

UDC 316.2

*M.V. Chernyshev***TRANSFORMATION OF EUROPEAN SOCIETY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF RADICAL INTELLECTUALS IN THE PERIOD OF FIN-DE-SIECLE (1890–1914)**

Fin-de-siècle is a French definition for “end of the age”, though also implying an era of changes in different spheres of social life within European society between 1890 and 1914. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century we can observe the phenomenon of formation of the new type of modernist political ideology “beyond Left and Right” which tended to adopt some sort of cultural revolt against decadent bourgeois society and associate it with new forms of political actions. Famous writers of the Fin-de-siècle Gabriele D’Annunzio and Maurice Barrès embodied in their writings this tendency. This essay argues that despite their claimed break with the tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and search for individual liberation, the representatives of the new intellectual tradition put into practice some of the ideas that later were associated with European totalitarian ideologies of fascism and national socialism. This study attempts to describe development of views of the two writers on the national societies taking into consideration a certain number of dynamic tensions within the period of European fin-de-siècle: first of all, between the tendencies of Decadence which were evident in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the desire for spiritual renewal, between the cult of personal perfection and the collective myth of political nationalism.

*Keywords:* modernity, national socialism, decadence, Fin-de-siècle, conservatism, fascism, Western civilization, political radicalism.

DOI: 10.35634/2587-9030-2019-3-2-214-231

*«On the one hand, given the total collapse of faith of his age, an egotist can find no other expression for his creative energies than to cultivate his own inner universe, and this he proceeds to do, arrogantly and in defiance of all other men. The cult of the self is simply an extreme and systematic development of the spirit of the times. On the other hand, the egotist is trying to achieve for himself a therapy and pedagogy which will lead him back to the world, and for this he must find a basis of conviction and certainty on which he can ground his action».*

Shenton, G. *The Fictions of the Self: The Early Works of Maurice Barrès*. Chapel Hill: North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 1979, p. 34.

**Introduction**

Jurgen Habermas in his essay *Modernity versus Postmodernity* (1981) noted that the category of beauty and the domain of beautiful objects were first constituted in the period of European Renaissance but only around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century an aesthetic conception of art emerged, which encouraged the artist to produce his work according to the distinct consciousness of «art for art’s sake» [1. P. 4]. The phenomenon of European decadence in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in its wide sense means corrosive decline of individual and social certainty due to a perceived erosion of obligatory moral traditions. Although the impact of the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) on this process has remained debatable for more than a century, the peak period of the appearance of religious doubt as central theme in novels and plays can be observed during the 1880s and 1890s. Sometimes it had a fully materialistic explanation. In an article written in 1938, American psychologist Edvin Wilson referred to an adolescent memory of his friend-European who witnessed the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He expressed an idea that prosperity was not just around the corner and that a real depression could be recalled beginning in the 1890s and even in the 1870s: in those days, as they got worse and worse, people had to come looking for work, begging for work, just for their keep, and that by chance this depression might relieve the serious problem of domestic servants [2. P. 508]. Walter Laqueur (1996) points out that «the 1890s had not been a good decade» [3. P. 12] referring to the panic of 1893 and the ensuing economic depression in Western Europe and particularly in the USA. In France and Italy the economic crisis was confronted with major corruption scandals. Jewish German writer Max Nordau (1849–1923) observed that only a small minority in Europe found pleasure in the new tendencies. In his opinion, this minority consisted chiefly of rich, educated people, or of fanatics: «The former give the ton to all the

snobs, the fools and the blockheads; the latter make an impression upon the weak and dependent, and intimidate the nervous» [4. P. 21].

Characterizing the period of 1880s Hardy (1840–1928) witnessed about the chronic melancholy that was taking hold of the «civilized races» with the decline of belief in a beneficent power [5. P. 40]. Another important tendency in the development of European literature at that time was quite evident. Vittorio Pica (1862–1930), a critic who published both in Italy and France, in an essay of 1886 spoke of the challenges that contemporary authors faced because of what he describes as the rapid democratization of their readership. He observed an «anguished period of transition» as a «democratic literature» clashed with an «aristocratic literature». According to his witnesses, the two prevailing trends were likely to fall into «opposite, but equally pernicious extremes, since the one tends to become more and more commercial, losing the noble characteristics of art, while the second, desiring to be overly distinctive and trying to avoid any contact with whatsoever with the crowd, refines and complicates its aesthetics to the point of rendering itself abstruse and even incomprehensible» [6. P. 9]. Secular suspicions in previous traditions and the tensions between believers and skeptics at that time gave demand on new ideas of individual dignity opposed to the advancement of materialist philosophy and literature associated with political socialism. Godwin Peak, the literature hero of George Gissing's novel *Born in Exile* (1892) noted «a strong desire for anti-dogmatic books written by men of mark» [7. P. 150]. In situation of the permanent crisis of religious work ethic applied to the sphere of human morality, cultural decadence implied a prevalence of self-indulgence and sometimes pretension over effort and talent.

In circumstances of its separation from traditional religious values, a majority of modernist artists were interested in different aspects of extraordinary life and, above all, in spheres of technology and politics, opposed to decadence and sloth of expressions. Since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the western society seemed to be prosperous but with severe social and economic inequality, to such a degree that the upper class became either complacent or greedy, while the lower classes had become apathetic. Poor political leadership associated with scandals was appraised as a cause and a symptom of decadence, as the lifestyle of a decadent individual was usually considered to be incompatible with responsibility. Walter Laqueur refers to its emergence by 1905/6 when «the art mood had changed». He connected it with cultural demands of the new young generation which «got bored with the prevailing boredom» [8. P. 5].

The internal problems of Italy in the period of *transformismo* related to political and socio-economic development after the reunification in 1861 were not resolved, and they frustrated national intellectuals. Italian writer and social critic Alfredo Oriani (1852-1909) remarked that the country was made by «heroic imposition of the few» after which «the heroes became soldiers, the martyrs changed into clerks» [9. P. 478]. Positivism, equated with a crude and leveling democracy by Oriani and like-minded intellectuals, turned the «better minds», those conscious of their superiority, into a sort of exile. National heroes Garibaldi and Mazzini seemed forgotten. The national revolution had failed while the Italians were the conquered, not the conquerors. The «people» were absent from the struggle for the nation. For Oriani, the result was a separation of Parliament from the country, the decline of parties along with all other political ideals. He predicted an idealistic revolt, championed by a new elite. The new revolution of better minds was never defined, but remained a vague expression of intellectual frustration, a feeling of disquietude [10. P. 53]. Longing for a spiritual liberation, for the return to fashion of ideals that the *Postrisorgimento* seemed to have lost, soon emerged in the writings of the new generation of Italian writers, associated later with formation of prefascist ideology. Despite the statement by philosopher Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) that fascism was a *parenthesis* in Italian history, he was readily disposed to implicate fin-de-siècle decadence in the rise of fascism. Giovanni Gentile (1875-1944) argued in 1924 that fascism's deepest origins lay in the anti-positivist intellectual climate of the fifteen years prior to the World War I.

Adamson (1990) points out that modernism may be understood as a central project of the intellectual generation entering the European cultural scene between 1900 and 1914, that of a «cultural regeneration» through the secular religious quest for «new values» [11. P. 360]. The Nationalists and idealists represented the more conservative and authoritarian side of fascism, the syndicalists and modernists its more «revolutionary» and aggressive side. Within the last group – the modernists – one can distinguish futurists, followers of Gabriele D'Annunzio, and former associates of *La Voce* journal. Their representatives include the generations born in the 1860s as well as the 1880s. One of the most engrossing controversies about the former has centered on Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938), a poet, novelist, playwright, World War I hero, and political activist. In surveying the Italian scene, contemporary scholars regularly place him in the context of the «revolutionary right» or the «conservative revolution» from which European fascism and nazism sprang. For in-

stance, Stem (1961) draws the analogy between D'Annunzio and the German «conservative revolution» [12. P. 21-22].

