NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

THE MUSIC AND THOUGHT OF FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

A MAJOR DOCUMENT

SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT

for the degree
DOCTOR OF MUSIC

Field of Piano Performance

By
Benjamin T. Moritz

EVANSTON, ILLINOIS
June 2002
Abstract

Due to the relative obscurity of Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche’s piano music, it is of considerable interest to musicians in general and pianists in particular to become familiarized with this overlooked portion of Nietzsche’s works. In order to do this, I propose to thoroughly study the body of works, evaluate their potential appeal to pianists, and present my findings. In so doing, I also hope to discover the relation between his philosophical works and their application in his music. Underneath this conceptual umbrella, several different areas will be researched, and I have undertaken to describe these potential avenues for research in this brief.

I am approaching this subject as perhaps many others who are aware of Nietzsche’s musical output have approached it; that is by means of his philosophy. Nietzsche was first and foremost a thinker and throughout his writings you find an unusual capacity for disciplined, critical and intensive thought aimed at anything stumbling into his mental path. In this particular example, his writings on music far surpass his music both in sheer quantity and, as most critics charge, quality. To name just the larger works, *The Birth of Tragedy, The Gay Science, Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, and *The Antichrist* all deal at length with the subject of music. Add to that the numerous smaller essays, letters to friends, and the large correspondence between Nietzsche and Wagner, and you find that Nietzsche is unique among philosophers in the level of importance placed upon music. In contrast, his actual musical writings (recently compiled and published as *Der Musicalische Nachlass* by Curt Paul Janz) fill only one volume, and if only complete works are taken into consideration, even less than that.
Therefore, if Nietzsche himself wrote about music more than he wrote music, I will follow his lead and examine his philosophy first. As to the objection that music must stand on its own and not rely on external explanations for validation, I will not use this brief to get into such lengthy debates. In the more specific case of Nietzsche, he was a spiritual descendent of Hegel (antithetically), Schopenhauer, and for the early years of his life, an eager protégé of Richard Wagner. As with these thinkers, Nietzsche strongly felt that music did something, that it had aesthetic value insofar as it had cognitive value. Therefore if one does not know what the music is to do, one can hardly evaluate its effectiveness in reaching that goal.

Despite the far-ranging acceptance of Nietzsche and the accompanying translations scholars have carried out to expose others to Nietzsche’s writings, many of his shorter essays and correspondences remain exclusively in their original German. This is especially applicable to his writings about his own music, which he never published and exist only in collected correspondences. A final arm of my research will delve into the relation of Nietzsche and Richard Wagner and use this understanding to shed light on Nietzsche’s early musical works; those of which that were written during his infatuation with Wagner. Nietzsche’s intense and volatile relationship with Wagner played such a large role in Nietzsche’s life and thought that any investigation into his philosophical thought, let alone his musical thought, would be incomplete without delving into this “friendship.”
I would like to thank Jesse Rosenberg who gave me a great deal of helpful advice when I began tackling this project and pointed me towards people and sources that proved indispensable to my research. Among these was Tali Makell, a founder of the Nietzsche Music Project and a helpful and charitable researcher. James Porter provided important insight into Nietzsche’s early works and our conversations led to my close scrutiny of Nietzsche’s use of quantitative rhythms. Without Curt Paul Janz’s monumental accomplishment of compiling, editing and publishing Nietzsche’s music, this project would not have been possible at all. Finally I would like to thank my wife, Kristina Schmidt, my brother Tom Moritz, and my parents, Rick and Jill Moritz, for their support and endless patience.
ABBREVIATIONS

BGE  Beyond Good and Evil
BT   Birth of Tragedy
CW   The Case of Wagner
D    Daybreak
EH   Ecce Homo
GS   The Gay Science
HKB I-IV  Historische Kritische Briefe
HK I-VI  Historische Kritische Werke
MN   Friedrich Nietzsche: Der musikalische Nachläß
NCW  Nietzsche Contra Wagner
TSZ  Thus Spoke Zarathustra
TI   Twilight of the Idols: or, How one Philosophizes With a Hammer
WM   On Words and Music
UW   Unpublished Writings

The works listed correspond to the complete citations found in the Works Consulted section. In accordance with style manuals, the first citation of each source is cited in full, and subsequent citations will use the above abbreviations.

Note: The accepted method of citing Nietzsche’s published works is to indicate section numbers rather than page numbers, due to his unique style and the continuity of section numbers from one edition to another. In order to conform to Northwestern’s bibliographical guidelines, I have chosen to cite both. The page number comes first, followed by a colon and then the section information.
e.g. TSZ, 317: IV, The Drunken Song, 1 – refers to Thus Spoke Zarathustra, page 317, book four, chapter entitled “The Drunken Song,” section 1.
For his unpublished letters, journals and music, only page numbers are used.
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION ...........................................1

2. EARLY YEARS AND TRAINING .......................... 22

3. “GERMANIA” AND EARLY COMPOSITIONS .......... 33

4. NEW IDEAS AND GENRES ............................... 50

5. PRE-WAGNERIAN PIANO WORKS ....................... 63

6. AESTHETIC REFINEMENTS ............................... 77

7. COLLEGE YEARS IN BONN AND LEIPZIG .............. 105

8. WAGNER ................................................ 125

9. COMPOSITIONS DURING THE WAGNER YEARS ........ 147

10. AFTER WAGNER ........................................ 170

11. CONCLUSION ............................................ 181

Appendix

A. COMPLETED MUSICAL WORKS ...................... 188

B. UNDATED/INCOMPLETE MUSICAL WORKS ............ 190

C. MUSICAL EXAMPLES .................................. 191

D. DISCOGRAPHY .......................................... 211

WORKS CONSULTED ...................................... 213
Chapter 1

Introduction

When one considers how much the energy of young men needs to explode, one is not surprised that they decide for this cause or that without being at all subtle or choosy. What attracts them is the sight of the zeal that surrounds a cause—as it were, the sight of the burning fuse...¹

The writings of Friedrich Nietzsche have had an immense impact on modern culture. Seen as a prophet of modernism, Nietzsche laid the groundwork for existentialism, served posthumously as a rallying point for the Nazi party, and eloquently described the end of romanticism. Countless books interpret and reinterpret Nietzsche’s enigmatic epithets, and that number increases almost daily as scholars rush to investigate the rich depths of his literary output². Despite this abundance of research and his almost universal recognition as a thinker, a crucial aspect of his output is almost entirely overlooked: Nietzsche’s music.³ This is true despite the fact that music in general, and his own compositions in particular, played a large role in Nietzsche’s life. He summed up his feelings toward music in a letter to friend and fellow musician, Peter Gast, writing: “Life without music is simply an error, a pain, an exile.”⁴

In his short span of musical output—from his maturity (about 1862) until his descent into insanity in 1889—he completed fifteen lieder, nine solo piano pieces, a piece for choir and orchestra, and several piano four-hands pieces, in addition to a large number of sketches and half-finished compositions. Yet the very fact that Nietzsche composed

³ See Appendix A for a complete list of compositions.
music comes as a surprise to most, and the musical community is even less aware of this music than the philosophical community. When Nietzsche’s music is discussed, the analysis usually proceeds through a thick mist of disparaging irony, betraying the critic’s lack of objectivity from the outset. In a review of Nietzsche’s songs in *Musical Heritage*, for example, the author protests describing Nietzsche’s lieder as an accomplishment, writing: “It may seem churlish to point out that the only respect in which that ‘accomplishment’ is not in dispute is in comparison with the even less accomplished works for piano duet.” Yet the review in question evaluates a CD released by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau—a respected musician who has repeatedly praised Nietzsche’s musical output and willingly chose to record his music. This raises several questions that will form the core of this investigation. What does Nietzsche’s music have to offer? Why is his music largely overlooked or, worse yet, summarily rejected? In what way is music a truly crucial aspect of Nietzsche’s life and output? In short, why study Nietzsche’s music?

