Introduction

Political correctness (PC) is a measure that attempts to prevent all expressions or actions that could offend or marginalize certain people or groups of people and aims to spread justice and fairness by making the public sensitive to those most vulnerable in society. Starting in the 1970s as an ironic self-criticism of leftists, PC would soon be appropriated by various political groups. It would also generate much criticism. Many PC policies are used to define and correct language, especially linguistic markers of race, gender, and sexual orientation. The belief that altering language usage will change the public's perception of reality and, finally, reality itself, has led to an important reform of gender terms, personal pronouns, and gender pronouns. Certain terms and pronouns were amended and new ones defined. Since the late 1980s, the idea of "inclusive language" has been an important part of Western culture. In 2016, the State of New York issued a list with thirty-one "protected genders" among which there was also the "gender fluid" and the "gender gifted."

How would Zhuangzi (also Zhuang Zhou or Chuang Tzu),[1] a Chinese philosopher who lived in the fourth century BC, have reacted to these linguistic reforms? Zhuangzi is a pivotal figure of Daoism, which is, alongside Confucianism, one of the great philosophical systems of China. Zhuangzi was a language skeptic, which means that he did not believe that language could convey the true meanings of the world. This view set Daoism in opposition to Confucianism, which is famous for its vast "language correction project." Confucianism required clear standards for the use of names because Confucians thought that "if names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things."[2] For the *Zhuangzi*, the name is not the real thing and "names are arbitrary." The *Zhuangzi* provocatively holds that "a dog could be a sheep."[3]

For Confucius, the rectification of language is equivalent to moral cultivation. Does the *Zhuangzi*'s position toward Confucianism join some of the criticism with which the PC discourse is confronted in our times? Critics of PC, such as John Lea, believe that PC's purpose is "to induce correct opinion rather than to search for wisdom and liberate the mind" (Lea 2008, 29). More radically, Doris Lessing writes that PC, just like Communism, "debase[s] language and, with language, thought" (Lessing 1994). Does this criticism reflect the *Zhuangzi*'s position about language? Would Zhuangzi have argued that PC creates a (linguistic) dream world made of rules, policies, and words that is no more real than "Zhuangzi dreaming that he is a butterfly"? The Butterfly Parable, which is the arguably most famous text in the *Zhuangzi*, says: "Once upon a time, I dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of my happiness as a butterfly, unaware that I was myself. Soon I awaked, and there I was, veritably myself again" (trans. Giles 2019, 47).[4]

The Butterfly Parable is the last text to appear in the *Zhuangzi*'s chapter called "Adjustment of Controversies" (also translated as "The Equalization of Things" or as "The Smoothing out of Differences"), which deals with the topic of "transformation" (*hua* 化). In the parable, Zhuangzi does not know whether he is a butterfly dreaming that he is Zhuangzi or whether Zhuangzi is dreaming that he is a butterfly. This means that Daoism undermines identity, reality, and language, and thus also gender identity and gender reality, as they are expressed through language.

Daoism and Dandyism

The provocative sentence that "a dog could be a sheep" fascinated the Anglo-Irish writer Oscar Wilde, who was one of the first readers of the *Zhuangzi* when it appeared in its English translation by Herbert Giles in 1890. The young Wilde wrote one of the first reviews of the book and arguably designed his theory of "dandyism" in accordance with some of its principles. Dandyism was a challenging fashion movement, and it was very influential throughout the nineteenth century in the upper strata of English and French societies. One of dandyism's most prominent characteristics is that it questions the rules and codes of correctness in language and behavior. The present book will show that dandyism also has a very peculiar approach toward today's PC.

The link between dandyism and Daoism has been noted by several scholars, and all of them concentrate on Oscar Wilde.[5] Some point out that Wilde did not only write the review of the *Zhuangzi*, but that there are many parallels between Wilde's dandyism and Daoism in his work. Jerusha McCormack picks up the "correctness" topic and depicts both Zhuangzi and Wilde as "contrarians," that is, as people who "think against prevailing conventions in a way that appears to be systematically perverse, hence 'contrary' to the dominant discourse" (McCormack 2017, 77). She concludes that, historically, Wilde's anti-Victorianism mirrors Daoist anti-Confucianism because "the kind of society advocated by Confucius and that of high Victorian England had many similarities" (78).