The near kin to D'Annunzio in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century European impulse to renew the nation in French setting is Maurice Barrès (1862-1923). His distinguished personality and ideological stances have raised debates among his contemporaries and descendants. French intellectuals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such as Pierre Drieu La Rochelle and Robert Brasillach, who openly positioned themselves as fascists, looked on Barrès as their major precursor. Several scholars note that it was Barrès who invented the term National Socialism. Chaitin (2008) argues that his brand of nationalism included the leader principle «along with a heavy dose of mob violence, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism» [13. P. 79]. Whereas Sternhell (1973) and Soucy (1972) note that Barrès' forsaking rationalist humanism made him the bridge between 19<sup>th</sup> century traditional conservatism and 20<sup>th</sup> century fascism, Carroll (1995) presents the opposite view, stating that his persistence on following the philosophy of the autonomous subject accounts for his fall into totalitarianism [14]. Curtis (1959) states that «from the one perspective it is his betrayal of the tradition of the Enlightenment, from the other his fidelity to that heritage, that precipitates him into the abyss of protofascism» [15. P. 58]. Moreover, for Barrès himself, action was not the fullest form of realization but was desirable in order to heighten his own sensibility. Politics and Parliament became favorable settings in which he made it possible to enrich himself.

Having come under the impression of similarities between Maurice Barrès and Gabriele D'Annunzio in terms of their common outlook and style of writing in particular, it seems important to focus on common traits in evolution of their views on European fin-de-siècle and their personal activity in that period.

### **Esthetics is superior to tradition**

Both writers started their professional career quite early. In 1891, at the age of 29, Barrès was for Anatole France already «a youthful meitre» [16, P. 54]. The influence of this «prince of youth» on his younger contemporaries was remarkably strong. Despite the fact that his writing style soon included images of hunting, slaughter, and torture, it still left generally positive impression on such people as François Mauriac, Louis Aragon, Leon Blum, and Thomas Mann.

Being a young journalist who quickly acquired a reputation of rebel and dandy, Barrès started his career of writer in 1888 by publishing *Under the Eye of the Barbarians* while he was in Italy, the first volume of a trilogy *Le Cult du moi (The Cult of the Self)*. Shenton (1979) states that following the Symbolist attacks on the naturalist vision of the world and anti-naturalist declarations of several writers in Jules Huret's *Survey on literary evolution* (1881), Barrès took the novel in an inward directions, placing the problems of the individual consciousness at the center of attention [17. P. 22-23]. Thus his *Le Cult du moi* was to a certain extent similar to the vision of Huysmans and France presented in his books. At the same time the young author was attuned to the literary public taste of the late 1880s. The novel begins as a thorough-going rejection of everything that the world has to offer a young man. At the beginning of *Under the Eye of the Barbarians* Barrès employs the popular figure of Narcissus to represent the young man's self-consciousness. He gives the Narcissus myth a meaning quite different from the one it has traditionally. For him, Narcissism is a positive impulse rather than a moral tragedy when passion, the single-minded projection of desire onto one object becomes a possible means of achieving the unity of the Self.

Dividing the world into moi (myself) and the *barbarians*, Barrès expressed in his early work the themes of exoticism searching for the life path conflicting with his teachers and surrounding. The experience, partly related to his private life, shows the disarray faced by a sensitive boy as he grows up in one of provincial towns and the ambition of the aspiring young writer and politician in the capital. On the one hand it is an expression of the pleasure of the senses, but besides that - frustration, intellectual yearning, and a studious desire for a higher form of spiritual fulfillment to be put among the spiritual elite. The hero is constantly measuring himself against others even when it goes against intellectual and moral tradition of the century. He is searching for the ideal master, the spiritual father who will provide a solution to the «problem of life». The desire to attach himself as a disciple to the authority of another leads to a violent rejection of those whose teaching disappoints his expectations. After the initial strong impression from meeting a «great man», the hero's accusation is leveled at the character that resembles popular French conservative philosopher Ernest Renan whose critical thought had undermined religious faith without proposing anything to replace it. Shenton (1979) explains this paradox stating that the hero found the messages of Renan too marked by the intellectual atmosphere of the Second Empire and politically he exposed a kind of liberal conservatism which must have seemed rather moderate to Barrès without any basis for action in the world [18. P. 29-31]. The

Self becomes the only reality and the search for personal gratification, preferably of a «higher» nature, is the only reasonable rule of life in the face of universal relativism. Towards the end of the book there goes a clear message that the main hero is seeking not only liberation, but a faith to which he may apply his life in a spirit of submission trying to obtain salvation in a formula for action because he understood that his impotence comes from his spiritual isolation. Shenton argues that Barrès's project is to harness the energy of an initial movement of revolt in an effort to discover authentic points of contact between the Self and the world.

Son of a wealthy landowner and mayor of the town Pescara (Abruzzo), Gabriele D'Annunzio entered the University of Rome La Sapienza in 1881 and shortly after that published several poems, collected under the general title of *San Pantaleone* (1886). They were full of pulsating youth and the promise of power, some descriptive of the sea and some of the Abruzzi landscape. His conception of style seemed to be new, and young D'Annunzio chose to express in his further novels the most subtle vibrations of his voluptuous life. According to one of the literary critics who lived at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the author raised a lot of inspiration among his contemporaries:

He is the most brilliant figure that has arisen in the last years of the dying century, and if he is a promise of what the next is to bring forth the outlook is as ominous as it is fascinating; his chief characteristics are brilliancy and corruption. In all the range of Italian literature there is perhaps no such brilliant prose. It flashes like gems in the sunlight; it reminds one of the glories of summer sunsets, of strains of delicious music. Perhaps no writer of equal talent is so corrupt. A distinguished French critic has said of him that he is a pagan of the days of Nero, and he might have added, worthy of the imperial court, a fit leader of the revels in the Golden House. D'Annunzio is an aristocrat to the finger-tips, and his is the elegant and polished corruption of the declining days of Greece and Rome [19. P. 146-147].

Borgese (1937) gave a critical evaluation of D'Annunzio's works based on the main issues which concerned the poet:

Acknowledged or despised, he was behind all the spiritual movements and modes from the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the years around 1920. His Italian, which he ever spoke with a heavy, lush provincial cadence, was written with an overgrowth of similes, often baroque, on a constant musical strain, not seldom cheap [...] Occasionally, but seldom, he had tried, since his early youth, to endow his imaginary violence with a collective or patriotic meaning. Imaginary violence mixed with patriotic meaning were overshadowed by «matchless human joy» with which no Mazzini, no prophet of the Risorgimento could like [20. P. 92, 96].

Even though D'Annunzio began his literary career as a poet importing French decadent fashion into the Rome of the 1880s, he gained an international reputation as a novelist. From 1889, when his highly acclaimed *The Pleasure* appeared, to *The Fire*, in 1900, he wrote six novels. Each of them is centered on a life of a young man who is in search of spiritual meaning, mostly by means of sensual pleasure. Initially, in *The Pleasure* the hero is isolated, self-absorbed, and weak-willed, more romantically involved but otherwise similar to his counterpart in Joris-Karl Huysmans's *A Rebours* (1884). The main idea which was mentioned in all of the author's novels at this time was the need for dreams shared equally by the so-called intellectual class. The democratic culture, confessed by the rest of people was diagnosed by the author as hopeless: «The world is the representation of the sensibilities and the thoughts of a few superior people, who over the course of time have created it and then enlarged and beautified it. It is a magnificent gift lavished upon the many by the few, by free men upon slaves: by those who think and feel upon those who must work» [21. P. 19].

D'Annunzio's primal experience of the clash between aristocratic and democratic writing came in the disruptive world of post-Unification journalism. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s there are signs that a less frigid attitude toward the wider public was also developing in D'Annunzio. In a newspaper article of 1892, *The Need of the Dream* while speaking with disdain about the popular audience, which seemed to have an appetite for the cheap editions of mediocre literature, he stresses out that the need for dreams is shared by both intellectuals and by the «lower classes». In the mid 1890s D'Annunzio begins to imagine the creator of art as the shaper of the whole community's consciousness. In *Maia* (1903) D'Annunzio uses this aesthetics to expound his will to dominate his community with splendid words and powerful imagination. While in the period of fin-de-siècle symbolism could be associated with a refined art in the (Mallarme, Apolliner), D'An-

nunzio here transforms its hermetic aesthetics into an instrument for making the poet a great communicator. In his novel *The Fire* (1900), the protagonist Effrena expresses distaste for an elegant public which prefers applause on the poet's meetings to a revitalised Italy.

