back to England for Oscar Wilde and Max Beerbohm. Still, Barbey and Baudelaire are unique and especially important to dandyism as two of the most prolific and dedicated dandyist writers in France. They are credited with developing dandyism in France and giving it its theoretical foothold (Rossbach 81), moving the cult of celebrity from surface fascination to substantiated study.

Before the efforts of Barbey and Baudelaire, dandyism was mostly performative and had little explicit theory attached to it. Brummell had not had much need for writing theory, since “cet homme, trop superficiellement jugé, fut une puissance si intellectuelle, qu’il regna encore plus par les airs que par les mots” (“Du Dandysme” 138)<sup>1</sup>. Even though theories of dandyism have since developed, dandyism remains a difficult practice to define. Broadly, it is the practice of devoted self-cultivation and unshakeable calmness. Emphasis on originality makes standardization difficult within the practice, so much so that some critics like Marie-Christine

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<sup>1</sup> “So intellectual a power was this man, too superficially judged, that he ruled, even more by what he looked than by what he said” (*Dandyism* 57)

Natta in *La Grandeur sans convictions* suggest that all dandies – whether Brummell, Baudelaire, Wilde, or Beerbohm – are all only vain *attempts* at dandyism (30). In addition to this, dandyism is subjected to very polarized descriptions depending on the reviewer. In his preface to an English edition of Barbey's *Du Dandysme et de George Brummell*, Quentin Crisp neatly sums up the paradox of the dandy by noting that “the dictionary states that dandyism is ‘ostentatious elegance’ but it is in the very nature of elegance that it is not ostentatious” (8). While to some, mostly dandies themselves, dandyism was a complex method of self-elaboration (*The Painter* 37; *Dandyism* 57; “What is Enlightenment” 41), to most, it was seen as empty vanity (Carlyle 207). The dandy was deemed ridiculous, flippant, and unimportant; he was often excluded from ‘more serious’ intellectual conversation by those who opposed what they viewed as the thoroughly *un-serious* enterprise of fastidious and cultivated self-adornment and self-regulation. As one of their most famous contemporary critics, Thomas Carlyle disdainfully called the dandy merely a “clothes-wearing man” in *Sartor Resartus* (207), which appeared first as a serial in a magazine in the early 1830s and as a novel in 1836. Though critics like Carlyle were quick to dismiss the dandies as completely superficial, that reproach is itself the result of merely surface inspection. Other examples of such criticism are easy enough to find. Though Carlyle led the anti-dandiacal campaign in England, writers such as William Thackeray also disparaged dandyism, and publications like *Fraser's Magazine* (1830-1882) were particularly militant against it as well (Moers 167). In France, Balzac and Stendhal were initially critics of the dandyism. However, these critics often blatantly overlooked important facets of the Dandiacal lifestyle, including the dandy's notable function as social interpreter. At least, the apparent contradiction between a figure who is casually deemed absurd by some of his contemporaries



and yet held sway over both British and French societies for more than a century should make one wary of denouncing the dandy without reflection (Godfrey 24).

Contrary to their critics, the dandies defined their efforts as ‘heroic.’ In response to what he viewed as the ‘democratization’ of society, the dandy willed himself to be a paradigm of difference and distinction in an age which he felt was succumbing to the equalization of experience. It is in this vein that Baudelaire called dandyism “le dernier éclat d’heroïsme dans les décadences” (“Le Peintre” 560),<sup>2</sup> a last grand attempt to glorify the powers and pride of humanity. The irony circulating beneath this characterization has been identified by the critic Walter Benjamin. Benjamin states that the dandy’s heroism in the context of Modernity was ironic, because Modernity is characterized by “the loss of certainty, and the realization that certainty can never be established once and for all” (Delanty 3069). In such an unstable atmosphere, there can be no Herculean deeds because the world is no longer “whole.” Thus, Benjamin concludes that the dandy, though he may make heroic efforts, is not very heroic after all: “the modern hero is no hero; he is a portrayer of heroes” (Benjamin 60). The dandy may perform heroic aspects but is crucially unable to embody them fully in the context of Modernity.

Thus one of the main difficulties in examining dandyism does not lie in disputes over their originality, as some literary critics have supposed, or to a lack of depth, but rather to the dandy’s ironic spirit – that which ‘doubles’ him, causing “definitions of the dandy [to be] almost as confusing as definitions of the word irony itself” (Godfrey 23). It is only in recognizing his irony that we can attempt to define him at all. The irony was firstly dependent on the very society it was mocking, for “the dandy, like the ironist, could not exist at all without a public whose standards of taste, hierarchies of value and conventions of discourse he could predict. [...] Without a set of conventions to respect and oppose, neither figure can produce the effect that

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<sup>2</sup> “the last flicker of heroism in decadent ages” (*The Painter* 39).

justifies its existence” (Godfrey 28). Overturning or mocking the accepted conceptions of society are part and parcel of what it means to be a dandy. Replaying society back to itself, with a twist, was the crux of his irony. As Karen Humphreys observes,

For Barbey and Baudelaire the model ironic dandy is shaped by intellectual acumen and incisive self-awareness. Both artists strove desperately to carve out a lasting space in literary tradition and the *imprévu* represented a unique and original form of creativity. Their mutual valorization of the *imprévu*, the *incorrigible*, the *irremédiable*, and the *irréparable* reflects their refusal to be ruled and an obstinate unwillingness to “right” their ways according to a moral majority (70).

To be unpredictable, yet relevant, is the dandy’s aim. If it is to be said that the dandy is a mirror of society, then he is like the carnival-glass, warped and curved. Dandies themselves were well-aware of their doubled nature and were keen to manipulate it. Barbey says that dandyism “se joue de la règle et pourtant la respecte encore. Il en souffre et s’en venge tout en la subissant; il s’en réclame quand il y échappe; il la domine et en est dominé tour à tour : double et muable caractère!” (“Du Dandysme” 112)<sup>3</sup> Baudelaire also points out the doubled status of dandyism by remarking that it is “une institution en dehors des lois” (“Le Peintre” 559)<sup>4</sup> but also that its laws are drawn in opposition to the laws of common society. There is nothing the Baudelairean dandy wants so much as “de combattre et de détruire la trivialité” (“Le Peintre” 560)<sup>5</sup> which he thought so prevalent in his contemporaries. It is in response to this that dandyism “a des lois rigoureuses auxquelles sont strictement soumis tous les sujets” (“Le Peintre” 559)<sup>6</sup>. As they span two

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<sup>3</sup> “...while still respecting the conventionalities, plays with them. While admitting their power, it suffers from and avenges itself upon them, and pleads them as an excuse against themselves; dominates and is dominated by them in turn” (*Dandyism* 33)

<sup>4</sup> “an institution outside the law” (*The Painter* 36).

<sup>5</sup> “to combat and destroy triviality” (*The Painter* 39).

<sup>6</sup> “a rigorous code of laws that all its subjects are strictly bound by” (*The Painter* 36).

worlds, the Barbeyan and Baudelairean dandies are especially inclined to manipulate accepted norms and conventions.

My proposal is that the Barbeyan and Baudelairean dandy also approaches his alleged Stoicism with this ironic impetus. I will read the dandy's irony as a mix of appropriation and parody. Irony denotes a purposeful inversion of meaning in order to achieve dissimulation or pretence, and the dandy achieves this through appropriation and parody. Appropriation is the practice of reworking or imitating a style from another work to incite re-evaluation or critical challenge ("appropriation"). Parody is the use of that imitation to produce satire by applying it to an unlikely subject ("parody"). This allows the dandy to act as a distorted mirror or reflection of his contemporaries by showing them the extent of their own illusions. Thus, what I call 'therapeutic' neo-stoicisms in the dandy's contemporaries become ironized (that is, appropriated and parodied) in the dandy's own practices.

Through historical contextualization I will outline the presence of this neo-stoic dialogue in the nineteenth century. This tumultuous century was a time of economic, political, and social democratization, as well as prolific urban expansion. The 1800s in Europe are characterized as a period of substantial upheaval in which the stresses of modernity and metropolitan living were causing a rapid reorganization of life across England and France. This in turn instigated the development of the literary and aesthetic 'Modernisms.' In response to this, a neo-stoicism emerged in the writings and life practices of thinkers across Europe. This European neo-stoicism had primarily to do with a response to rapid and disorienting changes occurring at that time. Indifference and emotional restraint become part of a 'therapeutic' response to issues that arose with Modernity. So popular a theme was not to be missed by the dandy who was keenly aware of any trends of the day and who took great pains to make them his own. Outwardly, he displayed

the stoic's most famous countenance: an indifferent face to the rapidly changing world. Internally, he negotiated a new relation of the individual to the world. This thesis will look at the dandy's appropriation of Stoic influence in order to see what changes the dandies make to cultivate their own brand of ironic neo-stoicism.

On the surface, it may appear to be an absurd comparison to juxtapose the ascetic ancient Stoic and the pampered nineteenth century dandy. That said, when reading about dandyism, the adjective 'stoic' is often attributed to dandies. Within the dandy practice itself, both Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly and Charles Baudelaire explicitly name themselves and their constituents as 'stoic.' Barbey calls dandies "stoïciens du boudoir" ("Du Dandysme" 148)<sup>7</sup>, while Baudelaire states that "on voit que, de certains côtés, le dandysme confine au spiritualisme et au stoïcisme" ("Le Peintre" 560).<sup>8</sup> In addition to this, dandies trace their collective 'genealogy' leading back to "César, Catalina, Alcibiade" ("Le Peintre" 559),<sup>9</sup> quite distinct from the genealogy of fops that their contemporary critics tried to impose on them. These references can be read in three ways.

Naming dandies as Stoics could be either a factual identification, a watered-down modern sense of 'stoic', or a disingenuous characterization. Though the dandies were classically educated and therefore had ample exposure to the philosophy, it would be naïve to presume that an attempt to adopt ancient Stoic practices would manifest in the same way nearly two millennia later. Even within classical Stoicism's long history, it changed considerably, and the transformations of Modernity changed its formulations even more. Especially in the context of someone so invested in the present as Baudelaire, having even coined a definition of Modernity, to identify completely with a concept prevalent in the ancient world is unfeasible – but to identify partially with it is possible.

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<sup>7</sup> "stoics of the boudoir" (*Dandyism* 64).

<sup>8</sup> "clearly, then, dandyism in certain respects comes close to spiritualism and to stoicism" (*The Painter* 38).

<sup>9</sup> "Caesar, Catalina, Alcibiades" (*Le Peintre* 36)

Perhaps, then, the ‘stoic’ reference is meant more casually. It is important to note the semantic shift in the word ‘Stoic’ from signifying an adherent to the specific doctrine of Stoic philosophy into functioning merely as a ‘weaker’ adjective. As such an adjective, ‘stoic’ retains only some of its original meaning in the popular vernacular of nineteenth century Modernity. A ‘stoic’ response in the nineteenth century C.E. means only a measured and emotionless response. While this was constituent of the term in the second century B.C.E., it also carried a much broader and more complex philosophic practice. Generally, and rationally so, the inclination is to assume that when ‘Stoic’ occurs in dandy texts it is only in reference to this newer meaning of the word, separate from the ancient philosophy. However, there are numerous reasons why this characterization goes deeper than the surface. First, the performance of indifference by the dandies is within the same ‘therapeutic’ context as ancient Stoic indifference. Second, the dandies make several references to historical figures who are Stoics themselves which belies a closer connection. Third, the explicit theorization of dandyism by mid-nineteenth century French dandies demands a weightier philosophical consideration of all its constituent parts, including the ‘stoic’. Fourth and finally, the precision which dandies employ in all other aspects of their life cannot have suffered a total lapse in this sole area. For these reasons, I am disinclined to accept the dandy’s ancient Stoic influence as only surface allusion. Instead, I choose to read the stoic dandy as an ironic characterization, a modern neo-stoicism. I will be approaching the use of ‘stoic’ in the dandy context just as Benjamin approached ‘hero’ in the dandy context: as an attempt, a performance.

## Literature Survey

There is a large body of literary criticism on the dandy. One of the most important texts is the seminal handbook *The Dandy: From Brummell to Beerbohm* (1960) by Ellen Moers. Though it was written nearly a half-century ago, it remains highly relevant for its comprehensive contextualization of dandyism both socially and historically. Other helpful introductory books on the dandy include: *Dandies* (1968) by James Laver, *Le Dandysme de Baudelaire à Mallarmé* (1978) by Michel Lemaire, and *Le Dandysme* (1988) by Patrick Favardin and Laurent Bouëxière. These provide comprehensive histories and define the elusive nature of the dandy. Fewer critical texts focus on individual dandies, such as *Talon Rouge: Barbey d'Aurevilly, le dandy absolu* (1986) by Arnould de Liedekerke and *The Evolution of Dandyism in Baudelaire's Thought: Dandy, Hero, Saint* (1987) by Kenneth Sutherland McKellar.

There is a small branch of dandy criticism that deals with tracing the history of dandyism. The dandy is of course not a phenomenon isolated to the nineteenth century. Studies of alternative dandyism can be seen in *The Aristocrat as Art: A study of the Honnete Homme and the Dandy in seventeenth- and nineteenth-century French literature* (1980) by Domna C. Stanton and *The Dandy and the Herald: Manners, Mind, and Morals from Brummell to Durrell* (1988) by Richard Pine. Stanton's text sees nineteenth century dandyism as the inheritor of a practice called *honnêteté*, or rather, the practice of making oneself agreeable or cultivating an honourable character, from the seventeenth century. Pine's text, on the other hand, sees the dandies as the force which enabled and foregrounded modernist movements of the twentieth century.

One of the major trends in dandy criticism focuses on the sartorial side of the dandy. These include texts such as *Dandies: Fashion and Finesse in Art and Culture* (2001) by Susan Fillen-Yeh, and *Eccentricity and the Cultural Imagination in Nineteenth Century Paris* (2009)

by Miranda Gill, which both focus on fashion, trends and other era-specific behaviour. Dandyism also finds pride of place in broader topical anthologies such as *The Anatomy of Fashion: Dressing the Body from the Renaissance to Today* (2009) by Susan Vincent, *Fashioning London: Clothing and the Modern Metropolis* (2004) by Christopher Breward, and *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History* (2010) by Valerie Steele.

Other attempts trace the evolution of the cult of celebrity, as in *Beau Brummell: The Ultimate Man of Style* (2006) by Ian Kelly, which crowns that Brummell the ‘original celebrity.’ *The British pop dandy: masculinity, popular music and culture* (2009) by Stan Hawkins and *Rising Star: Dandyism, Gender, and Performance in the fin de siècle* (1998) by Rhonda Garelick both fuse the study of the dandy as celebrity with another trend, the performance of identity. Identity performance is a particularly hot topic, both racially, as in *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity* (2009) by Monica Miller, and with regards to gender, as in *Gender on the Divide: The Dandy in Modernist Literature* (1993) by Jessica Feldman, *Performing the Dandy: Manuel Machado and the Anxiety of Masculinity* (2003) by Jose Ignacio Badenes, and *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* (1995) by James Eli Adams. The interest is not limited to constructions of male gender roles, or to book-length studies: Miranda Gill wrote an article entitled “The Myth of the Female Dandy” (2007) which discusses the elusive “lionne,” counterpart of the male dandy. The discussion of gender and sexuality dynamics in dandyism is especially significant given the dandy’s role in blurring traditional binary gender roles and traditional sexualities. In addition to this, the marked misogyny in general in dandyism should not go unnoticed. However, this thesis will deal very little with gender and sexuality concerns regarding the dandy, except inasmuch as the dandy employs them as part of his ironic and satirical commentary of the society which he

simultaneously leads, follows, and mocks. Neither of the two primary dandies looked at in this thesis, Barbey or Baudelaire, was homosexual or especially 'metrosexual.' In addition to this, my comparison with the ancient Stoics leaves little room for discussion on gender because the ancient Stoic texts that I look at are all composed by males in a male-dominated era. These texts deal very little with matters of gender because for those ancient Stoics, being a male automatically entailed a sort of freedom.

Following a similar vein as my study, David Mazella's recent book, *The Making of Modern Cynicism* (2007), traces the evolution of Cynicism up to the present day. In his final chapter, "Cynicism and Dandyism," (176-214) Mazella argues that Cynicism is prominent in modern dandyism. Though we follow parallel trajectories, I cannot rely overmuch on Mazella's criticism for this study because the late Roman Stoics to whom I will refer downplayed their associations with Cynicism (Sellars 59). As such, his study is limited in its ability to consider neo-stoicism outside of a cynical context.



## Chapter Overviews

Chapter One briefly outlines dandyism, from its British roots to its mid-century presence in France. This chapter looks at two genealogies of the dandy: the first is traditionally imposed on the dandy by his critics and is based on a history of fops, macaronis, muscadins, and the like; the second genealogy was created by the dandy himself, and features much more illustrious names from the annals of history and the dandy's claim to Stoicism. The continuities and discontinuities of Stoic philosophy in modern dandyism will be discussed here vis-à-vis three perspectives already taken on the subject: religious, historical, and aesthetic. Chapter Two presents historical context, inasmuch as it foregrounds the conditions of Modernity that produced both a 'therapeutic' neo-stoic response on the one hand, and also a specifically ironic reaction on the other. This context situates dandyism between neo-stoicism and irony in order to show how the dandy adopted ancient Stoic influence and also how they manipulated it. Chapter Three analyzes this adaptation. I offer a reading of the ironic appropriation of ancient Stoic emotion theory, as it pertains to impressions, judgment and rationality, and preferred indifferents. I move to illustrate the dandy's inversion of and diversion from the ingredients forming ancient Stoic *apatheia*, producing instead a modern apathy. In conclusion, I trace the relationship between this apathy and modern ennui, reading ennui as the modern correlative to the ancient Stoic *eudaimonia*.

## **Chapter One: Locating Ancient Stoicism in Modern Dandyism**

### **1.1. The Beginning: Beau Brummell and the ‘Fop’ Genealogy**

In the beginning, there was Beau Brummell. He not only created the practice of dandyism, he epitomized it (*Dandyism* 43). He was the first dandy to mesmerize his contemporaries and he had a specific allure that charmed his generation and beyond. He was born in 1778 into a middle-class family in England and was educated at Eton and Oxford. Though he was not technically aristocratic by blood, Brummell’s status as a commoner was nominal. He was relatively high in terms of class status and wealth, but throughout his life he would continually deny that he came from a family of any distinction at all (Moers 18), perhaps because he thought this garnered him even more distinction by having sprung from nothing. Brummell is famous for two things: first, he revolutionized and reformed English fashion (Laver 9), and second, he was wholly invested and reportedly charming in his insolence. The two go hand in hand, as his reformations to dress were so radical as to be brazen, but nevertheless caught on. His impertinence was legendary and he offended at least as many individuals as he charmed. For a while he was the favourite of the King, but his social prominence was not due to this fact alone, and in any case, this friendship did not last. Eventually, he fell out of favour, as the following apocryphal story tells: one night, Brummell overstepped his familiarity with the King, telling him, “Wales, ring the bell.” The King could not in good standing let such a slight go unpunished, and from then on their friendship was finished (Moers 22; *Dandyism* 62). Whether or not this anecdote is true, it is in line with Brummell’s fabled impertinence. The dandy created his own vision of the world, in which he himself was the ruler supreme. Whether he overstepped boundaries seems to have been a matter of opinion, depending on whom he offended.

In 1816, having long since fallen out of favour and amassed huge debts from gambling, Brummell fled to France to escape his creditors. He lived out the rest of his days in Calais, degenerating into madness. It was a tragic end for a once celebrated individual. He remains the pearl of dandyism as the inventor of the practice, though it would continue to take on new forms long after his demise. That said, Brummell actually did little to advance the *theory* of dandyism for his followers, practically speaking. He did not leave written records on how to conduct oneself or what constituted a dandy demeanour. Instead, he led by example: his life is the best example of dandyism, though the only remnants of this are legendary anecdotes in his contemporaries' works, a few biographies, and the *Brummelliana* edited by William Hazlitt, which appeared soon after he fled to France in 1816.