Is there a connection between Daoism and the unwritten philosophy of the nineteenth-century dandies? In some way, the connection is counterintuitive. Daoism, as it rejected the Chinese clan system, "sought a return to a more ancient and animal-like world that rejected all artifice, culture, and order, and took a very passive attitude toward human affairs" (Li Zehou 2019, 67). Can this back-to-nature movement really be compared with the world of the masters or urban life, the dandies? I believe that it can, and the connection can best be established by looking at what both say about political correctness.

Daoism was against Confucianism, and Wilde fought the puritan Victorian moral earnestness of his society, ultimately being imprisoned for homosexuality. This means that both Zhuangzi and Wilde combated similar "sanitizing" social tendencies and undermined a certain form of "correctness" by using peculiar counter-methods reaching from the aesthetic to the anarchic. McCormack's parallelism is driven by the fact that Wilde read Giles's translation of the *Zhuangzi* and wrote a review of it. For McCormack, "Zhuangzi's thinking was certainly crucial in shaping Wilde's concept of the dandy" (93). Indeed, it seems that the *Zhuangzi* made a lasting impact on Wilde. In a correspondence, Wilde addressed his mock-rival James Abbott McNeill Whistler as "Dear Butterfly" (Wilde 1962, 170) and wrote to his friend Ada Leverson that *The Importance of Being Earnest* is a play "written by a butterfly for butterflies" (382). However, McCormack also wonders how Wilde's earlier thinking could have developed along similar lines even before having read the book: "Wilde's thinking at this point could hardly be said to be influenced by Zhuangzi. Yet the tenor of the argument as well as its mischievous style are uncannily close to that of Zhuangzi's exposition of the ambiguities of 'the real'" (78). For some scholars, the fact that such elements are

present in Wilde's early work even before having read the *Zhuangzi* is reason enough to question the existence of any Daoist influence in Wilde's writings: "The critiques that deny Chuang Tzu's influence largely develop along the rationale that Wilde had already formed most of his own views on art, life and society before he came to read Chuang Tzu" (Murray 1971, 4).

McCormack establishes numerous parallels between Wilde and Daoism but rarely refers to a broader concept of dandyism that, in Wilde's time, had already been in place for three generations. The other scholars follow the same approach. In this study, I want to widen the spectrum and look not only at Wilde but at dandyism more generally because earlier dandies are not less "Daoist," even though no direct Daoist influence on them can be detected. The parallels are indeed amazing. Not only can dandies be contrasted with Confucian moralists or with pedantic logicians like Huizi, but Confucian moralists and the Logicians from the School of Names have clear equivalents in what earlier generations of dandies had designated as their enemies: the snob and the careerist.

In the present book, I put a special focus on the founder of dandyism, George "Beau" Brummell. Brummell fought hypocrite aristocratic culture not, like Wilde, during the Victorian era but roughly seventy years earlier, during the English Regency period.

Baudelaire explains that dandyism appears "in periods of transition, when democracy is not yet all-powerful, and aristocracy is only just beginning to totter and fall" (Baudelaire 1986, 28).[6] The English Regency period, the time during which dandyism most consistently developed, was an unstable time swept up by great social, political, and economic change, which creates a parallel with China. Daoism thrived during the Warring States period (475–221 BC), which was a time of political division in which feudal systems were decaying. Politically, the situation resembled that of the Holy Roman Empire in its decadence, but, paradoxically, it was also an era of great cultural and intellectual expansion. The thoughts and ideas of this period remain important to this day in many Asian countries.[7]

The *Zhuangzi* presents a variety of "counterheroes," such as the drunkard who masters the "art" of falling from a cart without getting hurt, or the swimmer who dives into the most dangerous waterfalls without drowning. These protagonists excel at "useless arts," and the dandy could very well be another example of such unlikely characters from Daoist "knack stories." Brummell spent five hours in front of the

mirror binding his tie, and, equally meticulously, waxed his shoes down to the soles. He excelled at these activities like nobody else, but his art remains useless. What is this philosophy that attempts to make statements by engaging in useless activities? The concept of dandyism can be better understood by viewing it in light of Daoism. Both the Daoist and the dandy do nothing, but they do "nothing" in a particular way. "Of petty uselessness great usefulness is achieved," says the *Zhuangzi*.[8]

Both dandyism and Daoism adhere to an idle but fluid moving around, for which, in the nineteenth century, the word *flâner* was coined. The dandy is a flâneur, and in the *Zhuangzi*, *you* (遊) stands for a similarly aimless roaming, rambling, or sauntering. *You* has been translated as "going rambling without a destination" or "free and easy wandering." While Confucians focus on moral and personal duty, the *Zhuangzi* promotes carefree wandering (*xiaoyaoyou* 逍遥游). The flâneur never stops but sees men and women pass by while he is walking. Similar to the Daoist engaging in *you*, the flâneur's view "is constituted in multiple respects by our relation to the landscape" (Moeller and D'Ambrosio 2018, 11).