To answer these questions, one must understand the unique position Nietzsche holds in western history and be able to appreciate the unique Nietzschean perspective that western culture has unwittingly adopted. Understanding this perspective requires the adoption of a tactic long used by commentators on his philosophical works, whereby Nietzsche’s life and work are considered dynamically. The word “dynamic” has become the victim of its own success in contemporary parlance, and its application here must not be confused with pop culture associations. Rather than connoting excitement or a

---

6 See later discussion of Fischer-Dieskau, p. 15.
vaguely positive evaluation, it is here used to describe the ever-evolving, ever-growing aspect of Nietzsche’s life and works. As he personally matured, his thoughts and goals matured with him, and his output at different stages of his life shows considerable development. This tendency is exaggerated by his equally dynamic writing style. Approached from a German tradition of Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer, Nietzsche’s writing appears almost ludicrous at first sight. Whereas Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* and Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* remain true to the Socratic ideals of logical demonstration in conjunction with the German penchant for thoroughness and discipline, Nietzsche’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra* presents us with an allegorical story of a grumpy old man who lives in the mountains. His *Genealogy of Morals* is comprised of over a hundred short aphorisms that do little to indicate a formal structure. In fact, many aphorisms appear to conflict with other aphorisms, or even with themselves! Let us compare, for example, a short passage from Kant with a passage from Nietzsche.

From Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* A118

This synthetic unity presupposes or includes a synthesis, and if the former is to be *a priori* necessary, the synthesis must also be *a priori*. The transcendental unity of apperception thus relates to the pure synthesis of imagination, as an *a priori* condition of the possibility of all combination of the manifold in one knowledge. But only the productive synthesis of the imagination can take place *a priori*; the reproductive rests upon empirical conditions. Thus the principle of the necessary unity of pure synthesis of imagination, prior to apperception, is the ground of the possibility of all knowledge, especially of experience.7

Without delving too deeply into Kantian metaphysics, all of the classical elements of deductive logic are here evident. In the first sentence, Kant makes a statement dictating the conditions needed to qualify a synthetic unity as necessary. In the second

---

sentence he expands on the details that follow from such a relationship. Next he points out a definitional necessity that differentiates between two concepts. Finally, he draws a conclusion from the facts and relationships previously stated. It is of utmost importance to understand the value placed on this type of reasoning in the philosophical community. More than any other discipline, philosophy is defined by the method of inquiry rather than the subject, and by strictly following the dictates of logic Kant was in line with a tradition stretching back 2500 years. Now let us compare Kant’s writing with that of Nietzsche.

“My friends, all of you,” said the ugliest man, “what do you think? For the sake of this day, I am for the first time satisfied that I have lived my whole life. And that I attest so much is still not enough for me. Living on earth is worth while: one day, one festival with Zarathustra, taught me to love the earth.”

Compared to Kant’s quote, one hesitates to label such a text “philosophy.” Where are the arguments? Where are the “thus’s” and “therefore’s” that indicate the structure? This is more poetry than a study of logic. Many critics accused him of practicing bad philosophy and his contemporaries, while easily recognizing his literary genius, discarded his philosophical platforms as the crude rantings of a mentally unstable philology professor. Even as late as the 1960s, the philosopher Arthur Danto had the following to say about Nietzsche’s philosophy:

---


9 An especially eloquent yet misguided and biased criticism sums up so well the overall criticism of Nietzsche that it warrants complete citation. “His (Nietzsche’s) own method, in general, was not to collect facts and try out deductions from them but to indulge himself in intuitions and then look about for facts to support them. He himself, as was only to be expected, poured scorn on the thinkers who worked in the reverse way: a philosophy, he said, is primarily and properly the expression of a man. No doubt; but the trouble is that if we base our interpretation of the cosmos on our individual intuitions it is not long before we discover, to our annoyance, that other individuals have intuitions quite contrary but just as imperative; and then the only way to decide between the rival illuminations is by way of that marshalling of facts and
His thoughts are diffused through many loosely structured volumes, and his individual statements seem too clever and topical to sustain serious philosophical scrutiny.10

Those with whom Nietzsche sided tolerated but rarely understood his revolutionary ideas. After his descent into insanity, his writings--and with them the de facto role of Nietzsche interpreter--fell to his beloved sister, Elisabeth. Although well-intentioned and immensely devoted to her brother, much of the omnipresent subtlety and nuance of Nietzsche’s writings were lost on her, and the fascist, proto-Nazi beliefs of her husband, Bernhard Förster, supplied her with a more readily accessible philosophical glue with which to piece together her brother’s disparate tomes. This unfortunate turn of events led to the wholesale adoption of Nietzsche by the Nazis as fascist philosopher par excellence. Although this association culminated in the preservation of almost all Nietzsche’s manuscripts – an archival achievement that never would have taken place without the Nazis given Nietzsche’s small base of support—it also led to the close association of Nietzsche’s name with Nazism. After World War II, Nietzsche’s works were effectively blacklisted, and it was not until the post-war efforts of Walter Kaufmann and the adoption of Nietzsche by the French Deconstructionists of the 1960s that he was recognized as a true philosophical genius. Key to this rebirth of Nietzsche studies was a gradual shift in philosophical values predicted in Nietzsche’s own works.

After the two world wars and the previously unimaginable horrors they produced, any sort of benign faith in humanity waned. In conjunction with western culture’s testing them by ratiocination which might just as well have been undertaken in the first place: either that, or to perform a trumpet solo on the theme of our own “genius,” to retire to the mountain tops and megaphone from there that it is only our intuitions that have any value, none other being genuine.” This criticism is especially interesting considering its source, the esteemed Wagner biographer, Ernest Newman, Life of Wagner, vol. 4, 1866-1883 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 335-6.

concurrent embrace of secularism, nihilism emerged as a valid and popular philosophy. The French existentialists epitomized this shift, as can be seen dramatically in Jean Paul Sartre’s *Nausea*, or more abstractly in Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. Their acceptance and embrace of nihilism was hardly unique however; the first significant modern examination of its ramifications was espoused by Schopenhauer in his *magnum opus, The World as Will and Representation*. Nietzsche accepted much of Schopenhauer’s framework, but refined the theory by applying it to contemporary society. It is this application that led Nietzsche to attack the hypocrisy of his era. One such attack against the Christian morality of secular Europe led Nietzsche to pen the now infamous statement, “God is dead.”

The other significant shift in modern culture was psychology. When Sigmund Freud revolutionized individuals’ conceptions of themselves, he put a spotlight on the individual character of existence. Here too, Nietzsche led the way, asking in his autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, “Who among philosophers before me has been a psychologist at all?” and subtitling his book *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* “Aktenstücke eines Psychologen” or “Out of the Files of a Psychologist.” His tactic throughout his works was to examine men’s motivations, both conscious and unconscious, and admonish them to act according to their beliefs. The effect on modern culture was immense. When individual perceptions of reality had to be processed through numerous

---

psychological filters, it became much more difficult to assert the existence of universal truths.