The *Brummelliana* is a collection of sayings supposedly uttered by Beau Brummell, which were printed and reprinted in England, and also refers to any apocryphal story attributed to him. The following is an example, drawn from a May 1825 article in the *London Magazine*, entitled "Examination of a Young Pretender to Fashion." It recounts the following story:

When Brummell fell into disgrace, he devised the starched neckcloth with the design of putting the Prince's neck out of fashion, and of bringing his Royal Highness' muslin, his bow, and wadding into contempt. When he first appeared in this stiffened cravat, tradition says that the sensation in St. James's street was prodigious; dandies were struck dumb with envy, and washerwomen miscarried. No one could conceive how the effect was produced, - tin, card, a thousand contrivances were attempted, and innumerable men cut their throats in vain experiments; the secret, in fact, puzzled and baffled everyone, and the poor dandy L...d died raving mad of it; his mother, his sister, and all his relations waited on Brummell, and on their knees implored him to save their kinsman's life by the

explanation of the mystery; but the beau was obdurate, and L. miserably perished (quoted in Godfrey, 21).

Such anecdotes, truthful or not, circulated widely, and are a testament to the effect of Brummell on his contemporaries.

Brummell's first biographer was Captain William Jesse, whose book *The Life of George Brummell, Esq., Commonly Called Beau Brummell* appeared in 1844. Captain Jesse had spent most of his life outside of England and met Brummell in Calais in 1832. Jesse was apparently entranced and spent years compiling information on the dandy (Moers 22). Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly exchanged letters with Jesse while writing his own biography of Brummell, "Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell," which appeared in 1845 in French. Both of these texts were instrumental in setting down the life and practices of the original dandy and in separating the dandy from his predecessors.

Much, though certainly not all, of the criticism that the dandies suffered came because of the 'genealogy' ascribed to them by their contemporaries, which included numerous examples of types of men who similarly wished to perfect a certain – notably fashionable – persona. These include, but are not limited to, the *fop*, the *macaroni*, the *muscadin*, and the *incroyable* (Moers 11; Laver 9; Tuite 147). These incarnations can be distilled to and identified by surface criteria (Tuite 147). They are especially known for the extremity of their mannerisms and their singular styles of dress. As a result they are made out to be superficial, shallow beings, and for the most part they did not aspire to any higher aims than the perfect coif or outfit. The *fop* was a British gentleman during the seventeenth-century renowned (and ridiculed) as a slave to fashion; this definition suits the *macaroni* too, who followed in the eighteenth-century (Laver 9). The *muscadins* and *incroyables* appeared immediately following the French Revolution. These last

held tightly to the remaining class distinctions still available via garments, but suffered great scorn and were a short-lived phenomenon.

These figures are supposed to be the nineteenth century dandy's precursors, and this fact would change only with the publication of Barbey's "Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell" in 1844 (Humphreys 64), in which Barbey specifically tells his readers not to confound the dandy with previous fashion types (*Dandyism* 41). On the surface, the comparison might seem right: broadly, dandyism involved extremely refined mannerisms, cold and calculated reactions, an enviable wardrobe, and a delicate balance of pleasing and shocking an audience. However, despite sharing several features, the dandies of the nineteenth century are quite different from their supposed kin, not least because of some major socio-cultural events which separate them. As a result of cultural shifts like the French Revolution and the advent of industrialization, men's fashion took a decidedly more practical turn. 'The great renunciation' is the term for the departure of men's fashion from ostentatious ornamentation to simpler styles, because "[e]laborate and modish male dress was perceived as symptomatic of corruption, tyranny and foreign attitudes, while plainer male dress was heralded as an emblem of liberty, parliamentary democracy, enterprise, virtue, manliness, and patriotism" (Steele 98-99, quoted in Hammill 27). 'Quieter' attire took over, which the dandy mastered – in his own way. Of course, he still imposed distinctions, even within this less gaudy style, and as such was treated as the latest embodiment of fashion victim by his critics. But while it might still be tempting to relegate him to the ranks of the fops, it should be noted that the fops themselves would have quite rejected him.

Even comparing the fops and the dandies in purely aesthetic terms, which is supposed to be their main correlation, would still show considerable differences. Before Beau Brummell,

men's clothing was at least as decorated as a lady's gown. Men wore powdered wigs, rouge, and bright colours – generally 'flamboyant' costumes, by today's standards. In contrast,

dandyism is a critical component of the so-called reform of masculine dress that emerged in the wake of the French Revolution. The mode that dandyism is said to have reformed is the macaroni style, at its heights in the 1770s, characterized by excessive face and hair powder, bag wigs and hair extensions (Tuite 147).

Preferring to use subtle details to show his personal refinement, the dandy did not take part in such gaudy displays as his predecessors. In his preface to *Dandyism*, Quentin Crisp tells us that Brummell typified this move towards simplicity. Crisp says that "[Brummell's] object gradually came to be to represent correctness in dress without ostentation, cleanliness without scent, originality without caprice, and superiority of manner without undue seriousness" (8). George 'Beau' Brummell's wardrobe was revolutionary in that it was modelled on the distinctly less ornate and less 'high-brow' clothing choices of a country gentleman: knee-high boots, breeches, a waistcoat and a cravat (Laver 9).

Some critics have gone so far as to say that "we shall never understand dandyism unless we realize that whatever else it was it was the *repudiation* of fine feathers" (Laver 9), a thought which some dandies seem to echo. Barbey quotes Brummell as having said "Pour être bien mis, il ne faut pas être remarqué" ("Du Dandysme" 131)<sup>10</sup> and recommending that clothes be worn "comme s'ils étaient impondérables! Un Dandy peut mettre s'il veut dix heures à sa toilette, mais une fois faite, il l'oublie. Ce sont les autres qui doivent s'apercevoir qu'il est bien mis" ("Du Dandysme" 133)<sup>11</sup>. Working off – or perhaps playing off – of this notion of the secondary importance of the exterior, Baudelaire stated that "le dandysme n'est même pas, comme

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<sup>10</sup> "To be well-dressed, you must not be noticed" (*Dandyism*52)

<sup>11</sup> "As if they weighed nothing. A dandy may spend ten hours a day dressing, if he likes, but once dressed he thinks no more about it. It is for others to notice that he is well dressed" (*Dandyism*53).

beaucoup de personnes peu réfléchies paraissent le croire, un goût immodéré de la toilette et de l'élégance matérielle. Ces choses ne sont pour le parfait dandy qu'un symbole de la supériorité aristocratique de son esprit" ("Le Peintre" 560)<sup>12</sup>. Baudelaire's goal was to

be immaculate in dress and manners, to wear but the purest white linen, to keep his body and his hands with the solicitous care of a priestess in a pagan temple was to him a form, a symbol, of spiritual loftiness. Excess in dress, however, [Baudelaire] considered a sign of bad taste, and hence contrary to the tenets of dandyism. There is a morality in dress as in everything else, and its principle is to avoid immoderation and vanity (Rhodes 402).

Sima Godfrey notes that "while it is the first of these features – the visibly eccentric manner of dress – that originally attracts superficial attention, [...] it will be the latter aspect – his impertinence, his sense of irony – that will earn him his true notoriety and lasting reputation" (25). The dandy's exterior appearance might be the most immediately evident and most often identified element of dandies, but it is only one element of his persona. The dandy used his cultivated exterior – for it was cultivated, though it was not gaudy – in order to imitate a certain social class and inflict upon it his acid wit, satirizing and ironizing. The dandy walks a very fine line in society. He is able to seem to fit in, to set the trends even, but at the same time every phrase he utters is charged with criticism for the very society he seems to personify. The dandy is fascinating because of his quasi-treasonous dual nature: he is "not an anarchist who overthrows rules of behaviour and discourse; rather, he exploits their logic in order to produce the unexpected (an unexpected that conforms, however, to the rules of unexpectedness within that system) and challenges their system from within" (Godfrey 28). This double agent relies on, and yet consistently overthrows, societal precepts.

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<sup>12</sup> "Contrary to what a lot of thoughtless people believe, dandyism is not even an excessive delight in clothes and material elegance. For the perfect dandy, these things are no more than the symbol of the aristocratic superiority of his mind" (*The Painter* 37).

## 1.2. In France: Barbey and Baudelaire

Having established that in the nineteenth century, even in its first incarnation of George ‘Beau’ Brummell, dandyism broke with previous conceptions of the fashionable man, it is now time to turn to France and the changes that the practice underwent there. These changes include a development of the *theory* of dandyism as distinct from its *praxis* by two individuals who were notable dandies in their own rights, Jules Barbey d’Aurevilly and Charles Baudelaire.

The Barbeyan and Baudelairean dandies are a continuance of a theme first introduced by Honoré de Balzac. His essay, *Traité de la vie élégante*, was originally published in the fashion journal *La Mode* in 1830 in five instalments. The *Traité* contains a series of aphorisms and short explanations on stylish lifestyle. It includes a fictitious interview with the ultimate dandy himself, Beau Brummell, in exile in Calais, but it mainly degrades his ‘false’ aristocracy and makes light of the aging beau. The *Traité de la vie élégante* essentially introduced the English dandy to French society, and planted some integral seeds for later French dandyism to appear in both fiction and reality. However, the *Traité de la vie élégante* remains only a stepping off point for dandyism and does not figure as a main text in this thesis because it does not have the same impetus as Barbey’s and Baudelaire’s texts who wanted to make dandyism ‘academic.’ Balzac often seems to poke fun at dandyism instead of elevating it. By contrast, Barbey and Baudelaire both glimpsed something more substantial in dandyism.

The primary dandy texts examined in this thesis include Jules Barbey d’Aurevilly’s “Du Dandysme et de Beau Brummell” (1845) and Baudelaire’s essay “Le Peintre de la vie moderne” (1863). Though less than one hundred pages combined, “Du Dandysme et de Beau Brummell” and “Le Peintre de la vie moderne” changed the face of dandyism. They sought to redeem



dandyism from its critics and show that it was a viable and even respectable object of study. For Barbey and Baudelaire, dandyism is not a passing phase or trend, nor a youthful misconception. It is an ethically and aesthetically valid lifestyle, of which they are the only critics to have compounded this “science of manners” (Natta 17) into a theory. Spear-heading the projects of theorization and elevation of the dandy, Barbey and Baudelaire can be said to have been integral to the “transformation from a mindless model of vanity to a model of the repressed dreamer and intellectual rebel that separates earlier interpretations of the dandy from more modern ones” (Godfrey 27). Together, they “transformed dandyism into a disciplined exercise in thought and style” (Humphreys 64). This theoretical work would be later picked up by Albert Camus in “The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt” (1956) and Jean Baudrillard, who mentions the dandy’s aesthetic nihilism in *Simulacra and Simulations* (XVIII: On Nihilism) (1981).

Jules Amadée Barbey was born in 1808 and throughout his long life was known as a great dandy himself, not just as a theorist of dandyism. He was also a journalist. He experienced a Catholic revelation and conversion at mid-century, but continued to cultivate the image of a dandy through his mannerisms and often flamboyant clothing choices. He was most influential during the Second Empire (Moers 266). Most of his literary fame is due to novels such as *Les Diaboliques* (1874), published nearly thirty years after “Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell.” Barbey conducted extensive research to write “Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell,” including corresponding with Brummell’s English biographer, Captain Jesse (Moers 259). A shorter version was supposed to have appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* but was rejected (Moers 259). It was also rejected for the women’s fashion magazine *Le Moniteur de la Mode* because it was “too metaphysical” for the mostly female audience (Garelick 20). As the essay

grew longer, those versions were also rejected by other newspapers and journals. “Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell” was eventually self-published in 1845 as a small book.

Barbey’s anecdotal text focuses on Brummell. “Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell” is filled with anecdotes of the original dandy and lengthy footnotes. Rhonda Garelick credits Barbey with moving dandyism “away from its British, novelistic roots toward its later French life as an aesthetic and philosophical movement” (Garelick 9). This book-length essay is hard to qualify in terms of genre: it floats between “history, biography, autobiography, memoir, eulogy, jeremiad, gossip column, satire, tragic tale [...] as if genre were for Barbey a matter of tint rather than structure” (Feldman 55). Barbey’s is the first serious study of dandyism; Balzac’s treatise had been a series of questionably inflected representations, and other fictional manifestations were merely literary explorations within a set frame. It is especially notable that Barbey recognizes the dandy’s anti-establishment nature, thereby hinting at his ironic stature. Barbey calls dandyism “une révolution individuelle contre l’ordre établi” (“Du Dandysme” 112)<sup>13</sup>. This translates into “Barbey [being] the first to define the dialectic dependence of the dandy on a society whose conventions and values he seeks to undermine” (Godfrey 28).

Baudelaire’s text, *Le peintre de la vie moderne*, appeared in *Le Figaro* in three parts in 1863. Baudelaire’s personal history is perhaps more well-known than that of Barbey. Born in 1821, his father died when he was a young boy and his mother remarried the following year to a military man by the name of Aupick. Though Baudelaire would forever idolize his mother, he was less than enthused about his stepfather. Baudelaire displayed behaviour that his family considered ‘troubling,’ such as frequenting less than desirable hangouts in Paris and spending rather too much money. As a disciplinary measure, Aupick sent Baudelaire far outside of Paris on a voyage to India in order to hopefully ‘cure’ him. It did not work. Later attempts to control

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<sup>13</sup> “the revolt of the individual against the established order” (*Dandyism* 33)

his spending included a court order which apparently produced no change beyond adding resentment to the budding dandy. Over time, Baudelaire's dandy tastes developed from youthful trends to serious-minded social critiques as he toned down his style from the red cravat to the black suit which for him carried "an ironic, even subversive connotation" (Lehmann 31).

While Baudelaire's dandyism has received much more critical attention than Barbey's, Baudelaire was importantly inspired by Barbey's dandy. Rather than evoke the English Regency dandyism of Beau Brummell, Baudelaire wanted to unite the figure of the dandy with the figure of the artist. Ellen Moers suggests that it was Barbey's dandy which allowed him to do this. In the *Salon de 1846*, Baudelaire wrote, "[e]n relisant le livre *Du Dandysme*, par M. Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, le lecteur verra clairement que le dandysme est une chose moderne et qui tient à des causes tout à fait nouvelles" ("Le Peintre" 260).<sup>14</sup> This emphasis on the currency and newness in Barbey's text was in line with Baudelaire's idea to bring dandyism into focus as a specific relationship to the present. He considered art to be the epitome of this relationship as a meeting of permanent and impermanent. As the creator of this art, the artist was fundamentally situated in its immediate present. This allowed Baudelaire to superimpose his own version of newness onto the dandy: the concept of the artist (Moers 274). It is no accident that "Le Peintre" also features Baudelaire's definition of Modernity as "le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent, la moitié de l'art dont l'autre moitié est l'éternel et l'immuable" ("Le Peintre" 553)<sup>15</sup> – for Baudelaire, the dandy and the artist are the men of Modernity.

Though there are scattered references to dandies and dandyism in Baudelaire's journals, letters and essays, such as the "Salon of 1846," it is never directly in his poetry. "Le Peintre de la

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<sup>14</sup> "in rereading the book *On Dandyism*, by Mr. Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, the reader will clearly see that dandyism is a modern thing and attached to very new causes" (my translation).

<sup>15</sup> "the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other half being the eternal and the immovable" (*The Painter* 17)

vie moderne” is the only work in which Baudelaire fully expands his views about dandyism (Moers 276). Like Barbey’s text, Baudelaire’s text too seems to evade conventional genre boundaries as it encompasses biography, art criticism, social criticism, handbook, and manifesto. The bulk of “Le Peintre de la vie moderne” focuses on art criticism and the works of the painter Constantin Guys. It also includes Baudelaire’s seminal definition of Modernity. Only a small section is devoted to describing the dandy, and while inspired by Barbey’s dandy, it moves beyond it. Baudelaire’s text does not feature Beau Brummell, because to Baudelaire dandyism had expanded beyond the individual: the dandy is no longer a man “but a concept rich in linguistic – rather than specifically historical – associations” (Moers 276). Baudelaire’s dandy is a revolutionary who made his life art, intent on forging a heroism of modern life.

### **1.3. “As Alcibiades” - A Genealogy for Dandies, by Dandies**

As they fostered and developed dandy theory, Barbey and Baudelaire made several assertions about the nature of dandyism, as seen above. One of the most intriguing assertions they both articulate is the affinity between dandyism and ancient Stoicism. Those references will be articulated here for presentation as part of a larger personal genealogy project which the dandy put forth to counter the initial (false) genealogy expressed by his contemporaries. Far from thinking themselves akin to fops, the Barbeyan and Baudelairean dandies had much loftier expectations, as will be shown below.

I first presented a genealogy that consisted of fops, muscadins, and macaronis in connection with George Brummell. That genealogy was imposed on the dandy by his contemporaries and remains for the most part the same in today’s common cultural conceptions, though I and others (Tuite, Laver) have suggested many reasons why it was not illustrative of the

dandy's true form. Here, I offer a radically different genealogy, one proposed by the dandies themselves. This genealogy consists primarily of great ancestors, traced back to "César, Catalina, Alcibiade" ("Le Peintre" 559). Proud precursors to a proud phenomenon, Karen Humphries suggests that this history is a consequence of the fact that "a genealogy of heroes is regenerated in times of crisis and carries the Promethean torch" (Humphreys 65). After the Revolution social roles were no longer well-defined and the dandy sought to capitalize on this by writing himself a grandiose history to show where he aligned himself in the grander scheme. Baudelaire had the highest hopes for his dandyism:

The heroism of life, as he conceived it, made up of beauty and nobility, that was the distinctive characteristic he sought in the dandy's life, as he found it in the lives of those he considered prototypes of his hero: Chateaubriand, Delacroix, Alcibiades, and Caesar: the great Caesar, in whom Baudelaire beheld the supreme ideal of the perfect dandy, who was as much concerned over his immaculate appearance as over his dictatorship who was powerful, brave, and great of heart; who united in him beauty, glory, and refinement; who was greater than his victories, and whose death was on a par with his life. Baudelaire's dandyism, we see, aimed very high. Whatever were his failings, he tried to extract from life its epic grandeur (Rhodes 403)

But Caesar, Catalina and Alcibiades are not the only figures from antiquity that the dandy drew on. Barbey also said "si un dandy était éloquent, il le serait à la façon de Périclès" ("Du Dandysme" 120)<sup>16</sup>. More importantly, he called the dandies "stoïciens du boudoir" ("Du Dandysme" 148)<sup>17</sup> who routinely cultivated "une stoïque toilette" ("Du Dandysme" 151)<sup>18</sup>, adding that the greatest dandy was Socrates' student Alcibiades ("Du Dandysme" 166, Barbey

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<sup>16</sup> "Were a dandy to be eloquent, he would speak like Pericles" (*Dandyism* 42)

<sup>17</sup> "stoics of the boudoir" (*Dandyism* 64)

<sup>18</sup> "dressed stoically" (*Dandyism* 66).

78). Baudelaire intimates that “on voit que, de certains côtés, le dandysme confine au spiritualisme et au stoïcisme” (“Le Peintre” 560).<sup>19</sup> Though these are the most concrete assertions of Stoicism, the dandy also makes ample performative use of ancient Stoic philosophy. In the following examples, it is clear that the dandy’s approach to Stoicism is in terms of their most well-known ethics, the feature that we said survived most wholly into Modernity – their approach to the sentiments and self-control.