In 1892, D'Annunzio discovered German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche through extracts in the Parisian journal *Revue blanche*. In his article Jean de Nkthy presented excerpts from *The Genealogy of Morals*. It was followed by extracts from *Beyond Good and Evil*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *The Problem of Socrates*, *The Twilight of the Idols*, and *Nietzsche contra Wagner* (in 1897). His aesthetic began to shift toward the celebration of action, violence, and the myth of the superior man who thinks and acts «beyond good and evil». Both the novels and the occasional articles written by D'Annunzio in this period show that Nietzsche's ideas of the superman and will-to-power were absorbed by the Italian intellectual both emotionally and as «doctrines» [22. P. 369-370]. To the four qualities (will, lust, instinct, pride) which D'Annunzio himself declares as the key elements of his personality, he added Nietzsche's *will to power* which gradually drove him on to the political stage of Italy and brought him fame in Europe. His first «Nietzschean» novel, *The Virgins of the Rocks*, is written in a more disciplined and virile style, although his conception of a superman, as portrayed in Claudio Cantelmo, is cerebral and childishly pretentious [23. P. 60-61]. On the other hand, the *will to power* adopted by D'Annunzio, was bound to come to in conflict with his incurable *will to pleasure*, for the sake of which he had already removed (long before his acquaintance with Nietzsche) all distinction between good and evil. In his well-known play, *La Gioconda* (1899), the main character is an aesthetic superman, in whom the creative ecstasy and sensuality merge in one disposition to which he sacrifices his wife. In *The Ship* (1908), D'Annunzio combines extreme lust with extreme political will to power, both equally loud and cruel. The note of cruelty, so pronounced already in his *Stories of Pescara* (1902), leads at times to undisguised sadism – a feature which has been variously commented upon by most of D'Annunzio's critics.

The association of Nietzsche with Barrès was quite common during the 1890s due to the main issue of extreme individualism presented by French writer. However, the influence of German philosopher on his views and ideas should not be exaggerated. While Barrès had indeed written his *Culte du moi* trilogy during the early 1890s at the height of the popularity of Nietzsche in Europe, by 1898 he was writing about collective rather than individual regeneration in his novel of national energy. Another important point worth commenting is his attitude to German «musical philosopher» Richard Wagner. In the late 1880s, when Barrès had become an influential writer his thinking owed much to Baudelaire and Mallarmé, who found Wagner inspiring, but also to the pessimistic strain in Schopenhauer's philosophy, which he attempted to counter through a cult of energy [24. P. 321]. He valued the composer for his exaltation of those human beings who take their laws from no one but themselves. However, later he linked Wagner's music with German politics. Thus appearing in Barrès's early publications as the model for a renewed French energy Wagner evolved into a scapegoat with the development of Barrès's nationalist program. Although initially D'Annunzio also flirted with the Wagnerian notion of the artist as the creator of a new secular-religious faith, his future stance to him remained rather indifferent and aloof [25. P. 317].

In the late 1880s and early 1890s both Barrès and D'Annunzio do not limit themselves to complaining how beauty suffers at the hands of the mob and official institutions. Instead they set out to appeal to a new mass constituency, seeking to harmonize individual energy with public request for new ideas and slogans. By the end of the century the attitude of both writers toward Modernity had undergone an abrupt reversal, although in a different way. If Barrès started formulating the possibility of renewal from an individual to the entire nation and his esthetics went through the period of change, D'Annunzio found a new excitement in modernist technology. Even a brief analysis of his notebooks from 1899 indicates the shift: «All those people who lament and sigh that the centers of Beauty and Dreams have been invaded by the tramcar and the railroad are important» [26. P. 184]. The street car and the train, standard emblems of the Industrial Age's conquest of city and countryside, have suddenly lost their distastefulness for D'Annunzio and significantly enlarged the number of options for his esthetic choice. At that time this intellectual position led him and other modernist intellectuals to perception of growing distance between the artistic avant-garde and the public at large but also stimulated their artistic search in favor of making publicity for a new sort of activity.

### **Beyond the Left and the Right**

Several important political events happened in Italy and France from the late 1880s which stimulated Barrès and D'Annunzio to search for new forms of personal engagement in national affairs. Boulangist movement in the late 1880s sparked the popular imagination in France. Georges Ernest Jean-Marie Boulan-

ger (1837-1891), nicknamed *General Revanche*, was a politician who seemed to promise energetic leadership, a dynamic vision of national destiny, and a clean sweep of the political board in politically unstable France [27. P. 35]. According to Curtis (1959), Boulangism was an incoherent movement linking those dissident elements discontented for various reasons with the existing regime: anti-republican, antidemocrats and anti-Semites, who wished for constitutional revision, opposed to the anticlerical bias of the political regime controlled by liberals and moderate socialists, and those whose primary emotion was the memory of the defeat by Germany. Initially the protégé of the Radicals and of the anticlericals, Boulanger drifted to the Right and entered into negotiations with monarchists, the Church, and with foreign autocrats, one of whom was Russian tsar Alexander the Third. The Boulangist movement was «a faith for the troops, a means for the lieutenants, an end for the leader, but for no one a doctrine» [28. P. 27]. France, to be strong, had to have an authoritarian government, not a parliamentary one, and one National party, instead of a nation broken into conflicting factions. For the first time, French Republicans were allied with monarchists against other Republicans. However, after obtaining a sweeping success in the elections of January 27<sup>th</sup> 1889, General Boulanger failed in the attempt of state overturn.

For Barrès Boulange was particularly attractive because he allied the prestige of the army to an ability to arise the feelings of the masses with a regeneration of national life. Curtis stated that «constantly looking for the strong man, he found him in the man on the black horse» [29. P. 25]. Soon Barres managed to adapt his theory of *du moi* into politics. He first entered the Chamber in 1889 under a platform of "Nationalism, Protectionism, and Socialism" on the Boulangist ticket. He got a deputy seat on the extreme left of the Chamber. A year later he wrote, «Boulangism is a Socialist program, a general movement against the omnipotence of capital, in favor of national reconciliation and love of the disinherited». Without giving a chance to follow the way similar to «German collectivism» or «Russian terrorism» French socialism would produce both the vigorous development of national strength and the necessary effort to decentralize and federalize the government [30. P. 49-50]. In *The Garden of Berenice* (1891), only two years later, he expressed his gratitude to the workers of Nancy for providing him with his first election victory [31. P. 255].

In 1893 and 1896, Barrès ran parliamentary campaigns as a socialist on a worker's platform being defeated both times. From this experience he emerged with the conclusion that nothing was any importance, especially in political affairs, but success [32. P. 166]. Moreover, he had a strong disgust to the doctrinaire wing of French socialism since he saw it to be irreconcilable with national interests. In his 1898 electoral program Barres had elaborated his political program proposing homes for the old retired workers, the recognition of workers' syndicates and their independence, and contending that socialism was a word in which France had put its hope [33. P. 49]. In 1902, he spoke in highly enthusiastic terms of the necessity for economic transformation and a change of leadership for the French society [34. P. 253]. Four years later Barres was reelected to the Chamber of Deputies on a conservative ballot.

Summarizing his parliamentary experience, Barrès never had strong affiliation with any party or real electoral group, and continually changed his electoral nomenclature. In the Chamber he was deliberately ineffective: he spoke only 42 times often amid a volley of interruptions. Later in 1913 he wrote, «I am not a party man in the Chamber. Rather, I collaborate with all those who serve the national interest, all who unify and who eliminate those who conspire against the genius of the nation» [35. P. 235].