This shift from universal truths to individual existences comprises a large part of Nietzsche’s philosophy. Universal truths had been the goal of philosophy from the ancient Greeks onward, and it is this fundamental shift in focus that gives Nietzsche’s work its revolutionary character. What differentiates Kant’s prose sharply from Nietzsche’s is that Kant deals with abstractions in his pursuit for universal truths while Nietzsche examines individuals and addresses them as such. If the one’s goal is to posit something that is true in every situation and at any time, any reference to individual circumstances poisons the process. Plato solved this dilemma by positing a realm of forms that existed outside time and space, and lent its perfection to the reality we encounter. Descartes addressed the issue by doubting everything, and affirming only those things that could be proven by appeal to abstract deductions.14

Nietzsche chose instead to embrace individual circumstances—a reversal of philosophical tradition that consequently led him to dismiss the idea of a universal truth. In his own words, “What therefore is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding...”15 At the heart of this appeal is a fundamentally

---

14 Take for instance his “I think, therefore I am” argument. Doubting all else, Descartes knows only that he is thinking, therefore there must be a thing thinking – himself. Despite the apparent individual character of such a proof, it is Descartes’ use of it to ascertain universal truths (the existence of God, the existence of corporeal beings, the reality of others) that separates him from Nietzsche.

aesthetic idea. To address the divergent situations in which individuals find themselves, Nietzsche appeals to art and beauty. Setting aside the earlier philosophical ideals that would universalize aesthetics and find the ultimate standards of beauty, he chooses aesthetics for the very diversity that the field of philosophical aesthetics had sought to homogenize. The old proverb “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” sums up much of the “problem” of aesthetics. Although everyone accepts that beauty exists, no one has ever agreed on the precise criteria by which beauty may be judged. Nietzsche uses this combination of universal acceptance and individual ambiguity to address the diversity of the human condition. As Nietzsche writes in his *Birth of Tragedy*, “for it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified.”¹⁶ Magnus interprets this remark by explaining, “Nietzsche urges us to attend to goals and truth in local contexts, and to make choices on aesthetic grounds, taking artistic decisions as a model for all choice.”¹⁷

Magnus’ use of the word “urges” warrants a second look as it indicates another unique characteristic of Nietzsche’s works. If universal truths are nonexistent (or at least inaccessible), then truth lies within each of us - a truth derived from our relation to our particular situation, a truth created by our willing and doing. Therefore, the task of a philosopher is not to plumb the heights of universalized concepts and carry them back to those of us in this world of contingencies, but to enable us to discover our own truths and admonish us when we do not. Essentially, philosophers should spawn more philosophers inasmuch as being a philosopher entails creating, willing and acting. The philosopher’s

---

proper project should be one of creating laws and subsequently applying their laws to their surroundings. The fact that most people do not want to acknowledge the truths of our existence or take responsibility for their experience comprises the main obstacle to this “new” philosopher. “Why does man not see things? He is himself standing in the way: he conceals things.”\textsuperscript{18} Therefore, this new project must not and cannot be held to the same rules as previous projects. Roger White aptly describes the divide between Nietzsche and traditional philosophical practice when he writes, “…given the rhetorical and polemical aspects of his work, to expect or require a strict consistency of thought is inappropriate and almost certainly doomed to failure. For Nietzsche just is not an analytical philosopher manqué.”\textsuperscript{19} Nietzsche himself best sums up his relationship to traditional philosophy:

How I understand the philosopher -- as a terrible explosive, endangering everything... my concept of the philosopher is worlds removed from any concept that would include even a Kant, not to speak of academic "ruminants" and other professors of philosophy...\textsuperscript{20}

Philosophy, for Nietzsche, cannot be abstracted away from the very act of living. Rather than existing in abstracted formulae, philosophy must be found in the day-to-day actions and decisions each one of us carries out. Instead of drawing its strength from complete objectivity and the removal of all circumstances that it entails, Nietzsche’s philosophy grows through experience, becoming fuller and more complete the more one experiences. His philosophical expressions therefore, take on a personal and highly stylized aspect. No longer is a philosophical text a disembodied system of thought; it is

\textsuperscript{18} Friedrich Nietzsche, \textit{Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality}, transl. R.J. Hollingdale, ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997); (D); 199: 483.
\textsuperscript{19} Roger White, “Reading the Secondary Text,” \textit{Journal of Nietzsche Studies} 20, 83.
\textsuperscript{20} EH, 281: The Untimely Ones, 3.
instead a shadow cast in ink representing an individual through his thoughts. In a recent collaborative effort, Magnus, Stewart and Mileur insist that to understand Nietzsche’s thought, “…it requires a certain relation to the text, one in which Nietzsche’s polysemantic metaphors are not perceived as distractions but are instead thought to be required by his very thought itself, indeed may perhaps be said to be the thought itself.”

Many writers, including Gilles Deleuze, Alan Schrift, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida have written about Nietzsche as poet and author. These examinations cite the inextricable links between the writings and the content and the cognitive value of each. Drawing from the deconstructionist school he helped define, Michel Foucault repeatedly compares and contrasts the content of certain Nietzschean passages with the corresponding texts. One example that Foucault did not choose, but is worthy of a deconstructionist interpretation, may be found in the second part of Also Sprach Zarathustra when Zarathustra declares:

“I led you away from these fables when I taught you, ‘The will is a creator.’ All ‘it was’ is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful accident—until the creative will says to it, ‘But thus I willed it.’ Until the creative will says to it, ‘But thus I will it; thus shall I will it.’”

The content of this paragraph deals with the transformative nature of willing. On a deeper level, it examines the psychological effect of taking responsibility for one’s surroundings, and on a metaphysical level, provides an example of Nietzsche’s theory of

---

24 TSZ, 253.
the “will to power.” But one must not ignore the prose itself. This passage comes from Zarathustra as he is addressing his followers, and displays the imperative nature of Zarathustra’s exhortations and provides an example of someone exerting his will on his surroundings. This will is exerted through enthusiasm and rhetoric to convince both Zarathustra’s followers and Nietzsche’s readers. The use of short declarative sentences and the repetition of certain phrases create an atmosphere of insistence and great importance to the old man’s speech.

Such an examination of not only the content, but also the forum in which that content is presented, provides a clearer picture of Nietzsche’s thought. If this is applicable to the philosophical writings, why should it not be applicable to his musical writings as well? In an examination of Nietzsche’s technique of philosophizing, Richard Schacht notes that,

It is also undeniable that he often avails himself of notions having to do with arts other than literature, such as music, painting, architecture, and sculpture, along with the more general forms of human experience and phenomena to which they are related, as literature is to language. ‘Nietzsche’s aestheticism’ should properly be construed to refer to his tendency to think of life and the world on the models provided by the various arts—including but not uniquely privileging literature among them.25

Schacht goes on to cite instances of Nietzsche’s alluding to Wagner operas and Beethoven symphonies, yet never mentions Nietzsche’s own music. In fact, only one significant article has been published examining Nietzsche’s music as anything other than a biographical curiosity, that by Frederick Love in the 1960s.26 On the musical front, only a few reviews of recordings and published music have been undertaken, and these

have all been generally superficial. Typical of this is the patronizing tone of a recent review in *Time* magazine entitled, “The Melodies of Nietzsche: The great philosopher was also a nice little composer.” Seldom going beyond a surprised announcement that Nietzsche wrote music, the more diligent accounts quickly turn to his relationship with Wagner and bypass the music itself. Although there has been a surge of interest in Nietzsche’s music recently as exemplified by the Nietzsche Music Project, the subject still inhabits the periphery of musical and philosophical circles.

Realizing the importance of his music when examining such an idiomatic and rhetorical author as Nietzsche, the next step must be to examine what Nietzsche himself said about his music. When still a boy, Nietzsche wrote,

> God gave us music so that we, *first and foremost*, will be guided upward by it. All qualities are united in music: it can lift us up, it can be capricious, it can cheer us up and delight us, nay, with its soft, melancholy tunes, it can even break the resistance of the toughest character. Its main purpose, however, is to lead our thoughts upward, so that it elevates us, even deeply moves us. ... Music also provides pleasant entertainment and saves everyone who is interested in it from boredom. All humans who despise it should be considered mindless, animal-like creatures. May this most glorious gift of God ever be my companion on my life's journey, and I can consider myself fortunate to have come to love it. Let us sing out in eternal praise to God who is offering us this beautiful enjoyment.

---

27 While it is true that many experts weighed in on John Bell Young’s 1991 recording of Nietzsche’s music, without exception they avoided close musical examination, focusing instead on the academic rediscovery and the pianist’s individual interpretation. See a summary of these reviews at: http://www.musiciansgallery.com/start/pianists/young(john_bell).html#reviews

28 Elliot Ravetz, “The Melodies of Nietzsche: The great philosopher was also a nice little composer,” *Time Magazine*, 24 April 1995, 72.