In this vein, Baudelaire cites a key dandy mantra of *perinde ac cadaver* (“Le Peintre” 560)<sup>20</sup>, a Christian mantra inspired by asceticism and the Stoics. He goes on to expound on the dandy’s “attitudes toujours calmes mais révélant la force” (“Le Peintre” 561)<sup>21</sup> and his “air froid qui vient de l’inébranlable résolution de ne pas être ému” (“Le Peintre” 561).<sup>22</sup> Barbey, for his part, called the dandies “dieux aux petits pieds – qui veulent toujours produire la surprise en gardant l’impassibilité” (“Du Dandysme” 119),<sup>23</sup> citing the practice’s “calme antique” (“Du Dandysme” 119), and quoted Machiavelli’s maxim with regards to them: “le monde appartient aux esprits froids” (“Du Dandysme” 122)<sup>24</sup>. Likewise, “si on était passionné, on serait trop vrai pour être Dandy” (“Du Dandysme” 126)<sup>25</sup>, because the dandy is like “une pierre qui attire la mousse, sans se laisser pénétrer par la fraîcheur qui la couvre ” (“Du Dandysme” 140)<sup>26</sup>. He was capable of giving looks in which “ses yeux sagaces savaient se glacer d’indifférence sans mépris, comme il convient à un Dandy consommé” (“Du Dandysme” 134)<sup>27</sup>. There are many more

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<sup>19</sup> “in certain respects comes close to spiritualism and to stoicism” (*The Painter* 38).

<sup>20</sup> “as a corpse” (*The Painter* 38)

<sup>21</sup> “that calmness revealing strength in every circumstance” (*The Painter* 40)

<sup>22</sup> “cold exterior resulting from an unshakeable determination to remain unmoved” (*The Painter* 40).

<sup>23</sup> “miniature gods, who always try to create surprise by remaining impassive” (*Dandyism* 42)

<sup>24</sup> “the world belongs to the cool of head” (*Dandyism* 45)

<sup>25</sup> “Passion is too true to be dandyesque” (*Dandyism* 47)

<sup>26</sup> “the stone that draws to itself the moss and is unpenetrated by the coolness of its covering” (*Dandyism* 58)

<sup>27</sup> “glacial indifference without contempt, as becomes a consummate Dandy” (*Dandyism* 54)

references besides these. Clearly, there exists an important rhetoric of impassivity within dandyism which does seem to be inspired by ancient Stoic emotion philosophy.

As stated in the Introduction, there is a semantic shift of the word ‘Stoic’ from its original to the present day. For the most part, ‘stoic’ today has been distilled to refer to only controlled emotional comportment. While a ‘stoic’ response in the nineteenth century means a measured and passion-free response just as it did in the second century B.C.E., in Greco-Roman times it meant a great deal more than that; it also referred to a certain relationship to Nature, to God, and to community which does not necessarily translate into the nineteenth century. Generally, the inclination is to assume that when ‘stoic’ occurs in dandyist texts it is only in reference to this narrower contemporary meaning of the word. However, there is reason to believe that there is more to the comparison than meets the eye. Indeed, there are divergent stances or perspectives within the critical literature on dandies regarding how, if at all, dandyism intersects with ancient Stoicism.

The texts I will be using to explore this Stoic influence will be a variety from the Roman Imperial period, primarily Epictetus, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius. Reference to the actual practices of the Stoics is paramount in the face of the casual twists employed by both the neo-stoics and their ironists, the dandies. Stoic philosophy began with Zeno around 300 BCE. Borrowing primarily from the Cynics and Platonic philosophy, he began his own school, which soon became one of the dominant Hellenistic philosophies. Ancient Stoicism lasted over five hundred years, travelling from ancient Athens to Rome, with its influence resonating much further outward. While the Stoics held views on subjects as diverse as psychology and medicine to astrology and metaphysics, they are best known for their work on ethics. This is probably because most of the extant texts we have from the Stoics are from the later Roman adherents

from the first and second centuries A.D., including the writings of Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius, whose works focused primarily on personal conduct, morality, and virtue. Continually read and reread up to the current day with far-reaching influence over the centuries, these texts have led to an idea of Stoicism as a specifically ethics-based philosophy. That said, it is important to remember that these second-century writers represent only a later account of ancient Stoicism that is primarily concerned with ethics; “in fact, much of the surviving material actually *by* Stoics is what might be called practical ethics, not articulation of doctrine” (Schofield 253).

As mentioned, the three main ancient Stoic texts to be addressed in this chapter are Epictetus’ *Enchiridion*, Marcus Aurelius’ *Meditations*, and Seneca’s *Letters from a Stoic*. Epictetus was a freed slave from Anatolia who lived from C.E. 55 to 135. He himself did not leave records, but one of his pupils, Arrian, set down his teachings in the *Discourses* and *Enchiridion*, also known as the *Manual*. His Stoicism is notable for the influence of other philosophies upon it, such as Platonic and Socratic theories. Marcus Aurelius was born in C.E. 121. He was the adopted son of Aurelius Antoninus, who had been adopted as Hadrian’s heir. He ruled jointly as Roman Emperor from 161, and alone from 169 until his death in 180. He spent much of his reign campaigning in the Danube region. While on campaign, he set down his own thoughts and reflections in his *Meditations*. Seneca was a Roman statesman, philosopher, and playwright with a tumultuous life. He lived from around 4 B.C.E. to 65 C.E. and was plagued by ill health for most of his life. He was originally from Cordoba in Spain though quickly rose to prominence at Rome, even acting as a tutor to the emperor Nero. Though he was sentenced to death by multiple Roman emperors, Seneca managed to escape this sentence by taking exile in Corsica until he was eventually ordered by Nero to commit suicide. The *Letters from a Stoic* is



the record of his didactic correspondence with his younger student Lucilius (Penguin Introductions).

I have chosen examples from the late Roman Imperial period because of their emphasis on ethical considerations. The ethical bent presents the best parallel for my thesis because of the performative aspects of dandyism, that is, the consideration of conduct. In addition, the late Roman models of Stoicism employ a ‘handbook’ or ‘advice’ style of transmission, similar to the instructive handbook forms of the dandies. I hope to show that aspects of ancient Stoicism, specifically their philosophy of emotion, was present in the nineteenth century – a large enough leap in itself, as critics like Becker argue strongly that ancient Stoic influence and neo-stoicisms are all but absent after the Enlightenment, leaving the nineteenth and twentieth centuries bereft of Stoic influence.

#### **1.4. Continuities and Discontinuities**

Few critical texts, as I have said, have made reference to the use of ancient Stoicism in dandyism, and none have considered the relation ironically. Still, I am not the first to connect the dandies to the ancient Stoics. Though some literary critics have also noticed affinities, often it is merely to dismiss it as a misguided allusion, or on regrettable occasions as downright false. I have chosen to divide these critical perspectives into three categories which consist of a religious reading, a historical reading, and an aesthetic reading. The religious reading assents to the presence of ancient Stoicism in dandyism because of ancient Stoicism’s influence on and subsequent presence in Catholicism. The historical reading rejects the presence of ancient Stoicism in dandyism on the grounds that the social and political contexts of the modern world are too different to justify the existence of a philosophy of the ancient world in the same way as

it once existed. The final aesthetic reading surmises a relationship between the nineteenth-century dandy and the Hellenistic philosopher in terms of a shared or similarly artful way of life, or an “aesthetics of existence.” The following sections will summarize these approaches.

### **The Religious Approach**

The religious approach, typified here by literary critic Ernest Raynaud, represents a complicit acquiescence to the presence of ancient Stoicism in nineteenth century dandyism. Raynaud wrote *Baudelaire et la religion du Dandysme* in 1918, and in this text, Raynaud quotes Baudelaire on the dandy’s coolness and desire to overcome emotional inconstancy and assents to the idea that these are based in ancient Stoicism. He claims the dandy’s goal was to ‘aspire to the sublime’ and transcend trends, becoming a superior being in every external way: dress, manners, social circles, etc. Raynaud says that the dandy dogma is similar to Stoicism in that it focuses on staving off “les passions vulgaires pour conquérir l’Insensibilité” (19)<sup>28</sup>. This strictness translated into an excessive refinement of costume, sociability, and labour, among others, and in particular into the refinement of emotional response. Raynaud’s reading is problematic because he fails to adequately consider the contextual influences specific to the nineteenth century. When addressing the Stoic asceticism of the dandy, Raynaud’s text has a different goal in mind, and his motivations soon become clear. What Raynaud ultimately has in mind is setting up a Christian, specifically Catholic, Baudelaire. Leaning on certain Stoic principles that, according to Lawrence Becker, were translated into the Catholic Church in the fourth and fifth centuries C.E. (3), Raynaud creates an image of Baudelaire as a well-practicing, ascetic Catholic. Raynaud morphs Baudelaire’s asceticism and makes him a quintessential Catholic poet. Raynaud ends up with an almost painfully austere Baudelaire, claiming him as a morally upright man who avoided not

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<sup>28</sup> “the lowly passions to attain Indifference” (my translation).

only establishments of ill repute but even conversations which took on a lecherous tone, and whose only relation to Jeanne Duval – his purported mistress – was apparently one of chivalrous and conscientious charity.

This view is problematic based on the knowledge available today on Baudelaire's life. Raynaud's text was written in 1918, only about fifty years after the death of Baudelaire. It is possible that biographical information available today was not available then, and also that the more unsavoury parts of his life might have been deliberately avoided at the time. Still, the fact remains that Raynaud manipulates the influence of ancient Stoicism in Baudelaire's dandyism with a heavy Christian inflection. While Raynaud does nominally agree with an ancient Stoic influence on Baudelaire, his work diverges from mine in that it does not take the dandy's multiplicitous nature and tendency towards social commentary into consideration – two factors which profoundly influence the dandy's use of ancient Stoicism. All in all, this book is important because Raynaud makes the first constructive use of Baudelaire's allusions to Stoicism. However, it is my opinion that Raynaud only tacitly agrees with the Stoic influence in order to get to another matter, which is Baudelaire's relation to Catholicism.

### **The Historical Approach**

The historical approach refutes the influence of ancient Stoicism in nineteenth century dandyism by saying that the differences between the ancient and the modern world are too vast for a comparable version of Stoicism to exist between the two. The critic that I will address here is Marie-Christine Natta, who in her book *La Grandeur sans convictions* (1991) considers several different dandies, including both Barbey and Baudelaire. In this book, among many other pertinent arguments, she analyses the dandy's claim to Stoicism and identifies it as false, or at

least an exaggeration. It is my opinion that the dandy's precision in all other facets of his life necessitates a further reading than Natta's approach on the subject of his Stoicism.

Natta represents those who reject the dandy's take on ancient Stoicism as nothing other than false. *La Grandeur sans convictions* contains a chapter devoted to the dandy's Stoicism entitled "Sourire sous la morsure du renard," named with Baudelaire's own phrasing ("Le Peintre" 560)<sup>29</sup>, Natta argues that Barbey and Baudelaire have misinterpreted Stoicism and though they claim to be following its doctrine, they have fundamentally missed the mark. She identifies a few main reasons why they have understood Stoicism incorrectly.

With her first line, it seems as if her argument is perfectly in line with my own; she says, "Le dandy est un illusionniste qui inverse les valeurs sociales, les ordres hiérarchiques, et fait de la douleur de son ennui, non une faiblesse, mais une supériorité" (Natta 129)<sup>30</sup>. She continues, also prefiguring my own analysis, that dandyism is a dazzling mask for psychological struggles and interior pain. However, after these opening sentences, our views diverge. According to Natta, the extent to which the dandy hopes to escape feeling is both inhuman and impossible, meaning that dandyism has never actually been demonstrated because "aucun homme ne peut se conformer en tout point et à tout moment à la sécheresse de ses 'lois rigoureuses'" (Natta 129)<sup>31</sup>. She proceeds to give examples of how the dandies, regardless of how cold they may claim to be are actually fairly loving. Natta says gestures such as Baudelaire anxiously inquiring after Jeanne Duval's health render his neo-stoicism unfaithful to such an extent that it nullifies the allusion to ancient Stoicism. When the dandies do employ indifference, she says it is most often to cover emotional scars, which is not at all the purpose of actual Stoicism. Actual Stoicism, she argues, is

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<sup>29</sup> "smiling [...] under the bite of the fox" (*The Painter* 38)

<sup>30</sup> "The dandy is an illusionist who inverts social values, hierarchies, and uses his painful ennui not as a weakness, but a strength" (my translation).

<sup>31</sup> "no man can conform at all times and in all actions to the coldness of his 'rigorous laws'" (my translation).

employed in rational choice and discretion with regards to emotion, which I do not contest. Thus, because “cette maîtrise [des passions] vise des buts différents” (134)<sup>32</sup>, she concludes that the dandy’s use of Stoicism is quite misguided.

les stoïciens écartent les passions jugées mauvaises, car elles détournent l’homme de la saine nature. Les dandys les évitent car elles contrarient leur esthétique et les rendraient vulnérables; et s’ils ne peuvent les éviter, ils les cachent derrière leur masque impassible; or, l’idée du masque et de l’artifice est tout à fait étrangère au stoïcisme (Natta 134).<sup>33</sup>

Her argument, like mine, hinges on the context of Modernity: since the worldview has shifted since antiquity and the dandies are no longer governed by a whole and harmonious world, she says that the dandies have no hope of ever “être en accord avec l’ordre du monde” (135)<sup>34</sup> as the ancient Stoics strove to be. She notes that the dandy has especially harsh beliefs particularly towards Nature. It is true that Baudelaire routinely speaks in favour of artifice and makeup as ‘correctors’ for Nature’s faults. However, Natta believes this nullifies his claims to Stoicism: “Tout son comportement est une protestation contre la société et contre la nature que les stoïciens identifient à la raison” (Natta 135)<sup>35</sup>. Her argument is worth quoting at length:

Pour se rendre philosophe, dit Epictète, « il faut veiller, peiner, se séparer des siens, souffrir les mépris d’un jeune esclave, être raillé par les premiers venus, avoir en tout le dessous, dans les honneurs, dans les charges publiques, devant les juges et dans la moindre affaire. Pèse tout cela si tu veux recevoir en échange l’impassibilité, la liberté, le calme. Sinon n’approche pas, de peur que, comme les enfants, tu ne sois maintenant

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<sup>32</sup> “this mastery (of his passions) has a different goal” (my translation).

<sup>33</sup> “The Stoics dismiss emotions judged as incorrect, because they divert man from his true nature. The dandies avoid emotions because they are contrary to their aesthetic principles and would make them vulnerable; and if they cannot avoid them, they hide them behind an impassive mask; and the idea of the mask is completely foreign to Stoicism” (my translation)

<sup>34</sup> “to be in accordance with the order of the world” (my translation)

<sup>35</sup> “All his behaviour is a protest against the society and against the nature that the Stoics identified with reason” (my translation).

philosophe, plus tard précepteur, ensuite rhéteur, puis procureur de César. Tout cela ne s'accorde pas. Il faut que tu sois un seul homme, ou bon ou mauvais. Il faut cultiver, ou le gouvernement de toi-même ou les choses du dehors, t'appliquer aux choses intérieures ou aux choses extérieures, c'est-à-dire tenir le rôle de philosophe ou de particulier » (Epictetus XXIX, 6-7). Imagine-t-on un instant le dandy accepter une infériorité social, négliger l'opinion d'autrui, renoncer à toute forme de dilettantisme et au gouvernement des choses extérieures? (Natta 135)<sup>36</sup>

She concludes forcefully : “Non, décidément, la résignation stoïcienne n'est pas une vertu dandy. Le dandy ne se résigne pas, il s'oppose, certes avec détachement, en s'isolant, mais il s'oppose” (Natta 135)<sup>37</sup>. Natta is definitely opposed to the notion of a truly Stoic dandy.

I must point out that I am not entirely in disagreement with Natta – the purpose of this thesis is not to establish that the dandy is a perfect Stoic. Rather, I propose that the dandy is approaching ancient Stoicism from an ironic point of view, which fundamentally rearranges the way critics should be in dialogue with ancient Stoicism's influence in dandyism. Thus, stating that the dandy was ‘wrong’ in his self-characterization as a Stoic is controversial. After all, the dandy is renowned as one of the most careful constructors of identity. Given his laborious concern with this construction of identity, I have to conclude that the dandy would not be so careless or indeed reckless with his prize possession – himself – as to haphazardly choose a name

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<sup>36</sup> “To become a philosopher, says Epictetus, you must be vigilant and struggle, separate yourself from your family, suffer contempt like a young slave, be mocked by everyone, come last in everything, in honours, in public office, before judges and in the smallest matters. Consider all of this if you want to receive indifference, freedom, and peace in exchange. Otherwise, do not approach if you wish to be known a philosopher, now a tutor, then a rhetorician, then a procurator under Caesar. These are not compatible. You must be only a man, good or bad. You must cultivate either yourself or things exterior to yourself, apply yourself either to interior concerns or exterior ones, that is to say the role of the philosopher or of the mundane” (Epictetus XXIX, 6-7). Imagine for a moment a dandy accepting an inferior social position, ignoring the opinion of others, renouncing all forms of dilettantism and the curation of exterior concerns?” (my translation).

<sup>37</sup> “No, decidedly not, Stoic resignation is not a virtue possessed by the dandy. The dandy does not resign, he opposes, certainly with detachment, in isolation, but he opposes” (my translation)

with only the merest resemblance to his behaviour toward himself. Though Natta and I agree on some points, I do not feel that she takes finer nuances of the dandy's condition into proper consideration.

### **The Aesthetic Approach**

The final approach bears the most resemblance to my own thinking in that it productively relates ancient philosophy to the nineteenth century. This section will focus on furthering a connection made by Michel Foucault in order to discuss the similarities between the ethics of the subject in cases of stylized selfhood in both the Roman Imperial period and nineteenth-century France by the fact that they both subscribe to a stylized manner of living, what Michel Foucault terms an "aesthetics of existence." This concept first arises in a lecture series at the College de France in 1981-1982 entitled "The Hermeneutics of the Subject." "The Hermeneutics of the Subject" concentrates, broadly, on identity and self-construction, primarily using examples from Antiquity and ancient philosophies, and led to the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*. In the lecture series, Foucault offers analyses of highly regulated forms of self-cultivation with emphasis placed on the relationship of the self to the self, and the conscious regulation of influences on the individual in order to construct an identity that is free of norms. He even goes so far as to explicitly state that an 'aesthetics of existence' is shared between Antiquity and dandyism (*Hermeneutics* 251) This section will focus on further exploring that connection and its relevance via a comparison with another text by Foucault: an article from 1984 entitled "What is Enlightenment?" which deals with a concept of reactivated active selfhood in relation to Kant's theories of Enlightenment and Baudelaire's dandy.