As the flâneur moves around in life "with unspectacular excellence and spontaneity" (Moeller and D'Ambrosio 2017, 164), he has no time to confer names or pronouns upon the men and women that pass by. The dandy is not a language reformer but looks at society, men, women, transgender people, and many others in a detached way. In terms of gender, the dandy is a peculiar case because he is neither gay nor transgender or cross-dresser. But the flâneur is not simply gender-neutral either; he might have been "useless" for women but still exercised considerable attraction on women. "Of petty uselessness great usefulness is achieved."

As the Daoist-dandy strolls through society, he sees social reality not in terms of rules, speech codes, and other essences but rather as a unified totality of cultural existences that remains full of ambiguities. And both dandies and *you*-ing Daoists play with these ambiguities, which is why they are, by nature, opposed to all sorts of official correctness.

Wilde sees "uselessness" as a protest against the new businesslike lifestyle that keeps people running—not roaming: running after money but also running after the right ethics, through preaching, philanthropy, and mutual surveillance. In his review of the *Zhuangzi*, Wilde criticizes much of what we would today call "neoliberal culture." A rigorous and puritanical economy-based culture, not very ethical with regard to its economic principles (the Victorian age was also the great age of British colonialism) but issuing politically correct ethical appeals wherever it

could: "The doctrine of the uselessness of all useful things would not merely endanger our commercial supremacy as a nation but might bring discredit upon many prosperous and serious-minded members of the shop-keeping classes. What would become of our popular preachers, our Exeter Hall orators, our drawing-room evangelists?" (Wilde 1919, 186) There is, in Wilde's writings, a certain spirit of "live and let live" that contrasts with political correctness, which can be found in Daoist authors as well as in another Warring States philosopher who formulated an alternative to Confucian and Mohist thought. Yangzi, the founder of the Yangist school,[9] said that "if nobody would sacrifice a hair, if nobody would try to benefit the world, then the world would become orderly" (in Mair 1994, xxiii). This "order" will be established organically, that is, not by insisting on formal rules but by means of a tolerant cultural play.

Brummell and PC

What would Brummell, the foremost dandy, have said about political correctness? The *Trésor de la langue française* defines the dandy as somebody who has a total "disregard for social conventions and the ethics of the bourgeoisie." An anonymous author writing for *Blackwood's Edinburg Magazine* defined Brummell as "magnanimously mean, ridiculously wise, and contemptibly clever" (Anonymous 1844, 769). The secret of dandyism is not ethical engagement but rather the playful enactment of selfishness. The dandy is famous for his transgressive play not only with social rules but also with names as well as with genders. In one anecdote, Brummell goes to a certain Mrs. Thompson's ball without being invited but hopes to be able to get in with his friend the Prince Regent George. Unfortunately, George is late. Brummell makes "his best bow" and, "leisurely feeling in all his pockets to prolong the chances of the Prince's arrival," presents Mrs. Thompson with the invitation card to a certain Mrs. Johnson, who is Mrs. Thompson's rival in the East. "'That card, sir, is a Mrs. Johnson's; my name is Thompson." Brummell remains "perfectly cool" and replies: "Dear me, how very unfortunate! Really, Mrs. Johns—Thompson, I mean, I am very sorry for this mistake; but you know, Johnson and Thompson—and Thompson and Johnson, are really so much the same kind of thing" (from Jesse 1884, 1:101). This is Brummell's version of "The Equalization of Things." The dandy is very much aware of the importance given to names and titles, but

he intentionally disrespects them. The dandy is incorrect, but this does not mean that he simply neglects all conventions and acts carelessly. On the contrary, the dandy masters the conventions and ethics of the upper class better than anybody else. He challenges the rules of correctness, but he does so in such a polished way that it shames the most fervent defenders of correctness. His behavior can therefore be termed "polite incorrectness."