As scholar interest in Gabriele D'Annunzio revived in the post World War II period, his relationship to the left became a source of hot controversy. The historian Renzo De Felice (1978) called for a major revision of opinion on the poet's political legacy. He argued that D'Annunzio should not be regarded as a main precursor of fascism but rather as an element of «subversive leftism, the irregular left» [36. P. 2]. Becker (1994) notes that critics have been unable to take seriously the avowed "socialist" interests of *Canto novo* (1882), a collection of verse written when D'Annunzio was nineteen. Soon before that he promised in a letter to a friend that his collection of verse would contain «bursts of ferocious socialism». In other correspondence, the young writer expressed his hatred against «all those fat bourgeois» and demonstrated his compassion for the «poor exhausted workers» and the «despised beggars». Becker points out that unlike contemporaries who merely lament the allegedly anti-esthetic nature of socialism, D'Annunzio in the late 1890s does not limit himself to bemoaning the ugliness he detects in the burgeoning socialist movement. Instead he tries to attract the recently organized socialist constituency toward certain beauties of his devising [37. P. 75-76].

In 1897, searching to adapt his artistic expression to seek political influence, D'Annunzio states: «As the need for popular consent leads me to the simplification and amplification of my art, so that same need drives me to enter a field of civil activity». In the same speech he proposed to remake working class con-

consciousness by attuning it to ideals of beauty [38. P.80]. He was elected to Parliament as a deputy of the conservative right. However, in his speeches D'Annunzio soon started giving inappropriate political speeches. First, he stresses out that politics based on the subordination of worker to «padrone» (the boss) will be replaced by a quasi-religious and esthetic relationship of mutual understanding between poet and masses. At the same time he attacks «orthodox» socialist doctrine for «dehumanization of the multitude» and lack of nobility in its behavior. Therefore, it opened a way to a new semi-Nietzschean synthesis in a statement he made in 1897: «*I am beyond the right and the left, as I am beyond good and evil... I am a man of life and not of formulas*» [39. P. 193].

Three years later, in 1900, there was an episode taken place in the Chamber of Deputies when D'Annunzio spontaneously moved from the conservatives to the extreme left. He won a cordial welcome from his new socialist colleagues. The socialist party newspaper *Avanti!* also offered an approving review of this speaking campaign, expressing its satisfaction that D'Annunzio had dropped his identity as the esthete despicable of action and practical life and become «the singer of Garibaldi» [40. P. 48]. In 1901, the poet chose to deliver an inaugural reading at the pro-socialist People's University in Milan. Italian nationalists who initially were inspired by the fact that an aristocratic poet could succeed in politics changed their positive attitude to D'Annunzio. Their leader Enrico Corradini concluded from these episodes that esthetic politics of D'Annunzio provided neither an adequate line of defense against the danger of socialism nor a good alternative to seemingly outdated liberal ideology. A historian and a biographer of D'Annunzio, Paolo Alatri (1992), has described this change as «one of those extemporized and confused initiatives that mark the political life of a man devoid of any real and proper political dimension» [41. P. 49]. Though such a union of leftist ideas and concern with aristocratic ideals is hardly normative for the period of highly ideological debates in the two countries, the significance of this jointure should not seem elusive. D'Annunzio did not make any real contribution to the Italian society as a parliamentarian, nor did he become a distinguished anti-establishment politician. However, his rhetoric and ambitions to appeal directly to masses opened the way to adapt his talent to the new political reality of modernity.

In a letter of October 18, 1901, Barrès wrote that he was retiring from the sterile struggle and did not want to be either a candidate or deputy, for political nationalism was finished. What alone interested him was a certain national point of view to introduce into public affairs. He returned to his «true territory, which is to help maintain the standard of French thought» [42. P. 254]. Although Barrès did not give up doing parliamentary work completely and later he entered the parliament again as a deputy, he succeeded in projecting his influence on the French society beyond preparing legislation bills.

### **Notorious national-socialists**

According to Curtis (1959), Barrès was the first to give the word nationalism its present political significance, in an article on July 4, 1892, and became identified with the idea during the Boulanger and Dreyfus Affairs [43. P. 253]. In 1894, he defends French Socialism (as opposed to other brands) because of its moral superiority [44. P. 94]. Becker (1994) remarks that although the term «socialist nationalism» was used by Barrès in 1898, but D'Annunzio actually had elaborated the same set of ideas in his 1897 election speech [45. P. 49].

The speech given by D'Annunzio for pragmatic reasons to boost his popularity among political elites and masses in 1897 was based on the idea to establish a new order for Italians by transforming their consciousness. He announces a third politics, neither capitalist nor socialist. Firstly, he emphasizes the idea of a «racial community» which can unite the people, and attach them to their native place. Secondly, analyzing a current political crisis, D'Annunzio promises that Italy will return to East Africa (renunciation of the Italian protectorate over Abyssinia led to the fall of Crispi cabinet a year earlier). Both these ideas call for a new identity for the working class which should be recruited to campaigns of national solidarity and new foreign policy. Simultaneously, the speech justifies a rightist elitism in the form of hierarchy. It is the superior human, the poet, who provides guidance to his nationals. Thus the new type of politics ought to be created to transform explosive energies of socialist-inspired masses into nationalist and imperialist programs.

Appealing to the socialists in a newspaper article of 1900, D'Annunzio argues that the energies of class struggle should be refocused on a national struggle for existence and, therefore, to a national revival: «I repeat that I am only drawing my notions from the essential traits of my race, to wit, a vigorous instinct for self-preservation and a vigorous instinct for domination» [46. P. 121].

Similar to D'Annunzio, nationalism of Barrès is less a political theory than a private cult held up for the emulation and admiration of his disciples. It can be explained in the notion of an unconscious principle of growth:

The death of the Ideal in the 19<sup>th</sup> century entailed the end of the upward striving of the Romantics. Consciousness was turned downwards, towards the Unconscious, towards Instinct. Emotion, cut off from its roots in a higher moral sphere turns to this new substratum to ensure its unity in time. The Unconscious, of which renewed desire is the permanent expression, assures the unity in succession which is his essential doctrine. From it emerges the whole complex of notions such as evolutionary becoming, growth, the garden, and ultimately nationalism and the myth of Lorrain [47. P. 135].

Over the late 1880s-early 1890s opposition to the young Third Republic was most blatant on the right and syndicalist left side of political spectrum, but also among the young generation. At that time Barrès was idolized by them because of the spirit of arrogant disrespect and independence which spread through his writings. *Le Cult du moi* condemns the moral and philosophical bankruptcy of the regime and the emptiness of all the formulas for success which are available to the young generation. *Under the Eye of the Barbarians* was closely connected to the agitation around the figure of General Boulanger whose cause he contrasted to «two thousand mediocre men» who had usurped the levers of power under the cover of parliamentary democracy [48. P. 27]. Seen from this perspective, *Under the Eye of the Barbarians* can be interpreted as a hope that Boulanger would be able to renovate the national spirit and provide inspiration for the spiritually disgusted young generation. Charles Maurras acknowledged the role of Barrès in the attempt to save French culture. «If impressionism, naturalism, and all other forms of degenerate romanticism have been defeated in French intellectual life between 1885 and 1895, it is to Barrès and to Barrès alone that the chief honor of the triumph is due», he wrote» [49. P. 45].

In 1897, Barrès began his new trilogy *The Novel of National Energy* which included the following novels *The Uprooted* (1897), *The Appeal to the Soldier* (1900), and *Their Faces* (1902). According to the author's new viewpoint, a rejection of the formative forces, and thus of identity, can only lead to disaster for both the individual and the collectivity. Chaitin argues that in his novels, much more than in his political pamphlets, Barrès allows the full range and complexity of the tendencies that make up nationalist identity, and, above all, the contradictions within them. In *The Uprooted* he uses the expression «members of humanity» in the sense of Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893), which echoes that of De Maistre and Tocqueville, to criticize the revolution Jacobin tradition with its «paper constructs», first of all «abstract men, empty simulacra, philosophical marionettes» since they are people who have lost their selves, their ties to their ancestors, to the land where they were born and raised, and to their cultures. The latter are victims of synthetic theory and artificial law, imposed upon them by physical or mental violence. Here Barrès imposes criticism on Kantian universalism, with its categorical imperative and rationalist abstraction.

From his new perspective Barrès argues that tradition allowed the extension and development of individuality and also admitted the individual into something larger than himself: «There is at the bottom of ourselves a constant neurotic point ... it does not simply provoke the sensations of an ephemeral individual but also stirs the whole race» [50. P. 107]. Individuals are not masters of the thoughts born in them. Thoughts are reactions movements of the organism in a given milieu. They were not born of intelligence, but were ways of reacting that were common to all those in the same milieu. Though Barrès speaks of the Social Contract as «imbecilic because it is a dialectical construction about an abstract man», at times he approached Rousseauistic ideas, in talking of «being a slave of my earthly and family formation», and of «the slavery I have slowly learned to love» [51. P. 108-109].