Foucault has applied the “aesthetics of existence” and the complementary self-cultivation to his criticism to multiple epochs, citing a Herculean effort to know the self and live in an artful way in each. In interviews, he noted that he considered three golden ages of self-cultivation: the Greco-Roman period, the Renaissance, and nineteenth-century dandyism (“Genealogy of Ethics” 362). Each of these time periods are involved in trying to cultivate an art of living, which is “a question of knowing how to govern one’s own life in order to give it the most beautiful possible form (in the eyes of others, of oneself, and of future generations)” (“The Concern for Truth” 259) via personally-developed ethics. Notably, each of these time periods involves the emancipation of its members from over-arching structures and fairly radical socio-cultural change, such as the Renaissance’s rediscovery of Greco-Roman philosophy and the transformations of arts, culture, and science coming out of medieval times. Foucault says that “the theme of the return to the self has undoubtedly been a recurrent theme in ‘modern’ culture since the sixteenth century” (*Hermeneutics* 250). It is not a coincidence that “no secular books were more widely read during the Renaissance than Cicero’s *On Duties*, the *Letters* and *Dialogues* of Seneca, and the *Manual* of Epictetus” (“Stoicism in the Philosophical Tradition” 365). While Anthony A. Long calls Stoicism the “least explicitly and adequately acknowledged influence on Western thought” (“Stoicism in the Philosophical Tradition” 365), he cites its influence in the works of scholars as diverse as Lipsius, Leibniz, Rousseau, Adam Smith, and Kant. Foucault posits that Stoicism displays itself once again in the context of Modernity. He finds the influence most clearly on the nineteenth century, saying:

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? (*Hermeneutics* 251)

In the article “What is Enlightenment?” Foucault discusses the deep relation of the self and implicitly, a reinvigoration of “aesthetics of existence”, in the dandy. Foucault uses Baudelaire’s treatise, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, as a means to explain his views on the Enlightenment and expand on a text by Immanuel Kant, a response written into a journal during Kant’s early career. Foucault’s characterization of Baudelaire’s dandy echoes his characterization of the Hellenistic philosophers, but he is careful to avoid placing too much emphasis on the role of the Enlightenment as a magical moment of awakening for mankind. While he acknowledges the Enlightenment as a period of perhaps great evolution and revolution, he emphasizes that it is also merely one paradigm among many. That said, Foucault is attracted by Kant’s description of Enlightenment as an “Ausgang” or “exit,” as “a process that releases us from a state of tutelage or immaturity (*Unmündigkeit*). By tutelage he means a state of mind that makes us accept someone else's authority” (Seppa, n.pag). It is only after having been emancipated from an outside guiding force and autonomously using Reason that there is a reactivation of subjectivity in the modern era. This reactivation entails a separation of the dominant modes of subjection from the individual’s development of selfhood and an emphasis on emancipation from blind obedience. Once separated from these exterior influences, the subject must actively make his own truths.

In order to come to a definition of “aesthetics of existence,” I will first look at the social milieu in which it developed. Greco-Roman philosophies, such as Stoicism, were greatly concerned with ethics – that is, reasonable and moderate conduct – and while they had relatively

few governing bodies concerned with legislating private behaviours, it was a personal duty to conduct oneself in a mindful manner. To that end, the ancient's relation to the self was "intensified and valorized" (*Cultivation of the self* 43), and it is the intense personal relationship which Foucault designates as one of the main subjects of ethical concentration. The concentration is so great that it develops into the stylized creation of an ethical way of living. Philosophy had long been the practice of an 'art of living', but it was during the late Roman approach that it was canonized into an *aesthetics* of living where "the notion of exercising a perfect mastery over oneself soon became the main issue" (Dreyfus 235). It began long before Seneca or Epictetus approached the topic: Foucault says that the "aesthetics of existence" emerged from Greek concepts, and gradually garnered more and more consideration until, by the time it is elaborated by Seneca and Epictetus (*Care of the Self* 43), self-cultivation is the disciplined development of "a code of conduct that revolves around the question of the self" (Smart 210).

The emphasis on the cultivation of the self that Foucault finds in various authors from Antiquity leads him to conclude that the real maxim of the Greco-Roman era was not *gnothi seauton*, but rather, *epimeleia heautou*. *Gnothi seauton* translates to the well-known Delphic principle "know thyself," which doubtless has its merits, but Foucault places this second to *epimeleia heautou*, which approximately means "care of the self" ("On the Genealogy" 359, *Care of the Self* 43). The sentiment is Socratic, and appears in Plato's *Alcibiades* as Socrates explains to the youthful general that before presuming to rule others, one must learn to rule oneself. As the principle of self-care grew from Greek origins to Roman elaborations, the focus was on performing actions that all add up to produce a being whose every action is devoted to complementing the self. Seneca wrote hundreds of letters to friends about the importance of

cultivating the self, stressing that self-care requires more than a ‘general attitude.’ It requires great focus and devotion. This is reflected in the word *epimeleia*, “a sort of work, an activity; it implies attention, knowledge, and technique” (“On the Genealogy” 359), and also denotes

not just a preoccupation but a whole set of occupations; it is *epimeleia* that is employed in speaking of the activities of the master of a household, the tasks of the ruler who looks after his subjects, the care that must be given to a sick or wounded patient, or the honours that must be paid to the gods or to the dead. With regard to oneself as well, *epimeleia* implies a labour (*Care of the Self* 50).

The effort, curation, and overall emphasis on technique and craft in this passage belie the ritualism and aestheticization that figures prominently in the Roman elucidation of self-cultivation and later versions. The line between ethics and aesthetics was blurred because the Stoics “identified beauty (*to kalon*) to moral goodness (*to agathon*)” (Brilliant and Asmis n.pag.). Aesthetic-ethic integration was furthered by “the integration, the intertwining of the practice of the self with the general form of the art of living” (*Hermeneutics* 125). The Greco-Roman philosophical obligation to observe and regulate the self was a monumental effort to not just *control* but also *construct* the self, out of which “a whole art of self-knowledge developed, with precise recipes, specific forms of examination, and codified exercises” (*Cultivation of Self* 58). Studied self-care turned into self-cultivation. Over time, self-cultivation became more and more regulated until it

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, giving rise to relationships between individuals, to exchanges and communications, and at times even

to institutions. And it gave rise, finally, to a certain mode of knowledge and to the elaboration of a science (*Care of the Self* 45).

Ethics was heavily emphasized because the goal of philosophy was to learn to live well, even to make life a work of art. The care and cultivation of the self was not legislatively enforced, but available to each individual as a “principle of stylization of conduct for those who wished to give their existence the most graceful and accomplished form possible” (*Use of Pleasure* 250-251). But there is a major issue to address here: if Foucault is advocating for an “aesthetics of existence” that can be paralleled between the Greco-Romans and the nineteenth-century dandies, and allow members of both eras to create the self into a work of art, then the differences between a Greek ‘aesthetics’ which is aligned with social and ethical practice must be reconciled with a modern definition of aesthetics which has been technically split from moral and ethical standards.

Andrew Thacker describes how the problematic treatment of aesthetics in Foucault’s “aesthetics of existence” stems from the conflation of aesthetics and ethics implied therein. He argues that “aesthetics” in the Greek sense is considerably different from “aesthetics” in a modern, and specifically post-Kantian, sense. In the Greek sense, in which beauty could be equated to what is morally good, aesthetics and ethics could be said to be closely tied. In the modern sense, aesthetics has been separated from any practical office other than being itself; that is, art and aesthetic judgments are autonomous from moral ones. These two definitions are quite different. Therefore, turning one’s life into a work of art today means a considerably different thing than in the Greek context, and it would be an anachronism to apply Greek aesthetics, “intermeshed with social and ethical practices” today (14). Yet, Foucault constitutes the ‘aesthetics of existence’ as not “for, but in terms of, a contemporary situation,” (“Concern for

truth” 263) and so Thacker asks a very pertinent question: “If the Greeks had an undissociated sense of the aesthetic and the ethical life can we really look back to them as exemplars when our senses of the ethical and aesthetic are so clearly divorced?” (14). Given this gap between the two versions of “aesthetic,” Thacker proposes two options: the first being that Foucault was attempting to define a modern “aesthetics of existence” based on Greek thought, and the second being that Foucault was attempting a variation on Kantian aesthetics, based on a principle of autonomy.

Thacker says that the Greek notion only works today if Foucault was imagining a future state of aesthetics in which “the cognitive, the ethical, and the aesthetic, [...] intermingle and temper the other” (15). While these realms are currently treated as distinct, it is not unfeasible to say that aesthetics will not always be viewed under the umbrella of Kantian aesthetic autonomy, or that perhaps Foucault was seeking to redefine aesthetics in a non-Kantian way. Since under the Kantian approach, art objects cannot have an ethical dimension, Foucault’s theory is misplaced unless it can be contextualized by an approach which involves the negation of the autonomy of the art objects or aesthetic judgment and inclusion of ethical consideration. I argue that the differences between these definitions of aesthetics are substantial, and contribute to why the dandy can only give an ironic portrayal of this ethics.

The examples that Foucault listed above, like Baudelaire, Nietzsche, and Schopenhauer, sought to give their lives a beautiful form, but the determination to live beautifully within a modern era will mean something different given the evolution of ‘aesthetics’ between Greco-Roman and modern times.

## **A Different Approach**

In sum, these approaches offered above – religious, historical, and aesthetic – are attempts to unpack the relationship between ancient Stoicism and dandyism. While each offers special draws or deterrents, my position is that none of these aforementioned approaches is adequate because they do not consider the dandy's neo-stoicism in light of his ironic imperative. My estimation is that, because irony figures as such an important part of his definition and theorization, the dandy's neo-stoicism is also performed ironically.

The following chapter will address context in two ways. The first is the actual historical context of the nineteenth century: addressing the political, social, and economic events of the century in order to come to better understand the relation between the collective traumatic experience of Modernity and the reactive neo-stoicism it inspired. Second, I will analyze the extent to which those same modern preconditions inspired the *modus operandi* of the dandy: irony.

## **Chapter Two: Neo-Stoicism and Irony in Modernity**

### **2.1 Historical Context: Instability**

The nineteenth century was filled with social, political, and economic changes which, I will argue, make it hardly surprising that a therapeutically-inclined philosophy like neo-stoicism emerged: practicing regulation of emotions has continually offered solace to individuals struggling through difficult times. In France, the long and bloody battle for power which had begun with the French Revolution in 1789 continued into the nineteenth century. The turbulence persisted in a series of Revolutions, Restorations, Empires, and Republics. The optimism which had characterized the beginning of the century with the rise of Napoleon was soon followed by the bitter disappointment of many of his followers after he crowned himself Emperor. With Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo imminent, Louis XVIII of the House of Bourbon was briefly restored to the throne in 1814, and then again more permanently in 1815. He ruled until his death in 1824 and was succeeded by his brother, Charles X, who reigned until he was forced to abdicate during the July Revolution in 1830. Louis-Philippe of the Orleans monarchy succeeded him. Then, in 1848, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, nephew of the original Napoleon, became the first President of the République française. Shortly after, like his uncle, he declared himself Emperor, ending the short-lived republic and instituting the Second French Empire. The Third Republic began in 1871, after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian war saw the downfall of Napoleon III and his Empire. The Paris Commune lasted about two months and was subsequently replaced by the presidency of Adolphe Thiers. Various presidents follow after these, with varying degrees of stability. Add to this various wars – France invaded Spain in 1823 and took part in the Crimean War with England against Russia in 1854, not to mention the Second Opium War in Beijing in 1860 and the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. The nineteenth

century was, in France, arguably one of the most politically tumultuous in its history (see Christophe Charle).

The background to all this political turmoil was rapid social and economic change. The Industrial Revolution was in full swing by the mid-1800s. There was a surge in the population of the city of Paris of labourers looking for somewhere to live and work. Insufficient understanding of disease meant that illnesses spread quickly. Housing conditions were cramped and unsafe. There was a lack of infrastructure, including proper sanitation, until conditions caught up in the mid-nineteenth century. Work, if it could be found, was rarely at an adequate pay and still more rarely safe. Workers' riots were frequent and often violent. While a small section of the middle classes, the bourgeoisie, was rising in wealth and power, there remained a gap between the uppermost and lowest tiers of society. Most importantly, there was an increasing awareness of this gap on all levels of society (Charle).

These are the conditions in which 'Modernity' blooms. As opposed to merely 'modern,' a term which was used variously well before the nineteenth century, 'Modernity' did not come into usage until the works of Charles Baudelaire and his contemporaries (Delanty 3068). On a fundamental level, Modernity typifies an experience of tension. The swirl of philosophies during and after the Enlightenment era led to "the emergence of new modes of thought and consciousness" (Delanty 3069). Between these new modes of existence there reigned ambivalence. Multiplicity was rampant due to constantly shifting dynamics which forced ever newer re-evaluations of the present moment and its relation to the past. These topics are explored in Liah Greenfield's new book entitled *Mind, Madness and Modernity: The Impact of Culture on Human Experience* (2013) and Jerome Braun's *Psychological Aspects of Modernity* (1993).



But all these changes affected more than just the political and economic face of a country. On a personal level, individuals lost a sense of balance as well, and “for close to five hundred years [...] have probably experienced modernity as a radical threat to their history and traditions” (Berman 16). During the Middle Ages, constructions like the great chain of Being gave individuals a sense of placement and purpose within a larger network. Once constructions like these have been unravelled, the individual is placed in a precarious position, faced with redefining himself as a self. As Charles Taylor details, “Modernity is not that form of life toward which all cultures converge as they discard beliefs that held our forefathers back. Rather, it is a movement from one constellation of background understandings to another, which repositions the self in relation to others and the good” (“Two Theories of Modernity” 24). Repositioning is not an easy feat, however; Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s *A Letter* is a condensed example of the feelings elicited by Modernity. The only thing one could be certain of was that one could not be certain of anything. In this unstable context, the individual has a new and as yet unformulated relation to his surroundings and to himself. The relationship with the self intensifies because “emerging out of these dynamics are self-transformative tendencies and a self-conscious reflexivity” (Delanty 3069). Instability led to two responses: one could take comfort in a philosophy with a strongly established connection to the self and little relation on external factors for happiness or comfort, or one could embrace that instability.

## 2.2 The Neo-stoic Response

As noted, the tendency in tracing ancient Stoic influence and neo-stoicisms is to leap from the Enlightenment to the present day, ignoring any vestiges that may have appeared along the way. Lawrence C. Becker, the author of *A New Stoicism* (1998), which advocates for the (slightly modified) use of Stoic aspects in today's society and argues that Stoicism has a place in the present day and, indeed, is needed. But even Becker, capable of seeing the need for Stoicism today, glosses over its presence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He says that Stoicism was basically effaced by "evangelical and imperial Christianity" (3) after five hundred years of prominence in the Greek and Roman systems. The fragments of Stoicism that survived into the Middle Ages were only in the way of "pastoral counselling, the military, and what then passed for medicine and psychotherapy" (3). As a brief respite from Stoicism's hibernation, Becker cites an explosion of interest during the Renaissance, but is careful to note that it "bore only a strong family resemblance to that [Stoicism] of Zeno and Chryssipus" (3). Small matter, Becker claims, because the neo-stoic craze soon subsided and returned to a personal level of practice, if at all. Throughout the eighteenth century, "we gradually abandoned our doctrine that the universe should be understood as a purposive, rational being" (3), and in the nineteenth century, even the few remaining vestiges in theological practice were discarded, apparently "largely due to the rise of romanticism" (3). Becker says that it was the plethora of philosophies and intellectual movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which

finally laid waste to our movement [...] The social sciences bought the fact-value distinction, and philosophy peddled it to them. Nonnaturalism arose, collapsed into noncognitivism, and rose again as intuitionism and constructivism. Moral truth was given a coherentist interpretation. Pluralism, relativism, and irony abounded, alongside various

forms of dogmatism about natural duties and the intrinsic moral worth of human beings” (3-4).

Becker concludes gloomily that the only remaining adherents to any kind of Stoicism today are *some* soldiers, *some* logicians, and *some* (apparently nostalgic) Hellenists (4). If Becker is arguing for a fairly strict and thorough rejuvenation of Stoic doctrine, then its revival during the Renaissance was about as much of a *complete* manifestation as can ever have appeared since the Greeks and Romans made use of it, given that Becker notes that a fairly fundamental part of it is lost to us now since nature has ceased to be a necessarily rational or rationalizable factor.

I have quoted Becker at length because he represents a critical tendency on the subject of neo-stoicism. Yet, I argue that there *is* a place for Stoic influence in the nineteenth century – actually, that its presence is crucial. As an adaptable philosophy, ancient Stoicism and its many neo-stoicisms have been present and have been impactful well after the fall of the Roman Empire. That said, there is currently limited research available on the subject, with most major criticism about Stoicism in modern eras stopping at the Renaissance and Reformation, as Becker postulated. However, in 2012 *Philosophic Pride: Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau* by Christopher Brooke came out which bridges at least as far as the eighteenth century.

Anthony A. Long is also a proponent of the idea that ancient Stoic influence exists across multiple eras. He explains that the transference of Stoicism from its beginnings in Athens into even the present day is actually very plausible because, he argues, any ethics-based philosophy possesses an especially wide-ranging applicability. There is a distinct universality of the desire to live in a meaningful way; that is, a search for a suitable ethics is ongoing and in constant flux, and as such, ancient Stoic doctrine is revisited time and again. Long calls Stoicism the “least explicitly and adequately acknowledged influence on Western thought” (“Stoicism in the

Philosophical Tradition” 365), stating that it has taken many forms over the centuries. William B. Irvine has identified other examples of neo-stoicisms, such as René Descartes’ solipsistic philosophy, Schopenhauer’s nihilism, and Henry David Thoreau’s fiction (211). In fact, Irvine even quoted Thoreau, who wrote in his journal that “Zeno the Stoic stood precisely in the same relation to the world that I do now” (quoted in Irvine, 211). Domna Stanton finds a neo-stoicism in Montaigne’s *honnête homme* which she then explicitly links to the dandy in *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in Seventeenth- and Nineteenth-Century French literature* (1980). Philosophy provides, after all, an ‘art of living’: identifying appropriate actions and behaviours in order to live in the most beneficial way possible for the self and society.

Stoicism will never and can never again exist as it once did in its Classical iteration; still, it will persist in part, its doctrine divided up and shared. The vestiges of ancient Stoicism visible at any point after the advent of Christianity constitute ‘weaker’ neo-stoicisms, forms which emphasize various aspects of the doctrine. Extending the term ‘Stoic’ across centuries is possible and plausible because this philosophy deals primarily with the self, and “the bare self is anyone’s self, irrespective of gender, status, ethnicity, or chronology. Hence, [...] the terms Stoic and Epicurean are still available to us to describe someone’s self-orientation, while Platonic and Aristotelian are not” (*From Epicurus to Epictetus* 27). Though critics may condemn the idea of a universal self, humans have instinctual drives or inclinations that can be said to be universal and it is these drives upon which the ancient philosophies – at least the Epicureans and Stoics – are built. These philosophies contain elementary truths about human experience that are still recognized today. When taking these essentials into consideration, the far-reaching influence of Stoicism, adaptable to nearly any culture, is hardly surprising. For example, the Epicureans

argued that pleasure is preferable to pain, and thus pursued pleasure. Equally viable, Stoics propose predispositions to self-love, self-preservation, and sociability. Stoicism also heavily emphasizes rationality as the fundamental characteristic of humanity, and what separates humans from animals (Schofield 247). The Stoic ability to analyze and react to emotions of all ranks in a calm and collected manner is perhaps their most well-known feature.

This ability to compartmentalize and rationally reflect on emotions and emotional stimuli has long been both coveted and rejected. It is perhaps the case that any successful rehabilitation of Stoic ethics “will have to defeat the idea that there is something deeply wrong, and perhaps even psychologically impossible, about the kind of emotional life that Stoics recommend” (Becker ‘Stoic Emotion’ 250). Yet, Stoic impassivity has not only been desirable, but these therapeutic goals have been clearly outlined. The goal of Stoic indifference is not to feel nothing, but to mediate and feel *better*, a function attributed by Cicero as the goal of all philosophy:

Assuredly there is an art of healing the soul – I mean philosophy, whose aid must be sought not, as in bodily diseases, outside ourselves, and we must use our utmost endeavour, with all our resources and strengths, to have the power to be ourselves our own physicians (5).

The Stoic approach as therapeutic has been written on extensively. Two prominent texts on the subject are Martha C. Nussbaum’s book *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (1994) and Richard Sorabji’s book *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (2002). Nussbaum’s work is particularly adamant about the therapeutic value of Stoic doctrine. She claims that all Hellenistic philosophers, whether Epicurean, Cynics, or Stoics, saw philosophy as a way to deal with life’s pressing issues and trials in a productive way. More recently, Richard Sorabji addresses the development of ancient

psychology and how it influenced early Christian thought. Generally, there is a heavily emphasized presence of therapy in Stoic doctrine which makes it particularly engaging in times of strife. Evelyn Hanley tells us that

[s]ince the time of its inception in the ancient world, Stoicism has represented an attitude of mind that has tended to reappear in periods when profound changes in the social and intellectual milieu have produced in men a feeling of disillusionment with the age and a desire to seek compensation in a philosophy based upon an independence of externals and a reliance on the life of the mind (1).