Political correctness is about being a perfect gentleman, and, in particular, about how to use the perfect language in all circumstances. The dandy does not combat this concept of correctness by simply being "incorrect" but rather creates his own parallel idea of the "incorrect gentleman" that he practices to perfection. Dandyism does not engage in a Confucian "correction" of names but is rather tempted by what Daoism calls the playful "chaotification" of names.

The Power of Language

Much of Western thought is obsessed with the power of language. Wrong essences (essentializations) need to be corrected by modifying language, and PC consistently follows this tendency of Western thought. From a Daoist point of view, PC invents new terms not in order to overcome essentialist thinking but to create new essences. For the *Zhuangzi*, human reason sets formal limitations to everything, and the mind puts essences in order so that something solid will be established around us. The mind constructs a reality; however, from a Daoist point of view, this is not "real" reality. Political correctness is therefore part of a project of reason that essentializes reality through words. Daoism attempts to transcend such linguistic distinctions. Like the "way" of dandyism, the Dao cannot be the "correct way." Daoist "heroes" like Robber Zhi are blunt and irreverent, constantly speaking up against hypocrisy and Confucian stiffness; they are thus the opposite inverse of the politically correct. In the *Zhuangzi*, Robber Zhi says to Confucius that "there's no robber worse than you. Why doesn't the world call you Robber Confucius instead of calling me Robber Zhi?" (trans. Graham 2001, 237). Knowing the Way does not require etiquette; it does not consist of learning the formal rules of good manners or correct behavior. "Knowing the Way" is a matter of "useless but efficient play," and both Daoism and dandyism develop this philosophical concept.

Political Correctness and Irony

Political correctness is an attitude serving the purpose of social well-being: it aims to control and modify behaviors and expressions that might offend or hurt certain categories of people, most of whom presumably belong to minority groups. Since the late 1980s, the term has been used to describe a preference for inclusive language, which is why an examination of PC in philosophico-linguistic terms is interesting. PC concentrates on various issues in which it seeks to obtain equality and social justice, often revolving around questions of religion, class, or disability. In everyday life, matters of race, gender, and sexual orientation have become dominant. In this book, I refer to the topic of gender most often because a reading of PC through Daoism turns out to be most pertinent when concentrating on the implications of gender in language. The term "politically correct" was originally picked up from communist sources and was "adapted from the concept of 'correct thinking' as in the English translation of Mao's Little Red Book" (Suhr and Johnson, 9; see also Perry 1992). There is thus a connection with "'correct lineism' as used within the Communist Party" (Suhr and Johnson). According to Paul Berman, PC was "an approving phrase on the Leninist left to denote someone who steadfastly toed the party line" (Berman 1992, 5). This means that PC came into use as a self-critical statement among leftists in the 1960s. Later, in the media and in public usage, PC began to describe programs associated with ideas of diversity and multiculturalism or the respect of minorities. The transformation is rather surprising. However, before adopting its present function, the term had been subjected to irony and parody. Gloria Steinem (quoted in Hess 2019, 127) states that, initially, the term "'politically correct' was invented by people in social-justice movements to make fun of ourselves," which means that PC was not meant to be sincere at all and had begun as a measure of self-ridicule and irony. In the 1970s and '80s, leftists used PC as a self-critical satire. Far from being a sincere political movement, PC was a leftist joke aimed at holier-than-thou liberals—by those same liberals. Also, it was not directed at the present but rather at the recent past by "acting out an ironic replay of the Bad Old Days (Before the Sixties) when every revolutionary groupuscule had a party line about everything" (Hall 1994, 164). Typically, PC people would address "some glaring examples of sexist or racist behavior by their fellow students in imitation of the tone of voice of the Red Guards or Cultural Revolution

Commissar" (164). As a critique, PC was thus directed at those who "over-politicize" issues that were originally nonpolitical: family life, marriage, sexual relations, religion. And the critique's targets were leftists: leftists ironically criticized leftists.[10]

Within the political context of the 1980s, PC morphed into something else. At the time of Reagan and Thatcher, PC became a "backlash against the 60s" (Hall 1994, 165), which means, first, that PC became ethicized, and second, that once the political right had taken up the theme, it became thoroughly politicized.