In *Scenes and doctrines of nationalism* (1902) Barrès states that tradition became a means of protection against the brutal pressures of life, a means of individual exaltation, and also a basis for organizing French energy in order to accomplish French destiny. It was necessary for France to recapture, protect, increase the energy inherited from its ancestors. He made one of his characters, Saint-Phlin, explain that in cemeteries he saw the tree of life and its roots stir up the soul. Each act which «denies our earth and our dead means a lie which sterilizes us» [52. P. 113]. An individual is a moment in the development of his race, an instant in a long culture, «one movement in a thousand of a force which preceded me and will survive me. France would save itself only by a fever; our whole national history says it [...] here is my country and my race, and saw my true post, the end of my efforts, my predestination». Barrès adds that Lorraine was not es-

sentially «our countryside, works of art, customs, resources, dishes, not even our history, but it was a special way of feeling». But it was also true that Lorraine adhered to France solely to obtain order and peace: «Our patriotism has nothing idealistic, philosophic about it; our fathers were very realistic» [53. P. 112].

Both Barrès and D'Annunzio follow the trend of the new epoch justifying a new principle of leadership. In *Appeal to the Soldier* (1900) the French writer stated that the fundamental idea of Boulangism had been «to put the authority of the Fatherland above all parties; the General, in keeping with the art of leadership, instead of casting a deciding vote, approved them all» [54. P. 272]. Barrès argued that by transcending ideological rivalries Boulangism would have served the nation's broader interests. The authority of the new leadership would spring directly from the masses, not from elected intermediaries. The Chamber of Deputies could be disbanded by force to install a new order. In 1902, Barrès wrote that it was precisely because members of the Chamber of Deputies feared such a possibility they found national heroes disturbing [55. P. 226].

The new leader in D'Annunzio's terms is an assertive character, a «true noble» who «bears no resemblance to the worn out heirs of the ancient patrician families». «He is a free man, stronger than his environment, convinced that personality is more important than contingent qualities» [56. P. 162]. In the modern world, as seen by D'Annunzio, the new movers are the daring young technocrats like the pilot Tarsis in *Maybe yes, maybe no* (1910), or the adventurers of the age of imperialism like those portrayed in *Maia*. They mobilize the «revolutionary crowds» and connect them to the industrialized society by means of new political discourse. Lavrin (1968) points out that in his four volumes of *Laudi* (1903-04) D'Annunzio accepts the role of a self-appointed leader calling to new adventures and to a joy of life, embracing all the diversity of existence. In his temperamental adoption of the aspirations of *Young Italy*, he became a poet of patriotism, of energy and action. Yet instead of expanding through his nation, he reduced that cause to a very narrow *sacro egoismo*. As a proponent of national imperialism he found his ideal of leadership in a blend of Bismarck, Cesare Borgia, and an operatic condottiere [57. P. 60-66]. Identifying himself as an aristocratic artist in the mid 1880s and early 1890s, D'Annunzio nonetheless comes to wish for the influence over the mass audience, the newly «democratized» reading public. Trying to expand his audience to the «true crowd» at the turn of the century he becomes preoccupied with remodeling the language to reach these subjects. He started addressing the crowd in terms bespeaking courtship, telling people that he sees in their numbers a hidden beauty that he can draw out. The result is a myth of "two races-nobles and plebes-scripted as the story of the noble artist-creator, who mesmerizes, violates, and then discards the plebian masses much as he does women. In March of 1901, in Milan, according to the astonished observer F.T. Marinetti, D'Annunzio drew a crowd of 4000 to hear his poetical evocation of Garibaldi's life [58. P. 177].

The general tendency toward decline of the role of religion in modern Western society did not mean its total annihilation in the sphere of individual and group consciousness. Hugh McLeod (2000) draws our attention to an important point when he argues that in the educated middle class of France the impact of new intellectual developments within decadence in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century was less, because religious skepticism had for long been widespread. As a reaction to that, in the 1880s and the 1890s the rediscovery of Catholicism was commonplace among French intellectuals [59. P. 149]. Barrès went through the long process of adaptation to perception of religion as a necessary vital element in social life. In one of the first rallies of the French League of Patriots in 1899 a noteworthy dialogue between Barrès and one of its key founders Jules Lamaitre took place. When they started discussing seemingly common view on national traditions Barrès asked: «What traditions? If it meant reaction he would have none of it. No clericalism. Anti-clerical and militarist is what our government ought to be» [60. P. 180]. In a letter of April, 1902, Barrès stated that although he did not want Catholicism to be degraded, at the same time he did not intend to go to confession, or to associate himself with the campaigns of the vestries against free thinkers. He named himself among its defenders, «not as a faithful believer, but because I am patriotic, in the name of the national interest». He believed that French nationality was tied strictly to Catholicism, that it was formed and developed in a Catholic atmosphere, and that, in trying to destroy and tear Catholicism away from the nation, no one could foresee what would be demolished. His comment about religion after the death of his mother in 1907 was made in different, more personal terms: «Political defeat. After such shocks, one accepts the Catholic thesis. We have seen that we are not absolute masters of ourselves. We accept our fatalisms» [61. P. 226]. Later in 1911, he remarked: «The Church planted in the village square makes the soil healthy. Around it the human plant develops in an atmosphere of civilization [...] The Catholic religion became the poem that most satisfies me; it was in the churches that my intelligence and my heart find the formulas of the highest poetry» [62. P. 223].

D'Annunzio's was not focused on the problem of religion in the form of Catholicism so much, but his contribution to the debate about «Latin decadence» requires a special consideration. It is remarkable to note that both writers see Venice as an exemplified ideal of decayed glory. For D'Annunzio and Barrès, the decadence of the nation is an obsession, especially considering the fact that they were familiar with the literary current of decadence. In 1895, the Italian writer promises to promote a «Latin renaissance» in the magazine *Il Convito*. He issued a manifesto for an Italian cultural revival, stating that such a rebirth needed to be accompanied by the national self-assertion which he felt had never really materialized after the country reunification. Unlike Barrès's focus on regional values, D'Annunzio chose the city of Rome as a symbol that inspired the 19<sup>th</sup> century national intellectuals such as Mazzini or Carducci. To his mind, the liberation of it from the papacy («the sublime conquest») had never been followed by any glorious achievements for the new nation. Nationalists, such as Corradini, were eager to promote the myth of Rome's greatness as an example for the present, but to D'Annunzio romanticized it and sufficiently dramatized its appeal. In 1904, he had addressed the symbolic city in the national context:

Rome, Oh Rome, in thee alone in the circle of thy seven hills, the myriad discords of man will find again an all-embracing and sublime unity. Thou wilt give the new bread, tell the new word [63. P. 167].

Yarrow (1942) connects these words with those echoed by Benito Mussolini in his speech in Trieste on September 20, 1920: «Rome gives the signal of universal civilizations; Rome lays out roads, marks boundaries, and gives to the world the eternal laws of its immutable justice» [64. P. 168].

In the early 1890s D'Annunzio was influenced by the Charles Darwin evolution theory. He quickly absorbed such metaphors of the English naturalist as «selection» and «struggle for life» and perceived them in a very personal way, as a struggle to assert his own identity. In one of his early letters he demonstrates his determination to make a mark on the world, to «enter well armed and with strong armor into the great battle of life, into the struggle for life, as Darwin puts it» [65. P. 113]. Later he started applying Darwinism to the analysis of society and competition between countries in international affairs. His essay of 1892, *The elective beast* does not limit itself to casting the masses as the defeated in the battle for political ascendancy. It also makes reference to a struggle between European and non-European «races»:

In America, entire races have disappeared upon impact with the white man; the inhabitants of Oceania are vanishing, pursued into their very last refuges; the whole of Africa has been invaded. By what right? By the right of the stronger [66. P. 119].