Stoicism's therapeutic value ought to be emphasized in the context of Modernity. Ancient Stoicism was a philosophy which emphasized rationality and self-regulation whereby the investigation of passionate emotions could offer consolation, and often comprehension. Control, emotional and otherwise, in the face of such drastic social, political, economic, and personal changes as were occurring in the nineteenth century is advantageous to an individual reeling from the trauma – or at the very least 'malaise' – of Modernity. Charles Taylor defines the malaises of Modernity as "features of our contemporary society that people experience as a loss or a decline, even as our civilization 'develops.' [...] sometimes the loss is felt over a much longer historical period: the whole modern era from the seventeenth century is frequently seen as the time frame of decline" (*Malaise of Modernity* 1). Infamous for its indifferent attitude, the ancient Stoic method immediately surfaces as a suitable reaction to loss. Thus in Modernity, conditions seem ripe for a resurgence of Stoic ethics.

Friedrich Nietzsche would seem to agree. In *The Gay Science* (1882), he posited, "[f]or those with whom fate attempts improvisation – those who live in violent ages and depend on sudden and mercurial peoples – Stoicism may indeed be advisable" (306). Evelyn Hanley, author

of *Stoicism in Major English Poets of the Nineteenth Century* (1964) echoes this sentiment by outlining a neo-stoic influence in English writers like Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892). She says that as a practical response to a traumatic century, the revival of ancient Stoic aspects in the nineteenth century is not surprising. She notes that,

Stoic reaction is observable in the nineteenth century as well, a period when the intellectual atmosphere was permeated by an awareness of rapidly changing values in almost every realm of thought, by the sense of a past slipping inevitably away, and the fear of an unknown future. In a world so quickly developing a high complexity of organization, when man's intellectual nature was advancing more rapidly than his moral nature, the greatest apparent need was for a sound ethics, a stabilizing spiritual influence (Hanley 40).

Hanley identifies Stoic virtues among Matthew Arnold, Robert Browning, Alfred Lord Tennyson and William Wordsworth. Not just among its poets, the influence of Stoicism was strongly felt in England besides. Among those who propagated Stoic influence was Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle was a renowned enemy of the dandies, a great proponent of self-discipline, and is much more readily associated with Stoic features than the dandies who also claimed that attribution. In Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help* (1859) Smiles recounts the story of Carlyle's manuscript for *The French Revolution* having been unknowingly burned by a housemaid. As the story goes, upon hearing of the destruction of his manuscript, "his feelings may be imagined" (Smiles 102). Having no other recourse, however, and no drafts, Carlyle re-wrote the entire copy from memory. In the end, "that he persevered and finished the volume under such circumstances, affords an instance of determination of purpose which has seldom been surpassed" (Smiles 102), and is certainly emblematic of a purposefully unmoved Stoic countenance.

Carlyle is tied to a larger movement with supposed Stoic links as well, coining the key term ‘captains of industry’ in his work *Past and Present* (1843). Utilitarianism gained ground throughout the nineteenth century in England. Broadly, Utilitarianism advocated maximizing usefulness paired with self-interest; pursuing “the greatest happiness of the greatest number [as] the measure of right and wrong” (Bentham 58). While this is usually interpreted in a hedonistic sense, John Stuart Mill explicitly evokes and states a relation to ancient Stoicism in his *Utilitarianism*:

in this condition the world, paradoxical as the assertion may be, the conscious ability to do without happiness gives the best prospect of realising such happiness is attainable. For nothing except that consciousness can raise a person above the chances of life, by making him feel that, let fate and fortune do their worst, they have not power to subdue him: which, once felt, frees him from excess of anxiety concerning the evils of life, and enables him, like many a Stoic in the worst times of the Roman Empire, to cultivate in tranquility the sources of satisfaction accessible to him, without concerning himself about the uncertainty of their duration, any more than about their inevitable end (23).

One can hardly approach more closely Epictetus’ teachings in the *Enchiridion* than this statement without directly quoting him. Fate and fortune cannot subdue the ancient Stoic because those are exterior to the Stoic and therefore none of his concern (Epictetus 221). Similarly, it is only the judgment of impressions that is harmful (223), and if an individual is cautious to remain in accordance with nature in all of his actions, all will be well (223), and so on.



### 2.3 The Ironic Response

Now that an impetus for neo-stoic ethics in the nineteenth century has been identified, the focus must shift to its corresponding opposite. An equally strong opposing movement also emerges from the instability of Modernity, but rather than trying to right the trauma by balancing it, the focus shifts to embracing the newfound transience. This section is meant to describe the *modus operandi* of the dandy, irony, and show how the dandy's contemptuous nature is a consequence of the same Modernity that bred a nineteenth century neo-stoicism. The dandies' tendency to ironize and parody their contemporaneous society will then be examined in relation to their self-ascribed adaptation of ancient Stoicism, to argue that the dandy's neo-stoicism is an ironic take on the philosophy and on the dandy's peers.

The instability of the modern situation did not uniformly inspire a search for stability. Rather, the absurdity of trying to re-establish a system in which everything fits becomes more and more evident as the proposed answers start fraying at the edges and can find no solid foothold. When Charles Baudelaire proposed his definition of Modernity, he named it "le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent" ("Le Peintre" 553)<sup>38</sup> and emphasized the obligation of art to try to reflect this consciousness of the ephemeral in Modernity. The metropolis is the site of transience *par excellence* in the nineteenth century, and one of the primary features of Modernity. Many of the 'traumas' of Modernity are based specifically around the metropolitan experience, so it is fitting that the practice Baudelaire endorsed, dandyism, is also located primarily there. Other writers throughout the nineteenth century also alluded to the formative impact (and almost always also inherent discomfort) that the city presented to them. Georg Simmel's essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903) is a particularly illuminating study of the effects of the burgeoning city on the psyche. He describes how the modern individual has

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<sup>38</sup> "the transient, the fleeting, the contingent" (*The Painter* 17).

been transformed by living in a large city – especially Paris, one of the so-called capitals of the nineteenth century. Symptoms include a blasé attitude, superficiality, and alienation, among others. These will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter.

The metropolis is the specific feature of Modernity that brings forth the dandy. The rise of the dandy occurs concurrently with that of the city so that “dandyism might thus be considered as a manner bred out of and in reaction to new conditions of urban society” (Godfrey 26). The dandy is inextricably tied to the city and he could not exist outside of the metropolis. Few true dandies lived outside of the cultural hubs of London and Paris, though there are some notable exceptions like Gabriele d’Annunzio in Rome, Adolf Loos in Vienna, and Karl Gutzkow in Berlin.

As a strictly urban phenomenon, the dandy is tied to the metropolis and owes many of his characteristics to it. His urbane nature is a large part of what informs his irony. The *OED* defines ‘urbane’ as “elegant and refined in manners; courteous, civil; suave, sophisticated” (“urbane”). As Sima Godfrey explains, the dandy

is characterized by a certain kind of fine wit and polish that we call urbane and which dates back to Roman times when people from the Urbs (*the* city, Rome) were commonly opposed to people from the country, *rustici*. [...] With the rapid growth of the city in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the etymological distinction of *urbanus* becomes meaningful again, and the noun “urbanité” starts taking on new connotations that alert us to social change and to the general impact of the Dandy’s style. The language of irony becomes identified with the sophisticated and unnatural setting of the big city (26).

Gradually, the characterization of *urbane* takes on other connotations, including a certain slickness, and comes to be associated if not with *falsehood* then certainly with *duality*. This can

be seen in sub-definition 1C of the same entry from the OED, which says the urbane “follows the pursuits, has the ideas or the sentiments, characteristic of town or city life” (“urbane”). These then – quite literally “the ideas and sentiments characteristic of town and city life” – are applied to the dandy, *the* man of the metropolis, and his speech; it is from the urbane that the dandy’s doubled nature begins to appear. The experience of the metropolis in the nineteenth century, as noted above according to sociologist Georg Simmel, is also chiefly concerned with an indifferent attitude and estrangement. Thus, an urban figure is at once caught up within the pursuits, ideas, and sentiments particular to their city life, but also experiences an estrangement or distance from it. It is thus understandable that Godfrey calls the dandy “the signifying master of intertextual polyphony, the man who consciously manipulates two levels of discourse at once” (31). Janus-faced, he engages with his environment on two levels: as a sophisticated and refined inhabitant, but also as an indifferent and isolated spectator. These levels are “crucial to his creative transformation. Duality and discord are mobilizing forces that enable the dandy to transform himself into *oeuvre d’art* and immortalize himself through his work” (Humphreys 70).

I am not the first to find the dandy’s double-talk and manipulation of multiple registers ironic. In fact, the dandy himself was conscious of this irony, and revels in it, calling it his ‘genius’: “L’ironie est un génie qui dispense de tous les autres. Elle jette sur un homme l’air de sphinx qui préoccupe comme un mystère et qui inquiète comme un danger” (“Du Dandysme” 135)<sup>39</sup>. In what follows, I will address three important discussions on the dandy’s irony for precedent. The first of these is from Walter Benjamin, nineteenth-century literary critic and philosopher. He read Baudelaire extensively and carried out many studies of the poet, including *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* and *The Writer of Modern Life:*

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<sup>39</sup> “The genius of irony suffices, for it gives man that sphinx-like air which interests as a mystery and troubles as a danger” (*Dandyism* 55)

*Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, and sections included in his mammoth *Arcades Project*, written between 1927 and 1940. Benjamin was among the first literary critics to characterize the dandy as ironic, notably because of his interpretation of their self-ascribed heroism.

As noted in the introduction and Chapter Two, the dandy considered himself a hero: “The dandy, the aesthete, Baudelaire held, is a hero in modern society, a saint struggling against the engulfing mediocrity of bourgeois culture” (Rhodes 391). To Baudelaire, dandies were “destined to be heroes caught in an “unheroic” age” (Rossbach 83), elites adrift among an increasingly intellectually impoverished culture. Though Baudelaire’s dandy is more well-known to have found this parallel, Barbey’s dandy thought the same: throughout “*Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell*” he makes allusion to the dandy’s heroism.

Discussions of heroism were rampant throughout the nineteenth century. From Thomas Carlyle’s hero typology in *On Heroes and Hero Worship* (1830) and his captains of industry, to the Romantic heroes Byron and Chateaubriand and the heroics of Napoleon, there was a considerable dialogue on the subject among the dandy’s contemporaries. The dandies, never ones to miss out on a trend, propagate their own version of heroism as well. Incidentally, Barbey expressed discontent at the dandy not being included in this list. In a footnote in his “*Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell*,” he says:

Thomas Carlyle, qui a écrit un autre livre intitulé *les Héros* et qui nous a donné le Héros Poète, le Héros Roi, le Héros Homme de lettres, le Héros Prêtre, le Héros Prophète et même le Héros Dieu, aurait pu nous donner le Héros de l’élégance oisive – le Héros Dandy; mais il l’a oublié. Ce qu’il dit, du reste, dans le *Sartor Resartus*, des Dandys en générale, qu’il appelle du gros mot de *sect (Dandiactal Sect)*, montre assez qu’avec son

regard embarbouillé d'Allemand, le Jean-Paul anglais n'eût rien vu de ces nuances précises et froides qui furent Brummell. (110)<sup>40</sup>

Though he takes a mocking tone, perhaps Barbey has more than cause to be affronted by the dandy's notable absence from Carlyle's text; after all, the links between heroism and the cult of celebrity are palpable. Some have gone so far as to say that "celebrity is what 'modern civilization' mistakenly reveres as heroism, but in so doing it manages to preserve the faculty by which higher objects of worship could in future be recognized" (Salmon 65). In this sense, dandyism is worthy of the title of heroism, if only to keep the notion of it alive. Both Barbey and Baudelaire frequently refer to the dandy as hero, and Baudelaire first treats the subject of heroism of in modern life in a short essay entitled "On Heroism" from his text *Salon de 1846*.

Benjamin identified the feint behind this heroism attributed to the impetuously idle dandy. He saw that the dandy hero is the hero who can no longer go on journeys or fight epic battles because great deeds on par with those of ancients are continually forestalled in a modern context. Instead, "Modernity turns out to be [the hero's] doom. There are no provisions for him in it; it has not use for his type" (59). Without space for epic deeds, the hero is, for lack of a better word, unemployed. He can only be an echo of a hero, because "the modern hero is no hero; he is a portrayer of heroes. Heroic modernity turns out to be a *Trauerspiel* in which the hero's part is available" (60). Left to glorify himself in the quotidian, the dandy merely plays the part of a hero whose exploits no longer concern the balance of good and evil, or right and wrong, for those are no longer stable features. Benjamin's text and the discussion of the dandy's ironic

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<sup>40</sup> "Thomas Carlyle, who has written another book called *Heroes* and given us the Hero Poet, the Hero King, the Hero Man of Letters, the Hero Priest, the Hero Prophet and even the Hero God, might have given us the Hero of elegant idleness – the Hero Dandy; but he has forgotten him. Besides, what he says, in *Sartor Resartus* of Dandies in general, to whom he gives the vulgar name of the *Dandiacal sect*, shews sufficiently clearly that, with his confused teutonic vision, the English Jean Paul would have observed none of those precise and frigid details which were Brummell" (*Dandyism* 32)

heroism is particularly relevant to this thesis as my argument traces a similar vein concerning the dandy's neo-stoicism. Just as the dandy picked up on the dialogue of heroism of the day and transformed it for his own credo, he also picked up on the neo-stoic discussions of the day and transformed them too.

Later interpretations of the dandy's irony are more technical. In his article, "Rule-Following in Dandyism: 'Style' as an Overcoming of 'Rule' and 'Structure'" Thorsten Botz-Borstein heavily emphasizes the fact that dandyism is nothing if not original, and in fact, "the biggest fault one could commit is to believe that the dandy is a dandy because he follows the rules of dandyism" (285) and that "the first rule of dandyism is to follow no rules at all" (285). The dandy is an anarchist because he rejects "*all* rules and *all* norms" (285) and that "he is an anarchist who does not claim anarchy. The reason for this is that the dandy does not claim anything" (286). This interpretation of the dandy's ironic perspective is essential for understanding his parodic nature: "On the one hand he follows the rules perfectly (so perfectly that his act of rule-following becomes a parody or a mockery). On the other hand, through his style of following rules he makes clear his disdain for the rules of decadent aristocracy as well as for the bourgeois world of money" (287).

The distinction that the dandy does not imitate, but rather *mimes* (290) is important because it still allows room for active criticism and manipulation by the dandy. Botz-Borstein also makes the important distinction that the dandy is *not* a snob. In fact, dandyism and snobbism are diametrically opposed. Botz-Bornstein claims that the irony of snobbism consists of an irony of inversion, whereas that of the dandy is much more complicated, and consists of an irony of dispersion. Instead of merely parodying as expected by reversal or inversion, the dandy instead "does not say ironically, 'A+' in order to imply simply 'A-' [...] His ironically pronounced 'A+'

can mean ‘A+’, ‘A-’, ‘B’, ‘C’, or all four together or simply nothing at all” (293). This interpretation, however, makes it difficult to maintain the initial reference point within this polyphonic irony.

Sima Godfrey prefers the construction of irony laid down by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson. This “irony of mention” is not a traditional type of irony, simply involving a deliberate reversal of facts or factors. Instead, Sperber and Wilson’s theory “invoke[s] the logical opposition of *use* versus *mention*, and they conclude that all ironies may be interpreted as mentions having the character of an echo” (Godfrey 29). The echo can be thought of as a statement that may have made sense in one situation then becomes absurd in another, such as a statement about nice weather in the middle of a thunderstorm. What differentiates the statement’s status as either ‘absurd’ or ‘ironic’ is the interlocutor’s complicity (29) – if one is privy to the dandy’s mindset, one can accept the statements he makes within the original frame of reference. When the interlocutor is outside of the dandy’s perspective, whether politically, socially, economically, philosophically, or all of these, he perceives the statement as absurd. This irony of mention is employed by the dandies as a purposeful misuse or reinterpretation of common phrases or ideas in order to deliberately undercut their present context. He purposefully uses the mask of elegance to conceal just enough of his witticisms as to make them ambiguous, and just enough to keep his interlocutors strongly divided between those who understand him and those who don’t.

Godfrey says that it is the impertinence of deliberately misapplying context that links the dandy to the ironic figure (29). She gives several excellent examples of phrases in which the dandy demonstrates his ironic figuration. One of these quotes is the following anecdote about Brummell:

A friend one day called upon him, and found him confined to his room from a lameness in one foot, upon which he expressed his concern at the accident. 'I am very sorry for it too,' answered Brummell very gravely, 'particularly as its my favorite leg.' - Wm. Hazlitt, "Brummelliana," *London Weekly Review*, Feb. 2, 1828. (Godfrey 21).

Godfrey explains the irony behind this statement as rooted in the dandy's rebellious inversion of the popular contemporaneous themes. Brummell's statement about his favourite leg calls into question larger discussions; in this case, utilitarianism. She explains that, in common parlance of the time, practicality was a major concern. It was possible for a worker to bemoan an injury to one of his better (that is, more useful) limbs, in the context of value. If the worker is right-handed and needs that arm to swing a hammer, that arm is the better arm because it is of more use to the worker. On the other hand, to have a *favourite* leg does not take use value into consideration but rather aesthetic appreciation. To set himself apart from the common bourgeois of his time, the dandy made sure to make it clear that he had "no other preoccupation in life than the culture of the beautiful and his own aesthetic faculties" (Rhodes 391). Thus, with his statement, Brummell is inverting a convention and mocking the general concern for utility that characterized the era of industry (Godfrey 29). This is the dandy's way of rebelling against the utilitarian fervour of his contemporaries.

Godfrey's notion of irony is particularly helpful for thinking through the dandy's approach to Stoicism because it shows that the dandy takes parts of his surrounding society (in this case the utilitarian inclination) only to mock and invert – or as Godfrey says, "echo." For example, the dandy's concentrated practice of leisure is similarly motivated: only "*other* men may be cowed down and dragged into moral and intellectual slavery by material struggles and be condemned to practise what are called the professions" (Rhodes 391, my emphasis). Again, this



practice of leisure is in itself an effort to differentiate dandyism from the bourgeois society that the dandy despised. That said, it was in fact this level of society that the dandy belonged to, since none of the dandies were born into nobility, but built their reputations.

### Chapter Three: Dandiacal Appropriation: The Inversion and Diversion of Ancient Stoic Principles by the Dandy

*Le dandysme introduit le calme antique au sein des agitations modernes.*  
(“Du Dandysme” 119)<sup>41</sup>

The Stoics and the dandies both display indifferent facades. They both believe that emotions are reactions that should be controlled, intellectualized, and contemplated at a distance. This section will compare and contrast aspects of emotional comportment between the dandies and the ancient Stoics in an attempt to discern how truly they match up and to show that, while it is true the dandies employ similarly unemotional behaviour, there are substantial differences produced by the dandy’s ironic adaptation. This section will compare how the ‘ingredients’ for an indifferent attitude differ from the Stoics to the dandies. The first section will compare and contrast the ancient Stoic’s view of impressions with that of the dandy. The second section will address the processes of judgment and rationality from the ancient Stoic to the dandy. The third section will address the status of “preferred indifferents” on each side. Finally, I will outline that while following the ancient Stoic program would lead to a certain state of enlightenment known as *eudaimonia* through practiced *apatheia*, in the dandy’s case a practiced apathy leads to an ultimate state of ennui.