Political Correctness and Leftism

A further peculiarity is that this process went hand in hand with a crisis of the left. In the early 1980s in Western countries, leftist thought took a procapitalist turn, as it ceased defining itself as incompatible with capitalism. The old foundations of leftism were perturbed. In the wake of this, another event would determine the course of the left in an almost equally dramatic fashion. When Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan came to power, something unprecedented happened to the "individual." In the new laissez-faire style liberalism, individualism was given the status of a supreme value, and, surprisingly, this individualism appealed to everyone, regardless of their position on the political spectrum. The hedonism of the preceding hippie culture had laid the foundations for an individualist lifestyle, and by the end of the 1970s, individualism and identity search were no longer the exclusive values of the bourgeois right. It had become the lifestyle of conservative neoliberals as well as of leftists as the left could no longer counter this individualism with ideologies inspired by collectivism. Individualism had become the lifestyle par excellence. The ideological confusion that emerged from this change of direction, together with the procapitalist turn taken by leftist thought in general, has been a hallmark of leftist politics ever since. Having become both procapitalist and individualist, the left had to abandon most traditional socialist ideas. Its parties no longer spoke to, or for, the popular masses, which had already begun turning from the left anyway. The 1980s saw the "decline in active participation in mass political movements and a weakening influence and power of the 'old' social movements of the working class and industrial labor," writes Stuart Hall (1994, 167). Party discipline was no longer what it used to

be. Now it was not leftist parties but rather "individual" and independent social movements that began launching political initiatives. This development continues today.

The new economic and cultural constellations, which deprived the left of its traditional values, created a vacuum, and this vacuum would need to be filled. From here on, all that was left (for the left), was to speak up: not for the poor masses but for *other individuals*. Its principal occupation would become the fight against racism, intolerance, and the exclusion of individuals who were different, weak, or disadvantaged. Political correctness, semantically manipulated by the right, could serve as a welcome tool. The individuals that needed to be saved were not necessarily *literally* individuals, but they could also be represented by small coherent social groups motivated by ethnicity or gender. What the psychologist Jordan Peterson (Peterson et al. 2018, 37) has called the "new tribalism" emerges from these constellations.

Identity politics replaced socioeconomic theories like Marxism. However, the new cultural sensitivity could be just as suffocating as Marxism. Literature would now often be examined through the lenses of race and gender, as well as the new paradigm of multiculturalism. Though initially the new cultural sensitivity was supposed to broaden academic inquiry, often it "only narrowed our intellectual horizons," as writes Nathan Harden in his book *Sex and God at Yale*. Harden describes in his book on the new Ivy League academic culture a curious mixture of open-mindedness and closed, rigid formalism, which seems to resemble the culture that Alan Bloom had already announced in 1987 in *The Closing of the American Mind*.

Conservatives used PC in a different way: they imitated leftists by depicting themselves as oppressed and as victims, not of capitalism, but of the PC left. As a result, reasonable discussions about PC became gridlocked. The New Right thinking of the same era would reproach leftists for politicizing education (and pretty much everything else). They were not wrong, although their point falls a little flat: those who label leftists as PC are just as engaged in politicization.

This book tries to wrench the discussion from this gridlock, and to do so, it approaches PC from an unusual angle, represented by dandyism and Daoism. From a Daoist point of view, both the left and the right ethicized and politicized culture and were unwilling to accept culture for what it is: chaotic. Left and right launched dead-serious battles over PC, and each camp defended its position with the help of ethics. Today it is

difficult to even imagine that PC or anti-PC could be about aesthetics and not about ethics. Dandyism in particular, seems to adopt the behavior of the earlier pre-PC left, as dandies make fun of their own class, exalting and exaggerating a certain snobbish behavior, spicing it up with some biting irony. There is also a parallel with the *Zhuangzi*. According to Moeller, many texts in the *Zhuangzi*, especially the famous story of butcher Ding, were initially parodies. Later, some readers ceased seeing the irony and the humor, and the texts lost much of their subversive power (see Moeller 2020b).