29 A project dedicated to spreading knowledge and appreciation of Nietzsche’s music, The Nietzsche Music Project has led to the recording of two compact discs and performances of his music at several scholarly meetings. Their webpage is: http://www.nietzschevirtuosi.org.

One of his biographers, Werner Ross agrees that, “undoubtedly, Nietzsche had a natural musical talent.”

His friend von Gersdorff wrote of their school years at the prestigious Schulpforta, “His improvisations are unforgettable to me; I almost think that even Beethoven could not have improvised more movingly than Nietzsche, particularly, when a thunderstorm was looming.”

During this same time, Nietzsche frequently vacillated between being a musician, studying theology or philology. Later, while at the university in Leipzig, he was offered the opera review column in a local newspaper. As for his masterpiece, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, Nietzsche asked, “Under which rubric do I hear this singular Zarathustra? I believe it is nearest to the symphony.”

He even felt his “Hymnus an die Freundschaft” was important enough to be published at the end of his autobiography, *Ecce Homo*. Around the same time, Nietzsche wrote to his close friend, Erwin Rohde, concerning continuity of his musical style. “… I have reviewed and ordered my youthful compositions. It struck me how the music reflected the consistency of the composer’s (Nietzsche’s) character; that which was expressed as a boy is so clearly the language of his entire being, the grown man could not wish to change it.”

All of these examples point to the importance Nietzsche himself placed on his music.

Having established the biographical importance of examining Nietzsche’s music, the next challenge is to provide the musical justification for a close scrutiny of this overlooked music. This must be approached from two vantage points: the quality of the

---

32 Cited in Bertram, 113.
33 Love, *Young Nietzsche*, 12.
34 HKB III, 1.
35 HKB IV, 138.
music itself, and the value of studying Nietzsche’s music for musicians. When examining Beethoven or Mozart’s works, little justification is needed to undertake such a study. The quality of their music is commonly accepted, and scholars may begin from this assumption. The obscurity of Nietzsche’s music denies us this first assumption, and a preliminary justification must be found to support the quality of the music. Most obviously, the music itself can and must be examined; a process that comprises much of the body of this document. Additionally, pertinent reviews must be explored and the opinions of previous writers considered. As these are very few, an overview of the pertinent texts can be carried out with some thoroughness within the introduction.

Frederick R. Love wrote the first substantial scholarly work on Nietzsche’s music in 1963. Writing from a philosophical perspective, he sought to use Nietzsche’s music as an indicator of the depth of Wagner’s influence on Nietzsche’s thoughts. Since Nietzsche composed music from childhood throughout the period of his friendship with Wagner, Love used the compositions to act as a sort of barometer of Wagnerian influence.36 Even more important than his findings was Love’s critical consideration of Nietzsche’s musical compositions, most of which had languished in uncatalogued boxes in the Nietzsche Archive. At the time of Love’s research, only a few pieces had been published and were available to the public. Only his “Hymnus an die Freundschaft” had ever been published during Nietzsche’s lifetime—at his request in 1887. After his death in 1900, Elisabeth Förster Nietzsche published two brief samples in her work, Das Leben Friedrich Nietzsche, Vol.1 and then in 1924 a group of his lieder were published in Georg

36 Love, Young Nietzsche, 1-3.
Göhler’s *Nietzches musikalische Werke*. In 1959, Nietzsche’s “Der Tod der Könige” was rescued from obscurity for inclusion in a program for the Bayreuth festival.\(^{38}\) But it was not until 1976 when Curt Paul Janz published the first ever complete volume of Nietzsche’s music that the majority of these works were made available to the public.\(^{39}\) The collection was gathered from the Nietzsche archive (housed in the Goethe-Schiller Archiv in Weimar) and a few private collections. In addition to compiling the works and fragments, Janz included a detailed index to the source manuscripts, and even carried out a significant amount of musical detective work to give indications of Nietzsche’s intentions when puzzling fragments are encountered. It is due to Janz’s compilation that this current study is possible and his efforts are greatly appreciated.

Considering Janz’s considerable undertaking, it would be inappropriate to ignore his evaluations of Nietzsche’s music. In his biography of Nietzsche, he explains that, “Nietzsche was at least, at times, able to reach his ‘professional’ musical counterparts in the depth and strength of his musical expression.” And later, “These works should be considered as serious and seriously-meant works that are far-removed from a merely playful dilettantism.”\(^{40}\) The esteemed baritone, Dietrich Fischer Dieskau, wrote that, Nietzsche’s musical talent was, regardless of such opinions, extraordinary and that it was a distinctive part of his character, and that his psychological analysis of art must be seen analogous to his musical insights and to his enjoyment of polyphony, and that his drive to shed light into the deepest recesses of the human

\(^{38}\) *Friedrich Nietzsche: Der musikalische Nachlaß*, ed. Curt Paul Janz (Basel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1976), 187; (MN).

\(^{39}\) Ibid.

psyche is the equivalent to the will of a musician to bring psychological processes to light in a way that only music can.\textsuperscript{41}

Even his harshest contemporary critic, Hans von Bülow, had a few positive things to say, praising his vocal compositions and recognizing Nietzsche’s distinguished mind shining through his music.\textsuperscript{42}

Given these endorsements of the music’s quality, the question of its value to musicians must now be considered. Surely the genres for which Nietzsche wrote, namely solo piano and accompanied voice, are not lacking for repertoire. In fact, the repertoire for both is so immense that many wonderful and inspired pieces are seldom if ever performed. The argument that the performance of new music aids in the continuing development of art music by familiarizing the public with new musical ideas hardly works to the advantage of a composer whose works date from the 1860s. Perhaps the best reason for a further examination of his music lays in the middle ground between Nietzsche’s philosophy and his music.

Nietzsche held that the value of aesthetic experience increased insofar as it proved cognitive. This was especially true for music, which he believed communicated truths at a far more direct level than language.\textsuperscript{43} In view of Nietzsche’s organic and rhetorical style of communicating, it may be assumed that his music represents another rhetorical tool to express the same web of ideas comprising his literary works. Whether these ideas were carefully planned to bolster and coincide with his literary works or were more spontaneous expressions of his experiences is a point of debate. In Helmut Walther’s

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Cited in Newman, 324. The remainder of this review was not complimentary in the least, its harshness leading Nietzsche to swear off composition for six years (an oath he did not keep). See chapter 9.
\textsuperscript{43} This will be discussed at greater length in chapter 6.
lecture, “Nietzsche as Composer,” he suggests Nietzsche’s lack of musical training led his musical outbursts a more spontaneous air, while his long study of literature allowed him to go into more depth in his literary works.\(^{44}\) This is supported by the occasional nature of many of his musical compositions. His “Sylvesternacht” was dedicated to Cosima Wagner on the occasion of her birthday. His piece for two pianos, “Monodie a deux” was composed for the marriage of his friends Olga Herzen and Gabriel Monod.\(^{45}\)

This viewpoint is further supported by Nietzsche’s own discussions of his music. Whereas his discussions of music in general and music of composers such as Beethoven, Schumann and Wagner deal with numerous musical issues, when addressing his own music, Nietzsche regularly describes individual moments of inspiration. When describing “Sylvesternacht” to Rohde, Nietzsche writes, “I am sure you will detect the warm, contemplative, and happy tone which sounds through the whole work and which denotes for me a transfigured memory of the joy I felt during our autumn vacation.”\(^{46}\) In another letter to Hans von Bülow, Nietzsche comments on his writing process: “I now realize that the entire thing … was absolutely reflecting a real mood and that I felt a kind of pleasure in writing it down that I never felt before.”\(^{47}\) Even his choice of titles illustrates the momentary and spontaneous nature of the compositions; e.g. “Herbstlich sonnige Tage” (Sunny autumn day) and “Da geht ein Bach” (There flows a brook). In fact, several of Nietzsche’s musical compositions contain the subtitle, “Dichtung” or