The following chapter will employ the sociological work of Georg Simmel, especially his essay, “Metropolis and Mental Life” (1903) which deals with the psychological effects of modern living on the individual. This choice might seem contestable on the grounds: that Simmel was not French, but German; a sociologist, not a dandy; and writing after the turn of the century, instead of during it. I propose that these three features make him the best suited as a reference. I argue that being outside of the French milieu makes him a more objective observer.

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<sup>41</sup> “Dandyism introduces antique calm among our modern agitations” (*Dandyism* 42).

That he was a sociologist who studied the effects of modern life on the individual psychology also makes him well-equipped to handle this topic because the dandy's ironic neo-stoicism is a direct product of the effects of modern life on the individual. Finally, writing from the vantage point of the turn of the century, Simmel was in an ideal position to be able to look back and review what had happened in the past hundred years. His insightful comments on the consequences of Modernity for the individual make him a useful resource regarding the nineteenth century context but he is also useful for considering the dandies themselves. In addition to attempting to situate the modern individual's mindset within the metropolis in "The Metropolis and Mental Life," Simmel's essay entitled "On Fashion" (1901) depicts fashion as a natural product of a fast-paced environment like the metropolis. He argues that fashion is composed of a paradoxical relationship of individualism and conformity, as groups come together to form certain styles to differentiate themselves from another group. Thus, Simmel's research is doubly applicable to the dandy, having studied both the dandy's primary environment and his primary mode of expression.

The two dandy texts that I will examine in this chapter are Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly's "Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell" and Charles Baudelaire's "Le Peintre de la vie moderne." As noted in the introduction, these two texts represent the beginning of the theorization of dandyism. These two texts offer several examples of appropriation and parody of ancient Stoic doctrine under the guise of a nineteenth century neo-stoicism. The three main ancient Stoic texts to be addressed in this chapter are Epictetus' *Enchiridion*, Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, and Seneca's *Letters from a Stoic*. As suggested in Chapter One and Chapter Two, these texts address a later account of ancient Stoicism primarily concerned with ethics (Sellars

59). Further, it is these texts specifically that entered into the dialogue of neo-stoicism among the dandy's contemporaries, as his peers were looking into these texts (Hanley 1).

Ancient Stoic views teach somewhat extreme rationality and regulation of *pathos* or 'passions.' Often in surface readings, this conjures a caricature: a "picture-book Stoic wise man [who] is devoid of passions, emotionless, and unfeeling" (Rist 259). Writing in the fourth and fifth centuries, the Church Father Jerome characterized the Stoic goal of *apatheia* as a state of becoming 'either god or a stone.' Margaret Graver, author of *Stoicism and Emotion*, comments on this passage as half-true: "Being wise and thus free of the *pathe* does mean that one is godlike [...] But it does not mean that one becomes like a stone, for there are genuine objects to which the wise may respond affectively" (210). It is very important to note the distinction that ancient Stoic doctrine does not advocate the *elimination* of emotional response, but rather a controlled reevaluation of initial responses to impressions. Championing intellect over instinct, one ought to process all representations in a logical and rational way in order to remove the base, instinctive, animal reactions. The ancient Stoic Sage, as the epitome of this rationality, is a model figure who can critically adjudicate impressions and remain indifferent to 'vulgar' passions that arise from them. Instead, the Sage uses these experiences constructively, knowing that he cannot rely on any outer stimuli or objects to ensure his own happiness. The only claim to *eudaimonia* [happiness] comes from within. According to Epictetus in the *Enchiridion*, the consummate ancient Stoic is one who aims to be content no matter his circumstances: "untroubled with disturbing thoughts about illness, danger, death, exile or loss of reputation" (127).

By contrast, the dandy's ironic neo-stoicism is far less emotionally productive, and more simply nominal and performative. Though the dandy likens himself to an ancient Stoic, the dandy appropriates the ancient Stoic's demeanour without necessarily internalizing the doctrine.

Like Natta, I believe these changes are in part a consequence of historical differences, but unlike Natta, I think the dandies still make productive use of ancient Stoic influence, albeit in a substantially different direction than the original philosophy intended. Through their use of irony, the dandies are indeed closer to the caricatured Stoic than to a faithful adherent of the philosophy. Recalling that my definition of irony includes appropriation and parody with the end of dissimulation or pretence, this chapter will examine how several key parts of ancient Stoic indifference become inverted or diverted within the dandy's neo-stoicism.

Like the ancient Stoic Sage's imperturbability, the consummate dandy was known for his sang-froid. The dandies also shunned passionate reactions and cultivated an impassive exterior. Instinct is far below the dandy's studied apathy: the dandy would never stoop to anger or outbursts. That said, pithy, well-placed witticisms were not out of his range. While he loved nothing more than to astonish others, nothing could astonish him – immoveable and proud, the dandy was always reserved. However, the dandy's adherence to a detached attitude is not as deep as that of the ancient Stoics. In a phrase which belies the dandy's more superficial subscription to self-reserve Barbey says of Brummell, "son indolence ne lui permettait pas d'avoir de la verve, parce que d'avoir de la verve, c'est se passionner; se passionner, c'est tenir à quelque chose, et tenir à quelque chose, c'est se montrer inférieur" ("Du Dandysme" 137).<sup>42</sup> Imitating the ancient Stoic by *presenting* "l'insensibilité" ("Le Peintre" 552)<sup>43</sup>, "ses yeux sagaces savaient se glacer d'indifférence sans mépris, comme il convient à un Dandy consommé" ("Du Dandysme" 134),<sup>44</sup> the dandy appropriates ancient Stoic influence by consistently giving the impression of following their precepts, though in reality nodding to the fact that he is an "un Hercule sans emploi" ("Le

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<sup>42</sup> "his indolence forbid his being lively, for to be lively is to be excited; to be excited is to care about something, and to care about something is to shew oneself inferior" (*Dandyism* 56)

<sup>43</sup> "cold detachment" (*The Painter* 12)

<sup>44</sup> "a look of glacial indifference without contempt" (*Dandyism* 54)

Peintre” 561)<sup>45</sup>. As a hero without a mission, or a Stoic without the harmonious worldview, the dandy’s imitation becomes parody: it is placed on an incongruous, multiplicitous subject who inhabits a modern, that is to say *un*-harmonious, metropolis.

### 3.1. Impressions

#### Ancient Stoic Impressions

The Stoics viewed emotions as judgments resulting from impressions. Impressions come from outside of the individual, and are not produced by the individual. An impression is when “the mind registers some state of affairs *prior to* forming an opinion about it in one way or another” (Graver 24, my emphasis). They can concern any subject matter, and can have a ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ effect on the individual depending on how they are interpreted. Impressions are immediate, and their content and occurrence are not controlled. Most importantly, impressions have yet to be mediated by the individual. It is the reaction to these stimuli that is actually what is most important in ancient Stoicism because, regardless of the content or context of the impression, the individual can choose how they respond. Intuitive behaviours are rarely the most appropriate to the ancient Stoic and likewise, the dandy strives to correct “*la sauvagerie de l’instinct*” (Raynaud 20).

In his teachings, the former slave Epictetus suggests that in order not to be carried away by each impression, “make a practice at once of saying to every strong impression: ‘An impression is all you are, not the source of the impression’” (221). This is meant to convey that the impression or the occurrence which has presented itself to the individual, though it may stir up a certain reaction, should be absolutely differentiated from that reaction. In order to properly assess an impression, Epictetus recommends to “test and assess it with your criteria, but one

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<sup>45</sup> “an unemployed Hercules” (*The Painter* 40)

primarily: ask, ‘Is this something that is, or is not, in my control?’ and if it’s not one of the things that you control, be ready with the reaction, ‘Then it is none of my concern’” (221). Epictetus’ goal is detachment after careful consideration of the nature of the impression. The ancient Stoics do not reject all emotion, but readily surrender themselves to the realization that impressions of events that are beyond the control of the individual are not worth worrying over because they cannot be changed.

Marcus Aurelius makes a similar observation about the importance of objective observation in his *Meditations*. He advises to:

Always make a definition or sketch of what presents itself to your mind, so you can see it stripped bare to its essential nature and identify it clearly, in whole and in all its parts, and can tell yourself its proper name and the names of those elements of which it is compounded and into which it will be dissolved (20).

Being able to keep each impression separate in the mind is integral to keeping composure. That is why “[y]our impulse on every occasion should be to a complete survey of what exactly this thing is which is making an impression on your mind – to open it out by analysis into cause, material, reference, and the time-span within which it must cease to be” (Aurelius 118). It is necessary to keep a clear sense of the impression as merely a representation that in itself is not given to any specific response in an individual. It is in this way that the individual can keep a measured emotional stance. Dissecting each impression leaves the ancient Stoic free to come to terms with what the impression offers, and allows him to keep a clear head while he meditates over his reaction.

## Modern and Dandy Impressions

In the modern context, impressions are still instances which invite discernment. However, they have increased substantially in number. Georg Simmel says that one of the defining characteristics of the modern metropolis is “the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli” (“Metropolis” 325). With advancements in technology and a drastic increase in population density, the amount of impressions and the speed at which they occur to a dandy moving through Paris would have far exceeded those mediated by a Stoic, even in the heart of the *agora*. Doubly, even triply stimulated, the dandy would have to work harder to interpret responses to “the rapid telescoping of changing images, pronounced differences within what is grasped at a single glance, and the unexpectedness of violent stimuli” (“Metropolis” 325). Baudelaire identifies this, especially as regards the artist and the actor, and he speaks of a spiralling and amplifying delirium that accompanies any attempt to capture the world, whether in part or in whole. The artist

se trouve alors comme assailli par une émeute de details, qui tous demandent justice avec la furie d’une foule amoureuse d’égalité absolue. Toute justice se trouve forcément violée; toute harmonie détruite, sacrifiée; mainte trivialité devient énorme; mainte petitesse, usurpatrice. Plus l’artiste se penche avec impartialité vers le détail, plus l’anarchie augmente. Qu’il soit myope ou presbyte, toute hiérarchie et toute subordination disparaissent (“Le Peintre” 555).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> “finds himself assailed, as it were, by a riot of details, all of them demanding justice, with the fury of a mob in love with absolute equality. Any form of justice is inevitably infringed; any harmony is destroyed, sacrificed; a multitude of trivialities are magnified; a multitude of little things become the usurpers of attention. The more the artist pays impartial attention to detail, the greater does the anarchy become. Whether he be long- or short-sighted, all sense of hierarchy and subordination disappears” (*The Painter* 22).



This fundamentally changes the dandy's relation to ancient Stoicism. As Natta rightly interpreted, there are fundamental changes between the worldview of an ancient Stoic and that of the modern dandy, predicated upon the fact that in Modernity the possibility of an ordered universe seems unfathomable and unattainable. Whether due to political upheavals, social redefinition, or even technological and scientific advancement, the world is no longer ordered as it once was. Or rather, new principles of order have to be developed in this vertiginous atmosphere. Charles Taylor argues that previously, people had been able "to see themselves as part of a larger order. [...] This hierarchical order in the universe was reflected in the hierarchies of human society. People were often locked into a given place, a role and station that was properly theirs and from which it was almost unthinkable to deviate" (*Malaise of Modernity* 3). For the Stoics, "the universe formed a rational and divinely ordered whole. The ultimate goal in life was virtue, and behaving virtuously entailed an individual extirpating his or her passions and following the dictates of reason" (Dew 486). But because the vertigo of Modernity is based on the obliteration of these hierarchies, the sense of implicit external harmony and unity that is such a necessary premise of ancient Stoicism will not be able to function in the context of Modernity. For the dandies, the same conditions that elicited a neo-stoic response also made it impossible for a genuine form of ancient Stoicism to exist within Modernity. Whereas the Stoic's impulse is to remain in accordance with the ordered causal universe, there is no way to be in full accordance with the dandy's post-Copernican and post-Enlightenment universe. The dandies inhabited a space that is beyond the perceived cosmological harmony of the ancient Stoics. Where I differ from Natta is that I believe that the lack of coherence in Modernity does not preemptively negate any use or validity of ancient Stoic doctrine in the dandy's neo-stoicism, but rather simply requires a turn in a new direction: irony.

The condition of the man of Modernity is one of over-stimulation. The result of this is that the dandy's diversion from ancient Stoic meditative indifference can be read as a consequence of the hyper-vigilance that Modernity's plethora of impressions imposes. In the face of over-stimulation, the dandy appropriates the ancient Stoic's standard attitude to attempt to deal with this. Barbey clearly elicits this when he notes that dandyism endows "le calme antique au sein des agitations modernes" ("Du Dandysme" 119).<sup>47</sup> Despite its nominal and performative presence, the dandies are chronically impeded from fully employing the Stoic practice and from effectively reasoning through their impressions by the continual bombardment of inherently discordant impressions. The lack of recourse to a higher notion of unity such as the ancient Stoics possessed means that despite even with the most earnest attempts of mediation or the most concentrated indifferent attitude, the dandy will only ever be able to perform a likeness of ancient Stoicism. The dandies might appropriate the semblance of "le calme antique" ("Du Dandysme" 119) through enacting an indifferent attitude, but end up parodying it because "des agitations modernes" ("Du Dandysme" 119) displace the good intentions in sheer wealth of numbers and lack of connection between them.

Baudelaire says that going out onto the Paris streets is akin to moving through "une immense reservoir d'électricité" ("Le Peintre" 552).<sup>48</sup> In the face of this, the dandy's stance is best explained with an example of what the dandy is *not*. This example is Constantin Guys, *the* painter of modern life, the subject of Baudelaire's essay. Guys is contrasted with the dandy in the following ways. For a passionate painter like Constantin Guys, "c'est une immense jouissance que d'élire domicile dans le nombre, dans l'ondoyant, dans le mouvement, dans le fugitif et

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<sup>47</sup> "antique calmness among our modern agitations" (*Dandyism* 42)

<sup>48</sup> "an enormous reservoir of electricity" (*The Painter* 13).

l'infini" ("Le Peintre" 552)<sup>49</sup> and go out into the crowd with the intent to soak up what Barbey calls "cette autre vie [...] qui bat plus fort, qui tinte et éblouit" ("Du Dandysme" 131)<sup>50</sup>. Guys, a lover of life, is like "un *moi* insatiable pour du *non-moi*, qui, à chaque instant, le rend et l'exprime en images plus vivantes que la vie elle-même, toujours instable et fugitive ("Le Peintre" 552).<sup>51</sup> However, the dandy is the opposite of Guys' "*amabam amare* [...]. J'aime passionnément la passion" ("Le Peintre" 552).<sup>52</sup>

In a glittering description of how Constantin Guys views and portrays the world, Baudelaire calls the daily scene "si majestueux et si brillant" ("Le Peintre" 552)<sup>53</sup>, mentioning a barrage of images of horses, grooms, pageboys, women, fashion trends, a regiment marching by, workers, and more. Despite displaying some of the same facets as the dandy, like "une quintessence de caractère et une intelligence subtile de tout le mécanisme moral de ce monde" ("Le Peintre" 552),<sup>54</sup> Guys "est dominé, lui, par une passion insatiable, celle de voir et de sentir" ("Le Peintre" 552).<sup>55</sup> It is exactly the exuberance of life that Guys so admires that the dandies are trying to evade. Whereas Guys feeds off of the energy of the busy street and enjoys losing himself in the myriad of details in front of him, the dandy has the opposite reaction and aspires to "insensibilité" ("Le Peintre" 552)<sup>56</sup> to preserve his sanity in the face of it.

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<sup>49</sup> "it becomes an immense source of enjoyment to establish his dwelling in the throng, in the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting and the infinite" (*The Painter* 12).

<sup>50</sup> "that other life, louder, noisier, and more confusing" (*Dandyism* 52).

<sup>51</sup> "an ego athirst for the non-ego, and reflecting [life] at every moment in energies more vivid than life itself, always inconstant and fleeting" (*The Painter* 13)

<sup>52</sup> "I love passion, passionately" (*The Painter* 12).

<sup>53</sup> "majestic and dazzling" (*The Painter* 14).

<sup>54</sup> "a quintessence of character and a subtle understanding of all the moral mechanisms of this world" (*The Painter* 12)

<sup>55</sup> "is dominated, if ever anyone was, by an insatiable passion, that of seeing and feeling" (*The Painter* 12)

<sup>56</sup> "cold detachment" (*The Painter* 12)

It seems that such exuberance can only lead to parody on both ends of the spectrum. Such an “homme-enfant” (“Le Peintre” 552)<sup>57</sup> as Guys is over-sensitive to the world, but the indifferent dandy is under-sensitive to it. The afflicted individual either embraces the swift current of the metropolis like Guys, or builds a stony wall between themselves and the exterior like the dandies to blunt the spectrum of reaction to the impressions that they are confronted with. As Barbey intones, the dandy is like “une pierre qui attire la mousse, sans se laisser pénétrer par la fraîcheur qui la couvre” (“Du Dandysme” 140).<sup>58</sup> This vision of the dandy is much more in line with Saint Jerome’s idea of the Stoics necessarily being either God or a stone (Graver 210). In order not to be carried away with the crowd, the dandy must separate himself from the impressions in front of him inspired by his ancient Stoic forefathers, but like Jerome, he goes too far in his assumptions and ends up merely coldly indifferent.

In applying the ancient Stoic recourse of indifference, the dandy becomes that caricatured story-book Stoic, only able to defer reaction, not to deal with it. Even if the dandy had time between the impressions to distinguish between them, he does not have access to a harmonious, interconnectivity in which to order them, and so must suspend his emotional reaction. The first part of what metamorphoses the dandy’s neo-stoicism is the fact that they are bombarded with many more impressions than the ancient Stoic was. This fact affects how the dandy employs judgment and reason to impressions, as will be shown in the next section.

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<sup>57</sup> “man-child” (*The Painter* 12)

<sup>58</sup> “the stone that draws to itself the moss and is unpenetrated by the coolness of its covering” (*Dandyism* 58).

## 3.2 Judgment and Rationality

### Ancient Stoic Judgment and Rationality

Because circumstances can be so unpredictable, ancient Stoicism focuses on what *can* be controlled about a situation. Impressions are, as noted, an opportunity for discernment: upon experiencing an impression, it is up to the individual to decide if what the impression presents is valid, true, or objective, and whether it should prompt a positive or negative reaction. This opportunity for judgment is called ‘assent’ in the Stoic doctrine. Assent is more than affirming or denying the impression’s validity. Assent involves interpretation by the individual before the rationalized emotional choice proceeds (*From Epicurus to Epictetus* 384). Therefore, instinctual reactions figure as ‘pre-emotions’ and occur prior to the conscious action of assent. To the Stoics, to accept those pre-emotions and take them as truth would be contrary to human rationality. All animals are capable of instinctual reactions, but it is only humans who can, thanks to rationality, process and mediate their feelings in different circumstances.

This assent also requires appropriately interpreting a response. For the ancient Stoics an overly passionate response would be the result of an erroneous evaluation. For even the passions fall within the boundaries of the rational mind: as Anthony A. Long explains, emotions “are activities of a uniformly rational mind because only a rational mind could be subject to human emotions. Indeed, only a rational mind can act irrationally, meaning commit errors of judgment” (*From Epicurus to Epictetus* 379-380). If the individual is capable of making a bad judgment, then he is capable of making a good one, as well. Bad judgments – passions or disturbances – are “‘sicknesses’ that need to be ‘cured’ by analysis of their nature and origin and by advice” (Gill 41), using judgment and rationality.