In his *The virgins of the rocks* (1899) one of the central characters Cantelmo justifies the process of selection that elevates both an elite and an entire populace or «race»:

The highest specimen of consciousness will only appear at the summit of a race that has elevated itself over time through a continual accumulation of forces and deeds: at the summit of a race in which the most beautiful dreams, the most valiant sentiments, the noblest thoughts, the most imperious desires have been created and preserved over a long period of centuries [67. P. 119]

«Racial vocabulary» is willingly shared by Maurice Barrès. With much imprecision, he talks of races, mainly for rhetorical reasons though. He clearly differentiates between an Indo-European race and a Semitic one. For Barrès there is no French race, but a French nation which continued to develop every day, a French people, a collectivity of political formation in which there was no one rallying point – it consisted of Latins, partly of Gauls, partly of «soldiers of the Church». The French patria existed more assuredly through language than in territory, for it was the possession of the same language and common legends that constituted nationalities. His central idea behind nationalism is the – «the voice of the ancestors», «the prolongation of the dead», the acceptance of a determinism. Making his views apparent in the letter written by Roemerspacher in *The Appeal to the Soldier* (1900), Barrès regards France as the result of a series of historic facts, accumulated resources, and a direction imposed on individual behavior in order to produce a favorable action by individuals and by the nation as a whole. To be a nationalist is the best service that a Frenchman

could render to humanity. For Barrès the Marseillaise is important not so much for the words as for the mass of emotions it excites in people's subconscious.

In his Nancy electoral program in 1889, Barrès tied the Jewish question to the national question. According to him, the Jews had kept their distinctive character and had become dominators in the society. They violated the principles of the Revolution by their isolated action, by their manner of monopolizing, by speculation, and by cosmopolitanism. In the army, the magistrature, the ministries, and all French administrations they sufficiently exceeded the normal proportion to which their number could give them a right [68. P. 213]. This dangerous disproportion has to be corrected and more respect must be given to «true French nationals». Jews appear powerful both in France and abroad, as the evidence of the Panama scandal (1898) had shown.

By 1894, Barrès loudly proclaimed himself a socialist. As editor of the superpatriotic short-lived periodical *La Cocarde* between September 1894 and March 1895, Barrès undertook to give his socialism a theoretical foundation. While formally aligning himself with the Socialist Left, he based his doctrine on a mystique of rootedness that was fundamentally conservative. This ambivalence reflected, in part, the ideological disparities that existed on the staff of *La Cocarde*, a staff composed of writers of the most diverse political convictions, from the anarchist Augustin Hamon at one end of the spectrum to the young royalist Charles Maurras at the other. Barrès's attempt to bridge these differences, to conciliate the opposites was part of his continuing effort to unify the Right and the Left under one banner [69. P. 236; P. 276]. At that time Barrès managed to give praise to socialist politician and Jean Jaures and ardent anti-Semite Drumont while *La Cocarde* announced socialist and nationalist political meetings.

By means of demonstrating his leftist stances to state policies Barrès advocated the establishment of a series of socialist production enterprises on a voluntary, local, and decentralized basis. In accordance with his doctrine of the earth and the dead», each enterprise needs to be in harmony with the ancestral traditions of the region to which it belonged, an expression of the provincial heritage, along the lines of the idea «federalism» presented by an anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865) in which autonomous socialist associations would maintain their individual identities. Such a socialism would be anti-Jacobin, anti-statist, as well as anti-Marxist. Instead of being imposed from above by Parisian bureaucrats «abstractly», it would be organized from below by the workers themselves «spontaneously». Barrès points out that he agrees both with Marx and Taine that society is moving in a collectivist direction, but, like Taine, he found Marxist collectivism too centralized and monolithic, a threat to regional diversity and provincial rootedness. Another potentially authoritarian feature of Barrès's national socialism announced by him in 1898 was his advocacy of a corporate state. Denouncing the «incompetent» parliamentarianism of the Third Republic, he asserted that voting should be done on an economic and professional rather than on simply a geographical basis, workers forming their own unions or corporations, farmers theirs, small businessmen theirs, and so on [70. P. 238, 245].

The novels written by D'Annunzio and Barrès in the 1890s and political statements they made during this period (mostly Barrès) served as not only witness of political turmoil in political life of France (Dreyfus Affair, Panama scandal) and Italy (seemingly corrupted political system identified with Giovanni Giolitti) but also as a guide to a new type of action.

### War protagonists

French regions Alsace and Lorraine, occupied by Germany during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 was at the core of Barrès's political thought and literary activity throughout his life. He always demonstrated his intricate belonging to Lorraine, the region of his birth. The dream about revanche was one of the main reasons why he supported the Boulangist movement from the very start. To his mind, the force of a country was proportional to the number of rifles that its citizens could command. It was vital for France to be strong and to assert itself against the foreigners. In 1884 Barrès was writing of the special task of France, which was to recapture the stolen territory, and in particular, Metz and Strasbourg. In this way, the spirit of militarism was linked with the idea of regionalism. But the Nationalist campaign was also designed to put France on guard against the «cosmopolitan», or rather German, socialism which weakened the defense of the country [71]. Barrès saw his personal role in preserving French national culture in terms of tradition, protection, and decentralization.

Even on a personal level, relations with the foreigner were undesirable. Barrès' heroine, Colette Baudoche, perceived that «between her and the German soldier M. Asmus, it was not a personal question, but a French one». The premise behind this hatred of the foreigner was that France was the highest point of the world civilization, which was now being threatened. In spite of an early flirtation with Wagner, and in spite

of his frequent allusions to Goethe, he rejected German culture, as Blum said, because of his Latin taste, Western taste, meridional taste, and his detestation of the man of the north [72. P. 198-199]. As Curtis points out, «Wagner, Nietzsche, the excellent administrative system of the Germans counted little compared with the humiliation of the invasion» to Lorraine in 1870 and later menace». As early as 1884 he was writing of French special task, to recover the stolen territory», and he always believed that French resistance to Germanization was a matter of organic necessity. Not without reason Leon Daudet once called him «the watchman of the frontier» [73. P. 201].

Over the time of the Dreyfus affair (1894–1906) which divided the Third Republic into two political camps Barrès made loads of emotional statements some of which were directly associated with ardent anti-Semitism: «We are with the flag against the band of politicians, the governmental world enslaved to Judaism and composed for the most part of notorious traitors who would not let Dreyfus be condemned» [74. P. 204-205].

In 1902, making a speech at the third attendance of the French Homeland League which brought together prominent right-wing intellectuals and anti-dreyfusars, Barrès announced:

In that small area (Lorraine – *M.C.*), the bodies of Frenchmen and Germans are heaped together to promote a vigorous growth of vegetation: some thirty trees spring up to heaven. Germany may wish so self-consciously that the spirit of France and the spirit of the Fatherland unite only in the ultimate state of a common humanity, or in the bosom of God. But in reality they place us beyond the pale, they campaign for the destruction of our tongue and our thought. *This is a holy war.* In the land of Metz and Strasbourg, Germans, more cruel than orientals, who cut down olive trees and fill up wells, are realizing their dream of destruction. They prevent the minds of little French children from thinking like Frenchmen. They overwhelm them with German novels and German ideas, and like brushwood burying a living source, choke a sensibility which for centuries had *refreshed the race* and which these children receive from their parents [75. P. 191].

Before World War I Barrès published two novels – *In the Service of Germany* (1905), and *Colette Baudoche* (1909) in which he raised the dilemma facing people of French culture who had chosen to remain in the occupied territory. Barrès was convinced that France was weak against Germany because it makes no effort to resist; but the conquered provinces, reacting against German brutality, maintain their strength and vigor. Thus the provinces, if they are returned, will be a major force in regenerating the national spirit of France. German culture succeeds only in awakening an aggressive sense of awareness in the majority of the native population. German laws, despite a certain superficial appeal, cannot suborn the French mentality. The reason Barrès gives to that is because German laws are aimed at people in a lower state of development than the French. Germans stick strictly to the letter of the law and within these limits act basely and selfishly with no indulgence or regard for others as individuals. The French, on the other hand, possess to a high degree the notion of honor which transcends the letter of the law, the better to impose the spirit of generosity [76. P. 95].