---

\(^{44}\) Walther.
\(^{45}\) See the corresponding chapters for details of these compositions.
\(^{47}\) HKB III, 174.
While Nietzsche tried on occasion to compose longer and more complex works, these do not necessarily represent the best of his musical output; indeed it is in the longer works that his lack of musical training most comes to light. But within his short character pieces and Lieder, Nietzsche is highly effective in capturing moments of experience. In a review of concert of Nietzsche’s songs, Fritz Schleicher described Nietzsche as “…able to render imaginative, melodically and harmoniously sensitive creations, and that in them, his musical language is direct…”

In this respect, his music is entirely in keeping with his philosophical outlook. If truth resides in context, and individuals can discover these truths through close, honest scrutiny of their own experiences, then music—the most direct of all forms of expression—is an ideal vehicle for capturing individual moments. “Musical chords reminded me today of a winter and a house and an extremely solitary life, as well as the feeling in which I lived at that time: I thought I might go on living that way forever.” In Nietzsche’s music we are given a wonderfully unique insight into his own coming to terms with experience. Instead of reading Nietzsche the admonisher, we hear Nietzsche the individual, the case study, the scientist experimenting on himself. He was, in essence, driven to compose by a sort of musical existentialism, wherein music either supplements or replaces language as the vehicle to combat the fleeting nature of experience. Within the void created by Nietzsche’s embrace of nihilism, existence is cut loose from the

---

48 “Eine Sylvesternacht,” is subtitled “Musikalisches Dichtung” MN 36 and “Ermanarich” is subtitled “Symphonische Dichtung,” MN, 17.
49 Again, refer to later discussions of “Sylvesternacht,” “Monodie a deux,” and “Ermanarich” for treatments of his larger works.
50 Cited in Walther, 3.
51 GS, 252: IV, 317.
firmaments of universal truths and one is left with only experiences, and even these are constantly snatched away by the hands of time. Through language and music one can reclaim these experiences and claim ownership, therefore creating stability and meaning from within.

At this point, our “musical existentialism” appears little different from romanticism. Their difference will be explored in more detail in subsequent, and so will be discussed only briefly at this juncture. It is only upon examining the content of such captured experiences that Nietzsche distinguishes himself from the romantics and their music of decay and decadence that he so detested. Above all else, he insists that one must be true and honest. Much of Nietzsche’s most scorching invective attacks music that is merely nostalgic and hearkens back to romanticized, inaccurate versions of the past. In several works, Nietzsche ascribes his break with Wagner to the realization of Wagner’s romantic failings. Throughout his life, Nietzsche always acknowledged Wagner’s musical gifts. What caused Nietzsche to shift from enthusiast to critic was the content Wagner employed. Nietzsche came to see Wagner’s music not as affirming and owning one’s experiences, but as a vehicle of escapism and hypocrisy. In Nietzsche’s words, “We are all afraid of truth,” and the worst manifestation of such a fear is to use music - the essence of purity and truth - to flee truth. He grew to despise Wagner because his music lied to people and encouraged them to lie to themselves. Great music - and great art in general - had the ability to lead people to truth and their potential nobility, but it also had the power to confuse and weaken. Instead of helping individuals cross the

---

52 EH, 246: Why I am so Clever, 4.
bridge between man and übermensch, Wagner’s music produced pity and weakness, effectively undermining his yearning listeners’ ability to grow and develop.

This brings to light a key concept in Nietzsche’s thought: redemption through the aesthetic experience. Contrary to religious applications of the term, here it does not imply freedom from the sufferings of life; rather it is an embrace of all suffering, along with the rare moments of ecstasy. That suffering is a component of all human lives is all too well known. Nietzsche’s revolutionary approach to this “problem” was to eliminate the negative value placed on suffering. Instead of establishing the presence of positive counterweights to offset suffering as traditional religions do, or deriving means to eliminate human suffering in the manner of humanism and liberalism, Nietzsche embraces suffering as an integral and valuable part of human existence. To eliminate suffering would be a deprivation of part of the richness of human existence, and to explain it away as payment for a heavenly afterlife a misinterpretation of its role. It is only in moments of aesthetic ecstasy that we embrace all of our experience truthfully and honestly. As Zarathustra says to his followers:

Have you ever said Yes to a single joy? O my friends, then you have said Yes too to all woe. All things are entangled, ensnared, enamored; if ever you wanted one thing twice, if ever you said, ‘You please me, happiness! Abide, moment!’ then you wanted all back. All anew, all eternally, all entangled, ensnared, enamored—oh, then you loved the world. Eternal ones, love it eternally and evermore; and to woe too, you say: go, but return! For all joy wants—eternity.\textsuperscript{53}

In studying and performing Nietzsche’s music, one comes face to face with the application of this desire. As previous quotations have implied, Nietzsche wrote his music intending to express these redemptive moments in the most direct and truthful way

\textsuperscript{53} TSZ, 323: IV, The Drunken Song, 10.
possible. When performing his music or reading his works, one is confronted with more than a mere argument - one is confronted with a force that demands action. That music can deeply affect an individual is well established. In Nietzsche’s music we are given the opportunity to feel the effects of one of the most influential thinkers of modernity. Such a combination of philosophical and literary genius with musical ability is extraordinary, and musicians and philosophers alike have much to gain from examining the output of such a man. In this essay, that state of affairs will begin to be remedied through a survey of Nietzsche’s music, an examination of literary, musical and biographical connections, and recommendations for the integration of this music into the archive of common repertoire. Once given a glimpse of Nietzsche’s music, his love for music and belief in its powers “…to lead our thoughts upward, so that it elevates us, even deeply moves us” can find resonance in our own souls and elevate our appreciation of this “most glorious art form.”
Chapter 2

Early Years and Training

He who would learn to fly one day must first learn to stand and walk and run and climb and dance: one cannot fly into flying.¹

Music played a large role in Friedrich Nietzsche’s life from a young age. He was born in Röcken, Prussia on 15 October 1844 to Karl Ludwig Nietzsche, a Lutheran minister, and Franziska, née Oehler, a doting mother. The importance of music in the Lutheran church must have been especially evident in the Nietzsche household, as virtually all Friedrich’s early memories were of musical events. An excellent example of this correlation came when Nietzsche was only five years old and his father died. In later memoirs, Nietzsche reflected that the tolling of the bells and solemn organ hymns were what he associated with the tragic event. “At one o’clock in the afternoon, the ceremony began with a great ringing of bells. Oh, their hollow pealing will never fade from my ears, never will I forget the somberly thundering melody of the song ‘Jesu meine Zuversicht!’”² The year after his father’s death, Nietzsche had an unusual dream in which the bells and organ returned, and shortly thereafter his younger brother died. Although Nietzsche attributed prophetic overtones to this event, it can better be explained by Nietzsche’s refined powers of observation and his mother’s anxious behavior regarding her sick infant. This association between bells and death was strong enough to appear throughout Nietzsche’s works, both musical and philosophical.