The Aesthetics of Transgression

So is it true to say the dandy is not politically correct but is therefore "politically incorrect"? As mentioned, the *Trésor de la langue française* defines the dandy as somebody with a total "disregard of social conventions as well as the ethics of the bourgeoisie." Chateaubriand held that "Brummell reveals the proud independence of his character by keeping his hat on, rolling on the sofas [and] stretching his boots in front of the ladies who are sitting in front of him, all of them in admiration" (Chateaubriand 1836, 273). The dandy is also famous for his transgressive play with names and titles. The Johnson-Thompson anecdote of Brummell going to a ball without being invited has been related previously. The narrator (Jesse 1844, 1:101) depicts the adversary as losing control over the situation while Brummell stays cool, makes his "best bow, leisurely feeling in all his pockets" as he searches for an invitation card. The "incensed lady" Mrs. Thompson takes the card and "haughtily throwing it from her in a climax of vexation and anxiety to get rid of him," says that it is not her card, whereupon Brummell tells her, always "affecting the most innocent surprise," that some names are simply (almost) equal. There is an equalization of names, and Brummell stays perfectly cool when spelling it out in front of the lady. A similar confusion of names or titles emerges from the anecdote of Brummell attending a ball that was organized by a certain Lady Jersey. Brummell called up her carriage, mentioning the name "Mrs. Fitzherbert" instead of "mistress" and "laid a strong emphasis on the insulting epithet" (Jesse 1844, 256). Forgetting about names is part of the dandy's phlegm, and it can be considered his version of "no-mind." McCormack notes that the "difficulty of 'naming' is also central to many of Wilde's plays. Is a woman 'good' or 'bad'? Who

is Jack, after all?" (McCormack, 95n3). In *Dorian Gray*, Basil calls Henry "Harry" for no particular reason. The dandy is aware of the importance of names and titles, but he disrespects them on purpose.

The dandy is incorrect, but this does not mean that he simply neglects all conventions and acts carelessly; on the contrary, though the dandy has a total "disregard of social conventions and the ethics for the bourgeoisie" (Trésor), he masters the conventions and ethics of the bourgeoisie better than anybody else. The dandy is determined by a paradox. He is revolted and likes to provoke powerful people; however, contrary to the simply "incorrect" person, he not only occupies a firm place in the highest social strata where such conventions are applied but is even admired by its members because, in general, he *does* follow the rules very well. He is integrated and accepted, but the reason is not that he is politically correct. The gap between him and the rest of the "simply correct" community remains constantly obvious. The dandy *seems* to follow the rules, that is, he pretends; however, he does it so well that his pretense becomes genuine. He goes along with conventions but at the same time makes it clear that he does not take them seriously. Following the rules is for him an aesthetic play, which means that he does not accept the rules' ethical justification.

In a century of conformity, the dandy exercises a cult of difference but does so not by reforming but rather by parodying the rules of conformity. Reformers were plentiful, and most of them were moralizers and modernizers. The dandy breaks the rules of correctness; but, contrary to the opponents of PC that are increasingly prevalent in our times, he challenges correctness in such a polished way that it shames the most fervent defenders of this correctness. When Brummell finds the champagne of bad quality, he raises his glass and says, "John, give me some more of that cider" (Jesse 1844, 1:105); or he feeds the caviar to the cat and the truffle stuffed capon to the host's dog when the quality is inferior (Jesse 1910, 1:99, 2:25). The dandy's incorrectness is aimed at those who believe themselves to be very correct. He is thus reminiscent of Diogenes of Sinope, who rebuffed the powerful with his cynicism. To a lady who politely remarks that he must be embarrassed if somebody were to see him talking to such an unfashionable person as herself, he replies: "Don't mention it; there is no one near us" (Jesse 1844, 1:112). There is also some ironically applied megalomania. Brummell is reported to have said to Colonel McMahon, the prince's private secretary, about the prince regent: "I made him what he is, and I can unmake him" (1844, 1:257).

The dandy shocks—but with style. Through exaggerations, the dandy takes the concept of the perfect gentleman to an extreme, which means that he empties the concept of the gentleman of its ethical content. He keeps the form but fills it with absurdities.

The dandy is provocative and against correctness, but he is not the rugged chap who bluntly claims to be politically incorrect and behaves accordingly. His provocations are not of the dramatic or kitschy kind (kitsch will be dealt with in various contexts in this book), and Marie-Christine Natta is even convinced that "provocation plays no role" in Brummell's life (Natta 1989, 26–27).

The anti-PC rugged chap might seek to instigate a revolution. Meanwhile, the dandy has no intention of instigating a revolution of the politically incorrect because revolutions are always ethically motivated. The dandy has only an aesthetics. He sublimates the revolution into something that looks revolted without reaching the state of revolution and calmly continues playing the game of high society; by doing this, he changes the rules slightly. The dandy has no political program and no theory, not about aesthetics nor gender. He just does what he finds appropriate, and he does it with such consistency that observers sometimes imagine mysterious and unwritten rules behind his random behavior.