In the novel *Uprooted* (1898) Barrès uses the terms «German», «Protestant» and «barbarian» opposite the terms «Celtic», «Roman», «French», «Catholic» and «civilization». In 1917, three years after the start of the World War I, he justifies the reasons to fight against the German invader in the following terms: «Regionalism and tradition, which is the life of the soul, sustains our armies in the most thorough way» [77. P. 238]. To his mind, Catholics are trying to preserve Catholicism from pernicious German influences of Kantianism, higher criticism, and modernism. German victory would be a triumph for Metternich or Marx and the destruction of that proper French socialist tradition which «seeks forms of harmony with Fourier and forms of justice with Proudon» [78. P. 239].

At the start of the First World War Barrès called for a *union sacree*, for his countrymen to forget their differences and to fight as one against the common foe. In 1917, he declared «let us all put ourselves in step, in military step, and then on with the music.» In 1918, he spoke of Joan of Arc as a symbol of French unity, worthy of the «profound veneration» of revolutionaries, royalists, republicans, and Caesarians alike. In her name, he said, «we wish to affirm our reconciliation» and achieve a «collaboration of religion, patriotism, poetry and the spirit of war» [79. P. 273].

Doty notes that the exceptional feature of Barrès' career between 1906 and the outbreak of the war is that he increasingly became a part of the political establishment rather than its enemy. It referred to his refusal to support progressive tax reform and nationalization of the railroads. From then he regularly voted for

government repression of trade union activity. That gave a reason to characterize his political behavior as a man of the Center. When the war broke out, he welcomed the conflict as the occasion for France's moral rejuvenation and devoted himself to propaganda sustaining morality on the home front. It was no surprise that when during the military campaign prime-minister Clemenceau employed dictatorial measures against war dissenters, Barrès was one of his staunchest supporters.

The idea of war was always supported by D'Annunzio as a possibility to assert personal dignity and revive national spirit. His first detailed approach to the evolution of technology in the modern world D'Annunzio connected with the idea of military nationalism. In the articles from the late 1880s he described warships sunk by the newest torpedo boats. In *Naval Odes* (1892) the poet experimented with poeticizing the torpedo boat, which appeared to be a thing of beauty because it was an instrument of destruction. In the novel *Maia*, D'Annunzio glorified new machines and inventions since they were applied to aggressive campaigns abroad. In *Maybe yes, maybe no* (1910) the author's protagonist «drove along the ancient Roman road with a warlike roar similar to the beat of a vast metal drum» [80. P. 80].

Shortly before the start of the World War I D'Annunzio returned to Italy from France (where he lived for several years) and made public speeches in favor of Italy's entry on the side of the Allies. The outbreak of the war gave D'Annunzio the opportunity to personally fulfill the idea of courageous hero he had portrayed in the pages of his novels. He himself was a combatant aboard the torpedo boats. While he could not be relied on by the state authorities to help out in any very strenuous or long-continued campaign, his individual dramatic achievements, such as running the gauntlet of the Austrian fleet in a motor boat, won him sensational publicity throughout the country [81. P. 166]. He undertook several airborne flight missions, and suffered the loss of sight in one eye during a flying accident. Several times he drew up a detailed report for the Italian high command that called for the development of squadrons of torpedo-carrying aircraft. Helping to raise the spirits of the Italian public, still bittered by the Caporetto disaster in 1917, the writer on 9 August 1918, as a commander of the 87th fighter squadron La Serenissima, organized one of the great feats of the war, leading 9 planes in a 700 mile round trip to drop propaganda leaflets on Vienna. The War strengthened D'Annunzio's nationalist and irredentist views and made him one of the most famous representative of the new interwar political movement which unified active citizens with military background.

### Pre-fascists?

Given the enormous accumulation of information about the main two intellectuals of this study, it is still hard to give a precise answer to the question whether Gabriele D'Annunzio and Maurice Barrès were personally responsible for giving birth to political tradition associated with European fascism. Chaitin (2008) nicely points out that such different intellectuals as Auguste Comte, Hippolyte Taine, Emile Durkheim, Gabriel Tarde and Gustave Le Bon all believed in some form of hereditary determinism as well as in the subordination of the individual to the group. Like Schopenhauer, Wilhelm Wundt, and Sigmund Exner and some other thinkers of the period, they also upheld the *anti-Cartesian view* that affect and instinct take precedence over individual reason and that thought itself is the product of the impersonal forces of a collective unconscious. The anti-individualist social theories of positivism were combined in a strange alliance with the philosophy of the subject derived straight from Kant and the Enlightenment via Condorcet, Quinet, Proudhon, and Renouvier, among others, in order to serve as the ideological basis of opportunist Barrès's nationalism [82. P. 79].

It is important to note here how two provincial authors who demonstrated individualist outlook during the sufficient number of years and expressed their disgust with demands of the large public managed to become widely admired. The popularity of Barrès peaked due to changes in collective consciousness among French citizens because of political scandals in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. An American visitor to France in 1914 found Barrès spoken of everywhere as the most influential writer of his day: his position was «almost without parallel since Chateaubriand» [83. P. 3]. The final period of Barrès's creativity represents his vision of a regenerated nation as a well-articulated ideology of conservative national socialism, comparable in power to activity of D'Annunzio in that period.

During the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the appropriate object for intellectualized attack on politics arrived on the scene in the person of Giovanni Giolitti (1842–1928). Long before fascist writers made him the epitome of all that their antibourgeois revolution would eradicate, he had already become the recognized evil genius of Italian politics, a man without scruples or erudition whose intimate knowledge of bureaucratic machinery had enabled him to fashion permanent parliamentary majorities by means of election rigging. The

movement within Italy to purify the nation of this corrupting influence began in the 1890's [84. P. 53-54]. Salomone (1943) argues that the new Italy was born of the clash of intelligence with necessity, of the war waged by desire upon reality, and of the irrepressible conflict between history and myth. Such classical authors as Machiavelli and Vico were vivified and fused with the great currents of European thought and soon they were adopted as secular guides toward a historic transformation, the «redemption» of Italy [85. P. 170]. Thayer (1964) explains the process of Italian *transformismo* in the following way:

Deeper than the fear of being discredited by Italian voters was the realization among many Italian conservatives that no theory of the nation - of the strong and durable State – could succeed if it left out the masses. This was not peculiar to Italian rightist thought. The Action Francaise spoke for the people, and in Germany the leadership principle under National Socialism had to square its elite concept with the popular base as essential to all modern national philosophies. In the hands of young intellectuals who were properly of the generation of the *Postrisorgimento*, born too late to recall the wars for unification, conservative ideology became subversive and revolutionary [86. P. 132].

The ideas of national redemption and regeneration from decadence are related to the concept of political myth which gained recognition mainly due to the writings of Georges Sorel (1847–1922) at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Popular French philosopher of modernism Anri Bergson criticized the sphere of objective science as an optical illusion. In *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903), he introduced «of a one kind of knowledge which stops at the relative, and of the second that, wherever possible it attains the absolute» [87. p. 125]. It is artists, states Bergson, who potentially possess such intuitive vision, for they alone are able to perceive the «original harmony», and «the inner life of things». The political effect of Bergsonian philosophy was to promote not a conservative climate but one given to emotional reaction – an activated idealism which radical intellectuals began to elaborate in Italy during the Libyan War (1911-12) and which fit in well with the sense of renewal associated with the Great War. The struggle was backed up by many the representatives of the leftist movement – syndicalists – who regarded it as the equivalent of revolution. The latter were much better “understood” by ultraconservative nationalists of the Giolittian period than by the official Socialists who had become part of the system. By similar reasoning, the World War I was perceived by the radical intellectuals not a war of competing capitalisms, but as a revolutionary war against Prussian oppression. By the end of the war many former syndicalists had gone so far from their original position as to stress, not class struggle, but class collaboration in the interest of the nation as a whole.