² HK I, 5-6.
Although there is no evidence that Nietzsche received formal musical training before he entered the Gymnasium, his position as eldest son of a Lutheran minister makes it probable that he received some instruction in this area. Nietzsche’s father played the organ and piano, was known for his ability to improvise at the keyboard, and sang well enough to carry out his duties as a Lutheran pastor. Judging from German protestant practices of his day, young Friedrich was probably exposed to traditional Lutheran hymns, occasional Bach choral works and a reasonable amount of sacred music by Handel and Haydn. His own remembrances list Haydn’s *Creation*, Mozart’s *Requiem*, and Handel’s *Judas Maccabeus* and *Messiah* as being performed in the Naumburg cathedral.\(^3\) In fact, Nietzsche attributed his first foray into musical composition to a performance of Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus.” Shortly after hearing the piece, the nine-year old Nietzsche and a friend were improvising on the piano and began setting Biblical texts in the style of Handel. According to Nietzsche, they then notated their newly written composition.\(^4\) This recollection tells us much about Nietzsche’s musical training up to that point. His instruction must have included more than occasional lessons, and it is probable that a member of the church chorus met regularly with the young student. Fuelled by his obvious love for music, these lessons had apparently, by the time he was nine, enabled Nietzsche to read and notate music. His critical listening abilities are evidenced by the effective adoption of Handel’s style in his youthful work, as reported by Nietzsche himself upon later reflection (if Nietzsche’s adult recollections are to be believed). His earliest surviving musical work dates from the next year, when he wrote

---


\(^4\) *HK III*, 67.
out some melodic fragments. Although no more than twenty-one measures long, their systematic exploration of triadic harmonies provide evidence of further music instruction (ex. 1, all musical examples can be found in Appendix C).⁵

After his father’s death, the family moved from Röcken to Naumburg, where Friedrich attended the Gymnasium. While enrolled, he received additional music training from the school’s Cantor and possibly others. It was also during this time that Nietzsche met Gustav Krug and a friendship began that would last through much of Nietzsche’s life. Krug hailed from a family of excellent amateur musicians, and Nietzsche’s experiences in the Krug household were filled with music. Such musical soireé’s occasionally included some of Germany’s best musicians. Although generally conservative, the Krug family was familiar with a broad spectrum of contemporary music, including that of Liszt and Berlioz.⁶ Nietzsche’s reflections on his and Gustav’s musical experiences indicate the thoroughness of his friend’s musical training, and it can be assumed that Nietzsche supplemented his own lack of musical refinement with lessons from Krug. Despite his exposure to the New German School, by the time Nietzsche was fourteen he was a staunch musical conservative. In one notebook, Nietzsche described his tastes as follows: “I also feel an undying hatred towards all modern music and all that is not classical. Mozart and Haydn, Schubert and Mendelssohn, Beethoven and Bach, these are the soul of German music and in them I am grounded.”⁷ While the vehemence of this diatribe is harsh even for Nietzschean standards, it must be understood as the expression of a fiery fourteen year old newly enamored with his recently discovered

---

⁵ MN, 167.
⁶ HK I, 12-13.
⁷ HK I, 18.
poetic abilities. This is not the only evidence of young Nietzsche’s conservatism. In other letters and notebooks Nietzsche describes “Zukunftsmusik” as unhealthy, superfluous and dangerous. His practice lists also reflect this view, shunning contemporary works in favor of the easier Beethoven sonatas, and pieces of Bach, Schubert and Mendelssohn.8

From extant manuscripts, it is apparent that the compositions included on these practice lists not only supplied Nietzsche with material to better his pianistic skills, but also acted as instructional manuals for the intellectually hungry young student. There are brief fragments of music written in the style of Beethoven, Bach or Handel where Nietzsche’s attempts at thematic development and contrapuntal writing can be seen. His two “Sonaten” represent his earliest completed compositions, dating from 1856, and reflect his simultaneous study of Beethoven sonatas during that period. While strangely lacking any form that could be described as a sonata, these compositions do display many typically Beethoven-esque characteristics. He writes frequent significant dynamic changes, and the bulk of the work is comprised of chordal expansions. The vehemence of the tonic-dominant interchange comprising the ending of the piece might be compared to the finale of Beethoven’s fifth symphony if it were not for the lack of any developmental material preceding it. Several of Nietzsche’s gross exaggerations of Beethoven’s music can be seen in the coda (ex. 2).

---

8 Frederick R. Love, Young Nietzsche and the Wagnerian Experience (Chapel Hill: North Carolina UP, 1963); 6.
Later, in a sketch scored for piano four-hands (a compositional tool Nietzsche used throughout his life) entitled “Allegro con brio,”9 obvious Handelian influences can be seen (ex. 3). Typical early-classical chord progressions are elaborated through the use of several standard techniques, including repeated quarter note chords, Alberti bass, and tremolo broken chords. Above this can be found a mixture of chorale type melodies and dotted rhythms reminiscent of Handel’s oratorios.10 As most of the preliminary compositional work was carried out through improvisation at the piano, the written fragments reflect second or third drafts and are still instructive in regards to his self-training. The scoring of this particular work for piano four-hands seems to have been standard operating procedure. Virtually all of his larger works were first sketched for piano duet, and as was the case with several works, these preliminary versions are all that survive. The piano duet medium is one that came naturally to Nietzsche. In addition to his musical evenings at the Krug household in which duet improvisation was a favorite activity, he and his sister Elisabeth also took great pleasure in improvising at the piano together.11 In his last years in Naumburg before leaving for boarding school, he and Elisabeth renewed this childhood habit, spending many long evenings together at the piano.12 In fairness to Nietzsche, both of these works should be viewed as purely pedagogical exercises and the many errors of technique and judgment attributed to youth and inexperience.

9 MN, 186-189.
10 See ex. 2.
11 MN, 345.
12 Ibid.
It was also during this time that Nietzsche began studying the works of Johann Georg Albrechtsberger. Having composed many preludes, fugues, and chorales, Albrechtsberger is now better known for his pedagogical accomplishments. These include teaching Beethoven, Hummel, Moscheles and Weigl, as well as writing several well-known theoretical treatises. It is very likely that Nietzsche owned a copy of the 1837 edition of his *Sämtliche Schriften über Generalbaß, Harmonielehre, und Tonsetzkunst; zum Selbstunterricht*. Several fugue-writing exercises in Nietzsche’s hand exist from this time bearing a strong resemblance to Albrechtsberger’s tutorials. There also exist several motet fragments, further attesting to Nietzsche’s baroque influences. A motet entitled “Hoch tut euch auf” is dated December 1858, and another entitled “Jesus meine Zuversicht” was written soon after. A fragment of his fugal exercises bears Nietzsche’s notes on the back recording an upcoming performance of Handel’s *Messiah* in Naumburg.

Considering Nietzsche’s musical influences, his love for the oratorio—a quintessentially baroque genre—comes as no surprise. A Christmas wish list from 1858 includes a request for Haydn’s *Creation* and praise for Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*. When taken in conjunction with his scorn for more modern music, his conception of the diametric opposition between oratorio and opera also makes sense. While most of his excoriations of modern music rarely cite specific points of concern, his attacks on opera are frequently quite specific. It seems that Nietzsche viewed opera as standing opposed

---

13 Love, 87.
14 MN, 202-3.
15 Ibid., 324.
16 HK I, 35.
to oratorio, the latter a form he held in the highest regard. Nietzsche praises oratorio in its “scorn for all other means” and chastises opera for “making use of them (other means) for effect.” When music is used for mere effect, it becomes “accompaniment” and “no other sense is excited other than the ear.” For Nietzsche, the oratorio represented this proper union of text and music, in which both mediums were allowed to operate in optimal conditions. Opera, on the other hand, adopted theatrics to manipulate the audience, and correspondingly degraded music as a means to an end. His notebooks reveal his research into the history of opera, and an essay and several fragments survive that explore the history of opera. It is obvious in these early letters (the above dates from 1861 when Nietzsche was only sixteen) that Nietzsche holds music in the highest esteem due to its ability to uplift and empower the listener. Insofar as Nietzsche himself experienced this transformative power, he has left us numerous descriptions. One such experience is found in a letter to his sister in which he describes a trip his Schulpforta choir took to Cologne. Despite finding no lodgings and resorting to sleeping on restaurant benches, the beauty and power of the night’s music alone made it not only bearable, but even delightful.