The reasoning principle is essential to the ancient Stoic. Although an event – tragic or otherwise – may occur, humans are rational beings and “reason supervenes as craftsman of impulse” (Diogenes Laertius, VII 86, quoted in Schofield), thus enabling man to deal with his reactions in a productive way. According to Seneca in the *Letters from a Stoic*, the advantage that man has is that he is a “rational animal” (88). Marcus Aurelius is quite clear on reason’s importance: “Revere your power of judgment. All rests on this to make sure that your directing mind no longer entertains any judgment which fails to agree with the nature or the constitution of a rational being. And this state guarantees deliberate thought” (20). In this way, the philosopher will come to understand that “[f]or a rational nature the right path is to withhold assent to anything false or obscure in the impressions made on its mind [...] to reserve its desires and aversions to what lies in our power” (72). Epictetus says that cultivating the appropriate response to impressions will eventually become second nature if one is stringent:

For every challenge, remember the resources you have within you to cope with it. Provoked by the sight of a handsome man or a beautiful woman, you will discover within you the contrary power of self-restraint. Faced with pain, you will discover the power of endurance. If you are insulted, you will discover patience. In time, you will grow to be confident that there is not a single impression that you will not have the moral means to tolerate (225).

Epictetus is supremely confident in man’s reasoning abilities to assure balance within himself. Here he is describing the slow climb to *apatheia*, reached by continually making appropriate decisions and classifications of impressions. He argues that this should become simpler as the individual becomes accustomed to the sorting. The emphasis here is never to equate impressions – whether beautiful, painful, or tempting, as he describes – to one level, but

as he says, to learn to *tolerate* them. ‘Toleration’ implies here seeing the object as it really is and being able to reconcile oneself to the object’s true state or status impartially. To really illustrate the extent to which rationality should be cultivated, Epictetus’ illustrations explicitly go beyond somewhat trivial instances like seeing a desirable person in the street into more challenging territory. He demonstrates as follows:

In the case of particular things that delight you, or benefit you, or to which you have grown attached, remind yourself of what they are. Start with things of little value. If it is china you like, for instance, say, ‘I am fond of a piece of china.’ When it breaks, then you won’t be as disconcerted. When giving your wife or child a kiss, repeat to yourself, ‘I am kissing a mortal.’ Then you won’t be so distraught if they are taken from you (222).

Epictetus’ extreme rationalism – while it may seem cold and unfeeling – in actuality has the goal of consolation. What Epictetus is recommending is not that all experiences are the same, or that breaking a jug is the same as losing one’s wife. The goal of his rule is not to debase the wife or patronize her, but to comfort the one who loses his wife. Remembering that a wife is a human and humans are mortal is meant to reinforce that the loss was, although unfortunate, inevitable and part of a grander scheme beyond the individual’s control. It is meant to highlight to the individual that most things in life are transient.

## Judgment and Rationality for the Modern Dandy

The situation is somewhat different in the nineteenth century. Rationality is paramount to the modern metropolitan man, not least because he is confronted by a prodigious amount of impressions in the metropolis. Simmel notes that “the metropolitan type – which naturally takes on a thousand individual modifications – creates a protective organ for itself against the profound disruption with which the fluctuations and discontinuities of the external milieu threaten it” (“Metropolis” 326). This ‘organ’ is Reason (326).

According to Simmel, the metropolis naturally produces reasoning individuals in order to protect against the barrage of impressions they receive. In order to stay afloat in the midst of every movement or image that might uproot them, “instead of reacting emotionally, the metropolitan type reacts primarily in a rational manner” (“Metropolis” 326). Barbey uses almost the same phrasing in his own text, speaking of the dandy “chez qui la tête est au-dessous du coeur” (“Du Dandysme” 157).<sup>59</sup> This separation supposedly enables man to deal with his reactions in a productive way: “the intellectualistic quality [...] is thus recognized as a protection of the inner life against the domination of the metropolis” (“Metropolis 326) and “the modern mind has become a more and more calculating one” (“Metropolis 327) as a result. Studied indifference and objectivity is the dandies’ primary line of defense. Baudelaire is also aware of the emphasis on the reasoning individual. In *Le peintre de la vie moderne*, he notes the difference between reasoning and non-reasoning individuals to be distinct as the abilities of a man and a child:

L’homme de génie a les nerfs solides; l’enfant les a faibles. Chez l’un, la raison a pris une place considérable; chez l’autre, la sensibilité occupe presque tout l’être. Mais le génie n’est que *l’enfance retrouvée* à volonté, l’enfance douée maintenant, pour s’exprimer,

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<sup>59</sup> “whose head dominates his heart” (*Dandyism* 71)



d'organes virils et de l'esprit analytique qui lui permet d'ordonner la somme de matériaux involontairement amassée ("Le Peintre" 552)<sup>60</sup>

The man of Modernity's world-weary attitude, the initial connection between Stoicism and dandyism, actually has less to do with the unifying reasoning of the Stoics and more to do with a certain jadedness which comes with the over-stimulation mentioned. Instead of allaying passions objectively, the dandy has reached a point where he is replete with experience. He suffers from an over-loaded consciousness which he then actively tries to limit or unload by abiding by precepts which would seem to alleviate his burden: an undifferentiated shunning of passions as opposed to a deliberate rational choice in each instance.

### 3.3 Preferred Indifferents

#### Stoic Preferred Indifferents

For ancient Stoics, when an impression occurs there can be an initial gut reaction, also known as a pre-emotion or *propatheiai* (*From Epicurus to Epictetus* 380). Pre-emotions are initial responses, like a burst of anger, which are distinct from full judgments. Pre-emotions are instinctual responses which are immediate and unmediated in response to an impression. On the other hand, *pathos* or passions – also 'mental disturbances' (Sandbach 59) – are a subsection of emotions which have not been properly thought through. *Pathos* are not the initial response, but rather the consequence of an error in judgment. Errors in judgment are over-reactions "motivating us to treat non-essential advantages or disadvantages as if they are basic to our well-being" (*From Epicurus to Epictetus* 381). Putting too much emphasis on the health or wealth, for

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<sup>60</sup> "The man of genius has strong nerves; those of the child are weak. In the one, reason has assumed an important role; in the other, sensibility occupies almost the whole being. But genius is no more than childhood recaptured at will, childhood equipped now with man's physical means to express itself, and with the analytical mind that enables it to bring order into the sum of experience, involuntarily amassed" (*The Painter* 11).

example, can cause us to react in a way that is not in line with virtue. Advantages like health and wealth, while potentially preferable, are not in themselves moral or virtuous, nor are they constant. They are, rather, matters requiring choice to view them either of those ways (Schofield 240-241). Good health might be beneficial to an individual in most cases, but it cannot be guaranteed nor can a healthy person be guaranteed happiness in spite of health. Circumstances vary, and fortunes change: the only thing which can be controlled is the reaction to one's position.

The Stoics maintain what are called 'preferred indifferents.' Only certain emotions, actions, or objects are considered truly virtuous and worthy of pursuit. Virtue is the use of the qualities mentioned above, like moderation and endurance, to ensure one's own happiness. Virtue is "conceived as the capacity to use such advantages wisely, being the only candidate for that which is always beneficial" (Seddon 10). Health and wealth do not fit into the virtue category. Though not virtuous, they are not exactly bad either, and are referred to as 'advantages.' Advantages include owning property, being rich, having good health, and so on. These are not conditions for virtue, because "a man's excellence or virtue – the Greek word *arête* covers both – does not depend on his success in obtaining anything in the external world, it depends entirely on his having the right mental attitude towards those things" (Sandbach 29). Thus Stoicism is not a philosophy of poverty or property renunciation, but rather it proposes that these advantages are secondary to virtue.

One should be wary of advantages though, lest they become a focus. Pursuing advantages believing that they are virtuous is what leads to errors in judgment (passions) "because they do not benefit those who possess them in all circumstances" (Seddon 10). Wealth does not protect one from falling ill, for example, though it may aid in procuring doctors or cures. Happy

circumstances such as these are not necessary but not discouraged. Though we possess rationality, “our notion of human nature cannot be confined to reflection on the impulse to concern ourselves with health, possessions, and the like: to what we might call merely human” (Schofield 245). It is important that *apatheia* can and should be achieved without advantages because “they are not values that contribute to his excellence and his happiness, of which [the individual] is the sole arbiter” (Sandbach 29). That said, as with the pre-emotions, neither should advantages be disregarded because it is through analysis of them that incorrect behaviours can be identified.

Anthony A. Long says that Epictetus, instead of approaching ‘preferred indifferents’ directly, approaches them by relying on “the distinction between what is ‘ours’ and ‘what is not ours’” (*Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* 185), which is the very first distinction set down in the *Enchiridion*: “We are responsible for some things, while there are others for which we cannot be held responsible” (221). According to Long, “[t]he moral point of view is ‘ours’ and completely ‘up to us’; material well-being, whether of our body or of anything else, is ‘not ours’ and ‘not up to us.’ Hence, if happiness is to be completely up to us, it must be grounded in the former and not in the latter” (*Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* 185). So while Epictetus is not explicit about his preferred indifferents, it is possible to extrapolate that what exists outside of the self and of the control of the individual, like health or wealth, are gratuitous and should not be depended on.

In Letter CIV, Seneca is more explicit about the details of preferred indifferents, using the case of travel for an example. He is quite clear about his opinion: while such luxuries as travel may show you other countries, exotic locales, new insight into other cultures, and more, “travel won’t make a better or a saner man of you. For this we must spend time in study and in

the writings of wise men, and learn the truths that have emerged from their researches, and carry on in the search ourselves” (189). To believe that any exterior advantages have the power to bring happiness is to have a soul that still “needs to be rescued from its miserable state of slavery” (189). Preferred indifferents are merely perks, and should not be relied on or hoped for, because they are beyond the individual’s control.

### **Modern and Dandy Preferred Indifferents**

There are some parallels of preferred indifferents within dandyism, particularly concerning wealth. Most dandies – Brummell included – were actually not from nobility but rather the rising middle class from which they sought to distance themselves. Dandies “may have mixed with aristocrats, but they advocated a social elite which was based on abilities, genius or style, rather than birth” (Hammill 67). The dandies tried to build a new kind of aristocracy separate from their bourgeois backgrounds. The dandies’ reluctance to deal with pecuniary culture is primarily to separate themselves from the bourgeois classes and create a social distinction between those classes and themselves. That said, while dandies would prefer not to have to deal with money, they also recognize wealth’s potentially beneficial role in political, social, and intellectual freedom.

The dandy separated wealth from his list of ‘necessities’, but Baudelaire confirms the ‘preferred’ status of wealth in the following passage from *The Painter of Modern Life*: “le dandy n’aspire pas à l’argent comme à une chose essentielle; un crédit infini pourrait lui suffire” (“Le Peintre” 560)<sup>61</sup>. To be a dandy does not require money, though. He is to be elegant in all situations, whether penniless or flush. It is not uncommon for the dandy to finish as a bohemian

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<sup>61</sup> the dandy does not aspire to wealth as an object in itself; an open bank credit would suit him just as well” (*The Painter* 37).

with little or no money, having squandered it while he had it. The dandy – like Baudelaire himself – would make use of any income or inheritance while he had it, often using it up frivolously and very quickly. Similarly, Brummell remained as much a dandy as ever in his later years, Barbey tells his readers, though he was insolvent and removed from his previous social circle by his flight to France, Brummell remained as much a dandy as ever: “il le fut aussi avant qu’homme puisse l’être dans la pauvreté et dans la faim” (“Du Dandysme” 161).<sup>62</sup> The dandy would *prefer* an unlimited bankroll or inheritance, but perhaps also enjoyed the notoriety of finishing up his life as a bohemian. Health and wealth would suit them well, but true dandies are always elegant regardless of these factors.

Having appropriated the idea of preferred indifferents and nominally employed it by citing advantages, especially wealth, as non-essential, the dandy then proceeds to review why these advantages are *not* mere perks but legitimate desires that will cause genuine benefit. For example, after Baudelaire says that to be a dandy “n’aspire pas à l’argent comme à une chose essentielle,” (“Le Peintre” 560)<sup>63</sup> he immediately flips this by saying that “un crédit infini pourrait lui suffire” (“Le Peintre” 560).<sup>64</sup> So the dandy does not require physical piles of money, but does want the benefits of having a full bank account. A penniless dandy would remain a dandy and elegant to the best of his abilities, but the fact remains that some form of wealth or credit makes it substantially easier to remain elegant. Speaking specifically of love as a pastime for those with money, Baudelaire says that “il est malheureusement bien vrai que, sans le loisir et l’argent, l’amour ne peut être qu’une orgie de roturier ou l’accomplissement d’un devoir

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<sup>62</sup> “remained a Dandy as long as it was possible amid poverty and hunger” (*Dandyism* 73).

<sup>63</sup> “does not aspire to wealth as an object in itself” (*The Painter* 37)

<sup>64</sup> “an open bank credit would suit him just as well” (*The Painter* 37)

conjugal” (“Le Peintre” 559).<sup>65</sup> Leisure and money, while nominally dismissed, turn out to be absolutely necessary to certain behaviours. Similarly, always tongue in cheek, Barbey bewails the low stature of the term ‘Frivolity,’ which he defines as the “nom haineux donné à tout un ordre de préoccupations très légitimes au fond, puisqu’elles correspondent à des besoins réels” (“Du Dandysme” 120).<sup>66</sup> Here Barbey parodies the ancient hierarchy of preferred indifferents marking ‘frivolity’ with his very real wants.

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<sup>65</sup> “it is unfortunately very true that, without leisure and money, love can be no more than an orgy of the common man, or the accomplishment of a conjugal duty” (*The Painter* 36)

<sup>66</sup> “the hateful name bestowed upon a whole class of preoccupations which are really very legitimate, since they correspond to real wants” (*Dandyism* 43).

### 3.4. The Results: *Apatheia* and Apathy

*Un dandy peut être un homme blasé, peut être un homme souffrant; mais, dans ce dernier cas, il sourira comme le Lacédémonien sous la morsure du renard.*

-“Le Peintre” 560<sup>67</sup>

#### **Ancient Stoic *Apatheia***

The ancient Stoic sought *apatheia*, or the state of impassivity, to help him on the way to *eudaimonia* (happiness). *Apatheia* is much different from the modern meaning of apathy – a state which, though inspired by *apatheia*, signifies not just emotional indifference, but also a lack of interest in general. *Apatheia* does not mean that the individual has become insensitive to pleasure and pain, but rather that they have become sensitive to them “in the way that [they] ought to be” (Rist 260). Seneca describes the difficulty of definition in a letter as follows:

We are bound to involve ourselves in ambiguity if we try to express in a single word the meaning of the Greek term *apatheia* by transferring it straight into our word *impatientia*. For it may be understood in the opposite sense to the one we wish, with people taking it to signify the man who is unable to endure anything that goes badly for him instead of what we mean by it, the man who refuses to allow anything that goes badly for him to affect him. Consider then whether it might not be preferable to call it a mind that is ‘invulnerable’ or ‘above suffering’ (47).

To become ‘above suffering’ means becoming knowledgeable about what emotions are ‘true’ or ‘valid.’ This means striving for *eupatheiai*, good or ‘stable’ emotions, which include wishing, caution, and joy (*From Epicurus to Epictetus* 380). Good judgments and virtuous behaviours like moderation lead to the ultimate goal of the Sage: *eudaimonia*, meaning ‘happiness,’ or

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<sup>67</sup> “A dandy may be blasé, he may even suffer pain, but in the latter case he will keep smiling, like the Spartan under the bite of the fox” (*The Painter* 37)

‘flourishing’ (Seddon 3). This state is completely dependent on “a man’s own doing, the operation of his mind: if he judges correctly and holds steadfastly to truth he will be a perfect being, whom misfortune may strike but never harm” (Sandbach 68). So, *apatheia* is the name of the state of being without passions, or rather, knowing how to react to them appropriately and indifferently. Beyond this, *eudaimonia* is the state which is possible after perfecting one’s *apatheia*. *Eudaimonia* is more than just happiness; it is a state of irreproachability attained through rational comportment. Fortunes may change, but the Sage recognizes that his happiness is completely dependent on himself. In ancient Stoicism, to sustain *apatheia* is an essential step on the way to happiness.

### **Modern and Dandy Apathy**

Stoic indifference and dandy indifference do not map onto each other regularly or completely. The excess of impressions combined with the inability to adequately reason between them make it no surprise that the dandy chooses apathy. The ancient Stoics use their *apatheia* to attain a higher understanding; the dandies appropriate and parody this indifference and end by making it *apathy*.

The dandy’s devil-may-care demeanour is essentially a mask. Barbey readily admits to its presence: “ces stoïciens de boudoir boivent dans leur masque leur sang qui coule, et restent masqués” (“Du Dandysme” 148),<sup>68</sup> and more clearly still, Barbey notes Brummell’s “élégante froideur qu’il portait comme une armure et qui le rendait invulnérable” (“Du Dandysme” 148)<sup>69</sup> Similarly, Baudelaire says: Un dandy peut être un homme blasé, peut être un homme souffrant; mais, dans ce dernier cas, il sourira comme le Lacédémonien sous la morsure du renard (“Le

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<sup>68</sup> “These Stoics of the boudoir drink their own blood under their mask and remain masked” (*Dandyism* 64)

<sup>69</sup> “air of elegant indifference which he wore like armour, and which made him invulnerable” (*Dandyism* 64).



Peintre” 560).<sup>70</sup> Regardless of what is going on underneath the surface, the dandy will keep a straight face – or rather, keep his mask on straight.

The mask is a clear indication of parody. The appropriation of the ancient Stoic countenance takes up residence on the outer side of the mask, but beneath that, the dandy is using his calm exterior to defer emotional response in a thoroughly un-Stoic way. The shield-like use of the mask shows how the dandies deflect impressions whereas the Stoics reflect on them thoroughly. Modernity’s assault on the senses inspires the blasé attitude which is the dandy’s chosen recourse to the assault. Semantically speaking, this is shown in the lexical field of conflict employed by the dandies. Relevant words that recur include protection, shield, hostile, cloak and power. Barbey clearly noted the protective properties of indifference and its variants, including impertinence. He comments on its defensive qualities, saying that it

n’a pas besoin du secours des mots pour apparaître; sans appuyer, elle a une force bien autrement pénétrante que l’épigramme la plus brillamment rédigée. Quand elle existe, elle est le plus grand porte-respect qu’on puisse avoir contre la vanité des autres, si souvent hostile, comme elle est aussi la plus élégant manteau qui puisse cacher les infirmités qu’on sent en soi. A ceux qui l’ont, qu’est-il besoin d’autre chose?” (“Du Dandysme” 137)<sup>71</sup>

The dandy shields his issues with a cool exterior. Here again, I must give credit to Marie-Christine Natta: she said that it is the “vulnérabilité du dandy [qui] explique son comportement stoïcien. Il lui faut impérativement présenter aux autres une surface lisse, effacer toute aspérité

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<sup>70</sup> “A dandy may be blasé, he may even suffer pain, but in the latter case he will keep smiling, like the Spartan under the bite of the fox” (*The Painter* 37)

<sup>71</sup> “impertinence is a veiled genius and does not need the help of words to appear; without any accentuation, its power is far greater than that of the most brilliant epigram; it is the best shield against the vanity of others, so often hostile, and the best cloak to cover one’s own weaknesses. What need of other protection is there for those who possess it?” (*Dandyism* 56)

sensible. Il contient et cache sa douleur” (Natta 133). Baudelaire’s dandy is the man of Modernity, the man who must come face to face with all that the modern world is and all that it cannot be. Other critics have noticed the undertones of emotion beneath dandyism’s cold exterior, like Jessica Feldman, who posited that “[b]ecause Baudelaire has conceived of a dandy who creates himself in response to feelings of displacement and pain, the dandy’s usual nonchalance and impertinence are over-shadowed by his regret, intensity, and self-absorption” (120). Barbey noted something similar with Brummell: “sous le vernis de cette vanité toujours en grande tenue, il cacha probablement bien des douleurs” (“Du Dandysme” 155).<sup>72</sup> Concealing unhappiness is most definitely not the goal of the ancient Stoic approach: the dandy uses the Stoic treatment not to alleviate his pains but to mask them.