In several respects the way to public acceptance of Barrès resembles the one of D'Annunzio, and it is worth remembering that the two writers had a long, if not particularly close, friendship. Despite all their prolific writing and experience of political participation, Barres and D'Annunzio were not political philosophers, in the sense of having a systematic approach to political problems. Having come under the spell of the decadent writers during the 1880s, Barrès subsequently shifted direction, publishing a series of «novels of national energy» and elaborating a «cult of the ego». These anti-decadent positions closely resemble D'Annunzio's project of national revitalization and his praises of the militant, ruthless new political agenda. By the 1890s both writers could be heard loudly advocating a cultural renewal with aggressively nationalistic overtones. Following the same course as Barrès, D'Annunzio replaced the fin-de-siècle decadent pessimism with an optimism based on a conviction in the historic mission of his nation; and he makes himself the voice of energy, youth, and a newly disciplined version of those masses which at the beginning of the 1890s had seemed to him perilously close to dethroning the class of intellectuals [88. P. 148-152]. Power and instinct become the watchwords of this movement, replacing the tedious negotiations of a parliamentary democracy.

The influence of Barrès and D'Annunzio on political and social process in their countries in the period of fin-de-siècle is highly debatable. Adamson (1990) argues that while D'Annunzio was widely read by the next generation, «he offered them neither the new faith nor the model of an avant-garde intellectual for which they were searching, and his reputation among them, initially high, steadily declined over the course of the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century» [89. P. 370]. Although he still admits that the poet «creatively reshaped the rhetorical strategies of secular-religious, political performance» during the WWI. Yarrow places the emphasis on the practical side of his activity, especially during the period of the Free State of Fiume (1919-20), when D'Annunzio «added poetic license to the accomplishments of a soldier and Mussolini was but a secondary light in the Fascist heavens» [90. P. 166]. The author also calls attention to D'Annunzio's scheme for settling economic conflicts, since it was the first abortive attempt to put into practice some of the ideas that later were talked about under the name of “national syndicalism” [91. P. 168].

The evolution of political thought of Barrès from the *cult of the self* to conservative traditionalism through the period of excitement about «national socialism» is truly spectacular. What he and the nationalists had considered the party of disorder at the time of the Third Republic had become the party of order. As it did, Barrès had been forced to seek a new axiom, religion, or prince of men to satisfy his search for selfhood. Boulangism, socialism, the «national socialism» of the 1898 campaign in Nancy, and the fascist-like program he developed for the nationalist leagues had all successively failed either to take power or to analyse his world. There had been no new «prince of men» since Boulanger [92. P. 236]. In 1913, Barrès said: «This country wants neither king, nor emperor, nor parliamentary republic, nor socialism. What does it want? I do not know. Something unknown, new, plainly made of eternal materials, but with form. Boulangism was an attempt. A national ministry? It is worth a try, but *toward what?*» [93. P. 235-236]. It seems like an open-ended question indeed.

Curtis argues that Barrès' nationalism had been one of defense and retraction, not of expansion. The period of fin-de-siècle was the time when nationalism began turning inward as a means of internal strength rather than of external power. It was in this period that French nationalism relinquished its always tentative associations with liberalism and became firmly attached to the Right. The spirit of militarism, the hostility to foreign nations, the economic and political, protectionism, but above all, the denial of individual rights in the interests of the nation state, and the proscription of internal opposition and dissent, signified a radical departure from nationalism is its liberal period [94. P. 254]. But does it mean that his political heirs can only be found on the far-right side of political spectrum? Shenton assumes that if Barrès had been born forty years later, he would have been the most fervent of Gaullists. His tragedy was that he lived in a time when political leaders were so uninspiring, caught up as they were in the unedifying maneuvering of parliamentary democracy under the Third Republic [95. P. 35]. Nevertheless, the connection of socialism and nationalism has existed for a long time. Weber (1962) points out that «it is like one of those common law unions which practice and habit render commonplace and extremely unremarkable; an alliance that interests us here and that, as stated, has never lacked supporters in France since the days of Barrès» [96. P. 275].

Both D'Annunzio and Barrès were interested in an extraordinarily limited number of political issues, were constantly repetitive, often ambivalent and equivocal about those things that they found worth their attention. Charles Maurras spoke of an immobile mask» stuck to Barrès, Anatole France gave description to one of his books as «floating and indeterminate», and M. Domenach confessed his difficulty in choosing any of his 56 works as the Barrèsian work [97. P. 57].

However, they provoked a strong reaction among their contemporaries - intellectuals around the turn of the 20th century. They were read and sometimes imitated by James Joyce, Henry James, Stefan George, and Heinrich and Thomas Mann. For some of them they were consummate poets, prodigiously talented lyrical voices within the current of poetic decadence, for others they represented attractive sensuality and heroic desire for act which could inspire a new generation of Europeans to overcome the destructive consequences of positivism and naturalism in the sphere of art and the ideological influence of liberalism in the sphere of politics. Toward the end of World War I, Thomas Mann declared bitterly that D'Annunzio and other nationalist writers in Europe had created a «treacherously beguiling politics of aestheticism» [98. P. 2]. According to him, these authors offered to lead their audiences in an exhilarating quest for an ideal existence – «sublime, powerful, innocent, victorious, violent, and particularly beautiful life», to be won through ruthless action and through an «amoral and exuberant masculine brutality». Thus, Mann wisely diagnosed the practitioners of this «politics of aestheticism» exploiting the power of art in order to infuse new national ideals into the whole population of a nation.

European fin-de-siècle art was a compound phenomenon in its beliefs, aspirations and basic values which exposed necessity in moving toward an undefined and unpredictable future. The fact of unique and powerful contributions by modernist nationalist writers to the European fascist project of countering «materialist» views (whether capitalist or communist) with an appeal to spirituality seems evident. But one of the most important problems for the researchers examining the emergence of radical ideologies at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is to grasp the relationship between the modernist writers' aestheticism of fin-de-siècle with their political objectives because the Modernities of political technologies and human liberation often come into inevitable contradiction with each other. And, even more important, we should take into consideration the fact that art modernist groups and political movements of that time were dynamic phenomena which reflected latent ideals of certain social groups of European countries during the transitional period of 1890-1914. That is why it is fascinating to see how writers Maurice Barrès and Gabriele D'Annunzio managed to make apparent changes in their prose from individualistic hyper-aestheticism to nationalism com-

bined with overt attacks against reason and liberal humanism. The shift from decadent literature to ardent and somewhat aggressive style of modernist vanguard literature of that time was reflected by the intellectuals who tried to extrapolate modernist ideals of cultural revolt toward the sphere of pragmatic political reality.

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Received 03.04.2019

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### **ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ ЕВРОПЕЙСКОГО ОБЩЕСТВА ВО ВЗГЛЯДАХ РАДИКАЛЬНЫХ ИНТЕЛЛЕКТУАЛОВ НА РУБЕЖЕ ВЕКОВ (1890–1914 гг.)**

DOI: 10.35634/2587-9030-2019-3-2-214-231

Fin-de-siècle («финдесьебль») – французский термин, обозначающий конец века и используемый также для характеристики качественных изменений в разных областях общественной жизни европейского общества между 1890 и 1914 годами. На пороге 20го века можно было наблюдать феномен формирования модернистской политической идеологии нового типа, которая отлична от «идеологии правых и левых», провозглашает необходимость культурной революции против декадентского буржуазного общества и ассоциирует данный протест с новыми формами политического воздействия. Известные писатели периода рубежа веков Габриэле Д'Аннунцио и Морис Баррес воплотили эту тенденцию в своих произведениях. В данной статье утверждается, что, несмотря на заявленную попытку разрыва с идеалами «старой традиции» 19 века и поиска путей внутреннего личностного освобождения, представители новой интеллектуальной традиции представили часть идей, которые в дальнейшем ассоциировались с европейскими тоталитарными идеологиями фашизма и нацизма. В данном исследовании предпринимается попытка описать эволюцию взглядов двух авторов на национальные общества, принимая во внимание определенное количество противоречий в рамках периода рубежа веков, прежде всего между тенденциями декаданса, ярко проявленными в европейской культуре последней четверти 19 века, и стремлением к индивидуальному духовному обновлению, между заявленным культом личностного совершенства и коллективным мифом политического национализма.

*Ключевые слова:* модернизм, национал-социализм, декаданс, финдесьебль, консерватизм, фашизм, западная цивилизация, политический радикализм.

Поступила в редакцию 03.04.2019

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