This transformative power of music derived from the fundamental level at which music conveyed expression. From these early letters and other essays, one can begin to put together a conception of Nietzsche’s early aesthetic. In poetry written in 1859 and 1860, naturalistic themes appear frequently in which understanding and wisdom are

---

17 HKB I, 125.
18 HK II, 64-67.
19 Middleton, 8.
derived from communion with nature. This communion is frequently brought about by song, and allows the individual to go beyond the surface of experience and obtain a deeper understanding. In one notebook from 1862 Nietzsche credited music for reproducing “…the unceasing impression of demonic Nature,” and a few lines later hypothesized that “other senses therefore create similar impressions.” As an example he put forward the poems of Hölderlin, a poet whose works frequently appear on Nietzsche’s reading lists. Nietzsche’s naturalism and growing transcendentalism at this time closely relates to the works of Hölderlin, and similarities can be seen both in the aesthetic approach and the subject matter. Nietzsche praised his poems for their ability to “raise(s) us up to the purest ideal spheres,” and in an inventory of his library in 1861, Nietzsche listed not only works of Hölderlin, but those of Byron as well. The transcendental nature of both of these authors is echoed in Nietzsche’s own appreciation for the natural. In many ways, Nietzsche’s appreciation of Byron and Hölderlin was perfectly in keeping with the romantic ideals of his day. Perhaps most interesting and enlightening are the ways in which Nietzsche sought to temper these romantic tendencies by appealing to definite truths. In this regard, Nietzsche’s ideas resembled Schopenhauer’s, even though he would not be exposed to the latter’s works until November 1865. Rather than accepting a completely subjective theory of knowledge, he insisted that the truth to be found through transcendental aesthetic experiences was an objective and accessible to all. Its medium might differ from person to person, but its substance remained the same, as did its resultant effect on the truth-seeker.

---

20 For example, “Der Frühling,” HK I, 421.
21 HK II, 89.
22 Middleton, 5.
On this point Nietzsche remained adamant, and from it came his insistence on aesthetic integrity. Just as music could communicate metaphysical truths to a listener, it could also distract or confuse a listener if created by an unscrupulous musician. This is supported by his frequent references to Schiller and the poet’s heroic admonitions to the German people. Nietzsche praised Schiller most highly for the truthfulness and honor that he inspired in his reader, rather than for the quality of his poetry or prose. This praise relates most likely to Schiller’s essays, “On the Aesthetic Education of Man” and “On the Sublime.” Maintaining this integrity, however, meant rejecting the extravagance and exaggeration of romanticism. In this regard, the inclusion of recitative in oratorio necessitated certain reforms. The restrictions on the musical component did not allow for truly authentic and spontaneous musical expression, and the text was unnecessarily manipulated. The result was a highly artificial construction that failed to do justice to text or music. It is interesting to note that Wagner had made similar claims in his Oper und Drama. The 1851 printing of this work totaled only five hundred copies, however, and Nietzsche did not come into contact with it until after the second printing in 1868. Ironically, the vehemently conservative Nietzsche had independently reached the same conclusion as the proponent of Zukunftsmusik, Richard Wagner.

The evidence gleaned from the early correspondences and notebooks reveals a young Nietzsche with an aesthetic that closely resembles that found in his later works. Importantly, these principles were reached without the aid of Wagner or Schopenhauer, as Nietzsche’s first significant exposure to the two did not occur until the mid 1860s.

---

23 HK I, 346; HK I, 186-88.
This fact goes a long way to discounting a theory that habitually appears in almost any Nietzsche discussion—the reason for his break with Wagner. As the details of their relationship will be discussed at length later, a brief summary will suffice at this juncture. As his appreciation for Wagner’s music increased, Nietzsche was able to meet Wagner personally in 1868, at which time the two began their stormy friendship. For the next five years, Nietzsche was a regular guest at the Wagner household, and became one of his most avid supporters. Through the mid 1870’s their friendship began to wane, and finally the two made a decisive break in 1876. For the rest of his life, Nietzsche was one of Wagner’s harshest critics and published several scathing attacks on Wagner and his music. Many scholars have attributed the break to personal differences stemming from their unhealthy psychological relationship. From this evaluation, it follows that Nietzsche’s later attacks on Wagner were motivated primarily by resentment and anger. If this were the case, then it also follows that the integrity of Nietzsche’s philosophy is in question anytime it ventures into Wagnerian topics. It then becomes difficult to dismiss the intellectual quality of his music-related writings without casting aspersions on his philosophy as a whole, especially given the organic nature of his philosophical project.

Therefore, glimpses of Nietzsche’s “post-Wagnerian” views in his pre-Wagnerian writings provide crucial evidence in defense of his intellectual integrity. His early works also include clues as to the intellectual differences that may have contributed to his eventual split with Wagner. In this setting, Nietzsche’s music provides especially important insight into his aesthetic ideas. His teenage fixation on music leading mankind to greatness and allowing individuals to experience life on a deeper level foreshadows his later attacks on Wagner in which he accuses him of lying and misleading his followers.
By realizing the important role truth played in music throughout Nietzsche’s life, the impression of Nietzsche as adoring fan and jilted friend can be replaced with one of a great thinker who outgrew his intellectual forefathers. This conception is reinforced in Nietzsche’s later reflections. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche reviews his books and discusses the influences operating on each work. When discussing Wagner, Nietzsche reflects on the refinement of his own taste engendered by their relationship. Their similarities brought them together, but as Nietzsche’s mature philosophy came into sharper focus, the ideological gap between the two widened. Nietzsche was in fact appreciative of his friendship with Wagner, pointing to the benefits of becoming enveloped in romanticism and later escaping its clutches. By coming face to face with an icon of romanticism, Nietzsche could see the movement for all it was, realize its potential danger to German culture, and then more effectively counteract its causes and symptoms.
Chapter 3

Germania and Early Compositions

The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher regard those who think alike than those who think differently.  

In 1858, Nietzsche began his studies at the previously mentioned Schulpforta, and left Naumburg for the slightly more cosmopolitan Pforta. The prestigious boarding school maintained a curriculum focusing on the humanities, providing Nietzsche with proficiency in Greek and Latin as well as thorough grounding in German, Italian and French literature. Although now separated from Krug, they struck on the idea of forming an academic club to provide a framework for continuing their intellectual discussions despite their geographical distance. In 1860, “Germania” began with a membership of three: Nietzsche, Krug, and their mutual friend Wilhelm Pinder. The club had strict rules to ensure its maintenance and survival and was begun with formal ceremonies at a nearby ruined castle. Each member was required to submit a work each month, be it musical or literary. In addition, the members paid dues in order to purchase books and articles relevant to the members’ interests. The payment of dues, purchase of literature, and recording of member submissions was the responsibility of the chronicler, a position that rotated quarterly. It seems that of the three, Nietzsche was the most methodical and orderly, repeatedly issuing admonitions when Krug or Pinder fell behind their submission quota or were late paying dues. In fact, it is due to the long distance nature of the group (Nietzsche was in Pforta while Pinder and Krug were still in Naumburg so virtually all

1 D, 153: IV, 297.
2 Love, Young Nietzsche,11.
communications were by mail) and Nietzsche’s mania for proper records that such a thorough documentation of the group’s activities is available today.

It was through Germania that Nietzsche gained his first in-depth knowledge of Wagner. Pinder and Krug did not share Nietzsche’s musical conservatism, and their submissions and requests for purchases frequently dealt with Wagner and his music. Their budget went to purchase subscriptions to the *Anregungen für Kunst, Leben und Wissenschaft* and *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. No documentation of an official club subscription to the latter exists, and editions were most likely borrowed from Krug’s father, but there is documentation of the club’s subscription to the former. The *Anregungen* was published by Franz Brendel, a noted Wagnerian who saw the journal as a forum to unify artistic, literary, and philosophical discussions of the day. The procedure for Germania was for these readings to be sent around to the members for criticism and discussion. In addition, the three frequently met over school holidays or summers to discuss their correspondences and hear performances of musical works. Due to Krug’s increasing interest in Wagner, these meetings frequently centered on discussions of his music.

A crisis in September 1862 led Nietzsche to reevaluate the club’s purposes and index all submissions up to then. This was intended to highlight the other member’s lax submission record and point out the nearly bankrupt treasury. To regenerate “our Germania’s” failing health, he called for its members to make up the “25 officially required submissions.”