The dandy’s stoic face is but a veneer, and this typifies the dandy’s ironic performance of neo-stoicism. This charade becomes clear when Baudelaire, who seems to be advocating for a Stoic countenance, contradicts this claim by saying that the modern man is in a constant state of mourning for the world. More than ten years before *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, in *Le Salon de 1846*, Baudelaire wrote about the modern uniform of the black suit, describing it as the only attire suitable for such an age:

Quant à l’habit, la pelure du héros moderne [...] cependant, n’a-t-il pas sa beauté et son charme indigène [...] n’est-il pas l’habit nécessaire de notre époque, souffrante et portant jusque sur ses épaules noires et maigres le symbole d’un deuil perpétuel? Remarquez bien que l’habit noir et la redingote ont non-seulement leur beauté politique, qui est l’expression de l’égalité universelle, mais encore leur beauté poétique, qui est l’expression de l’âme publique; - une immense défilade de croque-morts, croque-morts

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<sup>72</sup> “Beneath the varnish of [Brummell’s] vanity, always in full dress, he probably concealed much unhappiness” (*Dandyism* 69)

politiques, croque-morts amoureux, croque-morts bourgeois. Nous célébrons tous quelque enterrement. (“Le Salon” 259-260)<sup>73</sup>

To be in a constant state of mourning is definitely at odds with the Stoics’ sense of carefully chosen emotional judgments. The neo-stoicism proposed by the dandy was not very productive emotionally, unlike the goal of the ancient Stoics’ treatment of emotion. The irony behind the dandy’s neo-stoicism is that, while he may have walked like a Stoic and talked like a Stoic, in the end the infamous refusal to feel emotion did not do him any good. In fact, the dandy’s suffering was magnified behind the mask he donned and worked so hard to maintain.

While giving the appearance of a carefree, nonchalant, and untroubled individual, the dandy was in fact over-sensitive. However, the dandy deferred and stockpiled these responses. The following examples make this clear. First, Baudelaire speaks of a “feu latent qui se fait deviner, qui pourrait mais qui ne veut pas rayonner” (“Le Peintre” 561).<sup>74</sup> Baudelaire is hinting at the great reserves of power behind the neo-stoic mask. Having appropriated and performed an ancient Stoic behaviour, the dandy inverts its original intention. Instead of helping to allay passionate response, the mask is actually a space for discontentment to brew. Barbey offers a similar idea when he says that “il y a dans le Dandysme quelque chose de froid, de sobre, de railleur et, quoique contenu, d’instantanément mobile, qui doit choquer immensément ces dramatiques machines à larmes pour qui les attendrissements sont encore plus d’un choix que

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<sup>73</sup> “Regarding the attire, the covering of the modern hero... does it not have a beauty and a charm of its own? [...] is this not an attire that is needed by our age, which is suffering, and dressed up to its thin black narrow shoulders in the symbol of constant mourning? The black suit and the frock coat not only have their political beauty as an expression of general quality, but also their poetic beauty as an expression of the public mentality: an immense cortege of undertakers – political undertakers, amorous undertakers, bourgeois undertakers. We are all attendants at some kind of funeral” (Salon of 1846)

<sup>74</sup> “latent fire, whose existence is merely suspected, and which, if it wanted to, but it does not, could burst forth in all its brightness” (*The Painter* 40).

d'une sympathie" ("Du Dandysme" 157).<sup>75</sup> In Barbey's text too, there is the idea of a tightly coiled spring. A calm surface does not mean calm below, the mask merely hides an incongruous expression beneath. As an instance of parody, the dandy uses an imitation for the goal of satirizing by applying it to an unlikely subject.

### **Indifference at the Intersection of Modernity: Ennui**

This parodic apathy is composed of the blasé attitude and leads ultimately to a state of ennui. As a specifically urban phenomenon the dandy was especially predisposed to this blasé countenance, and the dandy sought to perfect this blasé attitude. As Simmel says, "[t]here is perhaps no psychic phenomenon which is so unconditionally reserved to the city as the blasé outlook" ("Metropolis" 329). He continues:

The essence of the blasé attitude is an indifference toward the distinctions between things. Not in the sense that they are not perceived, as is the case of mental dullness, but rather that the meaning and the value of the distinctions between things and therewith of the things themselves, are experienced as meaningless. They appear to the blasé person in a flat and gray colour with no one of them worthy of being preferred to another ("Metropolis" 329-330).

They sought to convey "la pose d'esprit qui doit avoir fait le tour de beaucoup d'idées et qui est trop dégoûter pour s'animer" ("Du Dandysme" 119).<sup>76</sup> Baudelaire advised the dandies to behave *perinde ac cadaver* ("Le Peintre" 560). On a certain level, indifference seems to have also been an aesthetic choice. Commenting on Brummell's disdain for emotion, in his preface to "Du

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<sup>75</sup> "[t]here is in dandyism something cold, sober and mocking, and although restrained, yet capable of instant motion, which must terribly shock those dramatic tear-machines, for whom emotions are even more than tenderness" (*Dandyism* 71)

<sup>76</sup> "the attitude of an intelligence familiar with many ideas and too tired of them all to become animated" (*Dandyism* 42)

dandysme et de Georges Brummell,” Quentin Crisp says the following: “Since [Brummell] abhorred fox hunting not because of the cruelty to animals that it involved but because his highly varnished boots were likely to be bespattered with mud, it seems probable that passion of any kind was to be shunned on account of the havoc it might wreak upon his carefully arranged cravat” (11). It is true that the dandy’s blasé attitude is irremediably tied to his concept of beauty, his “aesthetics of existence”; as Baudelaire says, “le caractère de beauté du dandy consiste surtout dans l’air froid qui vient de l’inébranlable résolution de ne pas être ému” (“Le Peintre” 561).<sup>77</sup>

Still, there is more to the dandy’s blasé attitude than merely affecting a certain manner. The dandy must possess something more:

Singerie n’est pas ressemblance. On peut prendre un air ou une pose comme on vole la forme d’un frac; mais la comédie est fatigante: mais un masque est cruel, effroyable à porter ... l’ennui qu’ils respirent et inspirent ne leur donne qu’un faux reflet de Dandysme. Qu’ils prennent l’air dégoûté, s’ils veulent... (“Du Dandysme” 106)<sup>78</sup>

What exactly is missing from the imposters’ display is something which floats in and out of the dandy treatises mysteriously. It is the ability to “produire toujours l’imprévu, ce à quoi l’esprit accoutumé au joug des règles ne peut pas s’attendre en bonne logique” (“Du Dandysme” 112)<sup>79</sup>.

The dandy exists in the in-between spaces, shifting between categories, deliberating masking and unmasking himself and others. Yet, just as the ancient Stoics attain an enlightened state through adherence to their practice, the true dandy’s sustained apathy, his perpetual blasé, leads him to a

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<sup>77</sup> “the specific beauty of the dandy consists particularly in that cold exterior resulting from the unshakeable determination to remain unmoved” (*The Painter* 40).

<sup>78</sup> [t]o ape is not to resemble. Anyone can assume an air or a pose, as they can appropriate the cut of a dress-coat; but the comedy is tiring, a mask is painful and hideous [...] The boredom they respire and inspire gives them but a false air of Dandyism. Let them look satiated if they will” (*Dandyism* 26)

<sup>79</sup> always to produce the unexpected, that which could not logically be anticipated by those accustomed to the yoke of rules” (*Dandyism* 33)

state of ennui; just as the ancient Stoic *eudaimonia* affords an immovable calm amidst a sea of impressions, the dandy's ennui ultimately prevents any potential engagement with those impressions outside of this apathetic lens.

There is a vast difference between equating all sensations into a "blasé attitude" and an ancient Stoic approach to emotions that entails regulation and judgment. The goal of Stoicism is not to equate all emotions, as it might at first glance seem, but actually to become conscious of the distinctions between them. Assent, which the Stoics dubbed the moment of interpreting and classifying one's response, has, with the inundation of impressions bombarding the dandy in the metropolis, been set or gotten stuck on the default setting of indifference for the modern dandy. The dandy may claim to invoke ancient Stoic practice, but it turns out to only be possible to *perform* Stoic gestures and not to embody them completely. I have illustrated that the dandy's subscription to indifference is more about blunting emotions and shielding himself from emotional trauma than the pursuit of an enlightened assent from that trauma.

The two main terms that I have presented so far, indifference and apathy, have a close relative in the concept of ennui. Indifference is the quality of absence of feeling or passion, somewhat closely defined with lack of interest or attention. In a continuation from this, apathy is a freedom from suffering or passions or an "indifference to what is calculated to move the feelings, or to excite interest or action" ("apathy"). Moving beyond this, ennui is "the feeling of mental weariness and dissatisfaction produced by want of occupation, or by lack of interest in present surroundings or employments" ("ennui"). Reinhard Kuhn gives the following definition of ennui: "the state of emptiness that the soul feels when it is deprived of interest in action, life and the world (be it this world or another), a condition that is the immediate *consequence* of the encounter with nothingness, and has as an immediate effect a disaffection with reality" (13, my

emphasis). Thus, while an indifferent attitude produces an apathetic response to individual impressions, the multiplied experience of this apathy leads to a state of ennui that predetermines an apathetic response to all impressions.

The productive and constructive emotion theory of the ancient Stoics becomes twisted and reworked in the dandy doctrine for the following reasons: first, that the world is no longer a stable and intrinsically connected or harmonious place; second, that the sheer amount of impressions has increased substantially in volume and in violence on the senses within the modern metropolis due to the political, social, economical, and technological factors mentioned. For these reasons, though indifference first figured productively in ancient Stoic philosophical doctrine, for the dandy it undergoes a semantic shift. It comes to be associated not with the process of distinction between emotions and rationalized response, but rather the opposite: a *lack* of distinction and a characteristic blurring. Instead of indifference as a choice, there is talk of a “great yawn of indifference” that “swallows everything – sin and remorse, confession and relapse, will and impotence, charm and repugnance” (Dalle Pezze and Salzani 7); here is the root of *ennui*.

Ennui and its affiliate boredom have a specific history, tracing through *acedia*, *tedium vitae*, *melancholia*, etc, which has been expanded by literary critics like Reinhard Kuhn, Lars Svendsen, Elizabeth Goodstein, Barbara Dalle Pezze, and Carlo Salzani. However, though ennui might resemble and echo the previous incarnations of malaise, it cannot be fully identified with them because each of their forms is “embedded in a historically and culturally specific way of understanding and interpreting human experience” (Dalle Pezze and Salzani 11). Instead of having a singular history, ennui is viewed as “compounded of elements of very different provenance [...] kaleidoscopically” (Goodstein 218).

Ennui is an amalgam of many influences, and I am suggesting that the dandy's neo-stoic appropriation is particularly influential on the formation of ennui. The dandy's two main behavioural characteristics, indifference and apathy, are crucial to ennui: writing about Baudelaire, Barbara Dalle Pezze and Carlo Salzani say that spleen and ennui encompass "sickly sorrow, distaste for life, *apathy and universal indifference*" (10, my emphasis). As main ingredients for ennui, indifference causes the flattening out of existential experience, and apathy reflects the inability to react to this. I am suggesting that these two qualities are at the core of ennui, and as such, through the appropriation and parodying of Stoic indifference, dandyism ultimately transforms an enlightened state of *eudaimonia* into the nineteenth century Zeitgeist of Modernity: ennui.



## CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to show that a relationship exists between the emotional theories of ancient Stoic philosophy and modern dandy theory, both of which lay claim to ‘indifference’. The dandy texts focused on in this thesis, Barbey’s “Du Dandysme” *et de Georges Brummell* (1845) and Baudelaire’s *Le peintre de la vie moderne* (1863), both offer repeated references, nominally and performatively, to the dandies as ‘stoic.’ By naming themselves as ‘stoic’ and proposing to enact certain stoic behaviours like indifference, the dandies invite a comparative reading of their modern indifference and its relation to the original advocates of indifference, the ancient Stoics.

Previous attempts at categorizing the dandy’s neo-stoicism had been taken in religious, historical, and aesthetic directions, but none of these quite satisfy the dandy’s location within ancient Stoicism. The religious approach as presented by Ernest Raynaud assented to Stoic influence in dandyism insofar as it was useful to leading to a Catholic reading of the dandies in the end. The historical approach as presented by Marie-Christine Natta denied the presence of Stoic influence, judging that the differences in worldviews between the ancient Stoics and the modern dandies were too great to allow for a parallel. Finally, the aesthetic approach as presented by Michel Foucault accepted Stoic influence by proposing that both ancient Hellenistic philosophies (Stoicism in particular) and nineteenth century dandyism have comparable “aesthetics of existence” or artful ways of living.

Though each of these arguments has merits, they also each have issues. The religious approach does not actually end up dialoguing with Stoic doctrine except insofar as it influenced Catholic doctrine, and so its conclusions are based on a Christian-inflected asceticism. The historical approach is factually correct and my argument does not deny that the changes in

worldview that have occurred since Stoicism's prevalence in the ancient world make it not just difficult, but almost impossible to replicate ancient Stoicism in the nineteenth century. That said, I have been proposing *influence*, not duplication, in my own argument. Finally, the aesthetic approach does not take into account the fact that the scope of aesthetics has shifted since the ancient world so that it no longer includes so close a relationship between aesthetics and ethics. In light of these deficiencies in the previous approaches to the influence of ancient Stoicism on the dandy, I have taken a different direction that I see as more in line with the dandy's nature.

This thesis proposes that the dandy's neo-stoicism is based on irony, the *modus operandi* of the dandy. The dandy's irony has been established by other literary critics before me, but my own interpretation of the dandy's irony is composed of a mix of appropriation and parody. Irony denotes a purposeful inversion of meaning in order to achieve dissimulation or pretence, and the dandy achieves this through appropriation (the practice of reworking or imitating a style from another work to incite re-evaluation or intellectual challenge) and parody (the use of that imitation with the goal of satirizing by applying it to an unlikely subject). So, when the dandy names himself a Stoic and purports to enact Stoic behaviours like indifference in a modern context, he is imitating and reworking a previous style that in this case belongs to an ancient philosophy. The belief the dandy does this to incite critical re-evaluation or intellectual challenge is in line with other arguments by literary critics that identify the dandy as a figure of social critique. The dandy is also enacting parody in this situation by applying ancient Stoic principles that are traditionally viewed as ascetic and harsh to himself as a dandy, traditionally viewed as a rather superficial and materialistic. Because of the general perception of the dandy as linked to fops, macaronis, and muscadins, the dandy certainly seems an unlikely candidate to receive Stoic doctrine. And yet, the dandy asserts a parallel, so it must be interpreted.

I propose that what initially stimulates the dandy's appropriation and parody of ancient Stoicism is the dialogue with Stoicism that was occurring within the dandy's contemporaries in England and France. I suggest that this dialogue consists of a revival of ancient Stoic emotional practice as a reaction to new trials facing the modern individual in view of the social, political, and economic challenges that were occurring at the time, as rebellions and revolutions plagued both English and French societies. In view of this 'therapeutic' dialogue of neo-stoicism, the dandy was inspired to incorporate certain aspects of ancient Stoicism into his own doctrine. Since it was 'fashionable' to be indifferent, then the dandy – not one to pass by a trend – would put his own unique spin on it by, as mentioned above, appropriating and parodying the image of the ancient Stoic. This allows the dandy to act as a distorted mirror or grotesque reflection of his contemporaries by ironically reworking their discourse on ancient Stoicism in his own theory and praxis.

Having established first that the dandy makes nominal and performative use of ancient Stoicism, and then seen how that appropriation fits in with the dialogue of the dandy's contemporaries, the final section of this thesis evaluates the extent of the alleged presence of ancient Stoicism in dandyism. This section compares and contrasts the following shared constructs between the Stoics and the dandies: 'impressions', judgment and rationality, and preferred indifferents. Mediated by Simmel's sociological readings of the effects of the metropolis on the individual, this section shows that the dandies are not strictly 'faithful' to the ancient Stoic philosophy, whether due to their own changes or due to social changes beyond their control, and end up creating something new. In short, this section shows how the dandies adapt Stoic emotional philosophy from *apatheia* to apathy.

As a short recapitulation of the Stoic echelon of emotion, I offer the following summary. In ancient Stoic philosophy, concerning emotions, individuals can react to impressions with either passions (inappropriate reactions) or more hopefully, *eupatheiai* (good or stable emotions). The continuous use of rational behaviour and moderation through choosing *eupatheiai* means consistently exercising *apatheia* (remaining above emotions). This in turn eventually leads to *eudaimonia* (happiness). It is important to recall that the goal of Stoic emotion theory is not the elimination of emotional response, but rather productive reasoning through emotional response.

Impressions are instances or occurrences to which an individual reacts. These include everything that occurs in an individual's life, from the trivial to the highly significant. Impressions do not preclude any specific reaction; they are the situation, plain and simple. Impressions are opportunities for discernment and are separate from whatever emotions will follow, and need to be recognized as such. These facts do not change in the dandy's neo-stoicism, but the quantity does. Georg Simmel shows that the sheer amount of impressions that the modern individual like the dandy has to deal with increased exponentially from previous eras. This alters the dynamic to one of over-stimulation on the dandy's part. This detail is crucial and will determine to a large degree how the dandy will navigate his way through ancient Stoic emotion theory.

The section on judgment and rationality covered how the Stoic relied on his ability to reason as his way to avoid committing 'errors in judgment' – that is, falling prey to passions. To the ancient Stoics, unmediated emotions or direct responses are the result of improper use of assent. Assent ought to signify the will to rationalize which should be exercised in the face of all impressions. On the modern front, Simmel says that in the metropolis, man is predisposed to react dispassionately because of the amount of impressions to which he is subjected.

Intellectuality is privileged in the modern metropolitan individual because otherwise he would flounder beneath the assault on his senses. The dandy carries rationality to an extreme. He strives to uniformly adjudicate impressions of all kinds and relegate them to the same level.

Preferred indifferents are also a parallel between ancient Stoicism and modern dandyism. Ancient Stoics and modern dandies recognize that certain advantages are preferable in life and can make life considerably easier, but are not required for happiness. Such preferred indifferents include health and wealth. The difference here lies in the fact that the dandy wants to keep all the perks of the preferred indifferents regardless of their actual presence.

In the end, the modern dandy interpreted ancient Stoic philosophy with significant changes in his own neo-stoicism. The dandy took hold of the concept of indifference but instead of using it productively like the ancient Stoics, he turned it into apathy. While presenting an indifferent face to the world, in reality the dandy was only masking and deferring his own emotions. This in turn means that however lofty his intentions might claim to be by parodying ancient Stoic practices, the dandy in fact ends up diverting from Stoic practices and using them to mould the zeitgeist of nineteenth century modernism: ennui. Instead of a constructive apatheia, there is a theorization and aestheticization of indifference which produces *ennui*.

The nineteenth century dandy, living and fictional, is a prime example of ennui in both life and literature, and this thesis proposes that this is in part due to the dandy's appropriation and parody of ancient Stoic philosophy and in part to the instability of Modernity. The dandy's final 'product' may not have been as 'constructive' emotionally as ancient Stoic theory, but certainly helped to define a perspective which survives to this day: the blasé and apathetic attitude which has even, one could argue, turned into something of an epidemic. In this vein, my research hopes

to situate itself at an intersection of studies on indifference, neo-stoicism, irony, and ennui, with a view to helping identify the impetus of a behaviour that helped to define an age.

This topic merited examination because indifference is one of the dandy's main features and had not been comprehensively studied before. This thesis is limited to dandy texts by Barbey and Baudelaire because they are the ones who begin theorization of dandyism and help it grow and support praxis as well. However, it is conceivable that this reading could be extended to other dandies and dandy texts. I hope to have shown that there is a place in literary criticism for dandyism to be examined vis-à-vis ancient philosophy, and that the dialogue of ancient philosophical influence in dandyism that was begun by David Mazella with his book *The Making of Modern Cynicism* (2007) will continue.

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