---

3 Love, 15.
4 HK II, 90-91.
year old, Nietzsche outlined four points necessary for the regeneration of Germania. Apparently his admonishments were effective, as the club continued to function with surprising vitality well into 1865. From this chronicle, a picture of the discussions carried out by the group comes into focus. High on Nietzsche’s list of administrative overhauls is a control on spending, and he pointed to Krug’s proposal to purchase *Tristan und Isolde* as an example of fiscal irresponsibility. Nietzsche here referred to an extended discussion he and Krug had concerning the content of Germania’s next musical purchase. Because of Krug’s father’s connections with publishers, they were able to preview Hans von Bülow’s piano/vocal reduction of *Tristan* in the spring of 1861. Krug fell in love with the work, calling it “wonderful”\(^5\) while Nietzsche was nonplussed. His preference was that the club purchase Schumann’s *Das Paradies und die Peri*.\(^6\) Writing to Krug, he attempted to convince him of the benefits of purchasing *Tristan und Isolde* by pointing out the depth of Wagner’s work and highlighting the large amount of discussion this work could inspire versus the more straightforward oratorio.

This particular disagreement provides an excellent example of the musical views of the two students: Krug the devout Wagnerian and Nietzsche the proponent of oratorios and cantatas. It would not be their only disagreement over Wagner, as they frequently argued over the inclusion of Wagner in group discussions and purchases. In the same chronicle, Nietzsche lists the submitted works of all members, and the divide becomes more obvious. Krug’s list of submissions includes the following:

- “On the first scene of *Tristan and Isolde*”
- “On the New German School”

---

\(^5\) HKB I, 368.

\(^6\) Ibid.
As if Krug did not infuse enough Wagnerian thought into the group, Pinder’s submissions are equally telling, including:

- “On Hans Sachs—1”
- “On Hans Sachs—2”
- “On Hans Sachs—3”
- “Poem on Siegfried”

During the same twenty-six month period, Nietzsche—the member with the best submission record, submitting over twice as many works as Pinder—presented no works pertaining to Wagner.\(^7\)

Although far more musically conservative than Pinder and Krug, Nietzsche’s experiences in Germania up to 1862 did serve to broaden his musical horizons. He grew to appreciate and even revere the music of Robert Schumann, as his enthusiasm for Paradeis und der Peri shows, as well as a few pieces by Franz Liszt. Yet his musical tastes remained firmly grounded upon classical principles. An investigation of Nietzsche’s submissions during this time reveal his musical values and include his earliest surviving musical compositions. The importance of viewing his submissions in context warrants quoting his index in some length:\(^8\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Submission Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 1860</td>
<td>Introduction and chorus to “Weihnachtsoratorium” (Christmas Oratorio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1860</td>
<td>Harzreise (poem)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1860</td>
<td>Two Hirtenchöre for “Weihnachtsoratorium” (choral)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1860</td>
<td>Greek history in the time of the Peloponesian Wars (essay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1860</td>
<td>Two Prophetenchöre for “Weihnachtsoratorium” (choral)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1861</td>
<td>Seven Poems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1861</td>
<td>“Mariens Verkündigung” for “Weihnachtsoratorium” (choral)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^7\) HKB II, 95-99.
\(^8\) Ibid.
March 1861  Humanity’s Childhood (essay)
April 1861  Translation of Serbian folksongs
May 1861  “Mariensverkündigung” with Fugue (choral)
June 1861  Hirtenchor, Gesang des Mohren (choral)
July 1861  Ermanarich (Piano), Also a sketch of its literary history.
August 1861  “Schmerz ist Grundton der Natur” (orchestral sketch?)
September 1861  On Adelphi of Terenz (Germania discussion topic)
                         On the Dante Symphony (Liszt) (Germania discussion topic)
October 1861  Herbstlieder (Song)
November 1861  “Serbia” Symphonic Poem, parts I and II (piano)
December 1861  On Byrons dramatic works (essay)
January 1862  Napoleon III as president (essay)
February 1862  Three Hungarian Pieces (piano)
March 1862  Fatum und Geschichte (Germania discussion topic)
April 1862  -Nothing-
May 1862  Ermanarich’s Death (poem)
June 1862  Ungarischer Marsch, Heldenklage (piano)
July 1862  Aus der Jugendzeit (song)
August 1862  Sei still mein Herz (song), Ungarische Skizze (piano)
September 1862  New poems

Of the twenty-six months listed, Nietzsche submitted musical compositions for over half of them (fourteen). Of these, most of them survive, although frequently in incomplete form. The only works that have not survived in any form are the songs, “Herbstlieder” and “Sei still mein Herz,” and the piano works, “Drei Ungarischer Stücke.” Judging from the existing fragments of the others, it seems that Nietzsche’s index of Germania submissions may have not been strictly accurate. In his mission to rehabilitate the club and admonish his lax compatriots, his own list of submissions may have been rearranged and exaggerated. For example, his Weihnachtsoratorium submissions are all fragmentary, yet his index indicates them as complete pieces. As the club descended into its Tristan und Isolde-inspired nadir, the duties of chronicler habitually fell to Nietzsche allowing him to manipulate the records. These transgressions, if real, were undoubtedly minor and should not reflect poorly on
Nietzsche’s dedication to the project or the overall importance of the historical documents.

The first sections of his *Weihnachtsoratorium* - submitted to Germania in the last half of 1860 - provide an excellent starting point for evaluating Nietzsche’s early music. Submitted before he and Krug investigated the *Tristan und Isolde* score, the pieces are free of direct Wagnerian influences, while simultaneously reflecting a personal style that had begun to take shape. The introduction and first choir were submitted in August 1860, although they were not scored for their intended ensemble and still appear somewhat fragmentary. The orchestral parts are condensed to two staves and consistently fit into the pianist’s hands, suggesting this manuscript was composed at the piano and intended to be orchestrated later. Elements of the choral realization exist, adopting parts of Psalms 25 and 42 for its text, although the libretto is not indicated for parts other than the soprano. Judging from the similarities between the piano reduction and choral realization, it appears that Nietzsche had just begun to expand and orchestrate the reduction. Despite the incomplete nature of the work, certain characteristics may be discerned. The introduction is strictly contrapuntal, exhibiting at least four voices at all times. Suspensions and sequences appear repeatedly, and in the span of only 154 measures, three separate fugal passages are found. Nietzsche’s close attention to Albrechtsberger is evident, and despite occasional fugal inconsistencies, his subjects and counterpoint are musically appealing. His harmonic choices are conservative yet original and his harmonic vocabulary resembles that of Schubert. The main failing that appears in this work is a lack of development. His fugues begin well enough, but soon after all the voices have entered the music loses its momentum (ex. 4). Consequently, the already
short piece can be easily divided into many small sections. On a larger scale, the work is comprised of the introduction in f minor, the chorale in F major (it is unclear whether he intended it to be accompanied or not), and a return to the introductory material in the original key.

Nietzsche’s experimentation with early music can also be found in his *Miserere*. While not written specifically for Germania, the important role his fellow Germanians played in its composition warrants its inclusion in any discussion of the club. His choice of the sacred *Miserer*” points to a continued fascination with death, especially when one considers the likelihood that a *Miserere* was performed at his father’s funeral. Nietzsche may also have known of the young Mozart’s legendary transcription of Allegri’s *Miserere* after one hearing nearly a century earlier. The source from which Nietzsche would have learned of Mozart’s transcription—Krug—also provided him the stylistic content for the *Miserere*. Krug’s comprehensive musical training (conducted by his father) had focused on the works of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina over the summer of 1860. Due to their close friendship, Nietzsche was able to share in this instruction and represents Nietzsche’s first thorough Palestrinian exposure.

The Palestrinian influence throughout the *Miserere* is obvious, and Nietzsche made every effort to conform to the *stile antico*. Scored for five voices with no instrumental accompaniment, the piece is strictly contrapuntal and in large alle breve time (4/2). The unique key signature (g minor with only one flat—B) is a reference to the seventeenth century use of the Dorian minor—a characteristic Nietzsche probably learned from his participation in the Pforta choir. Although he began with all the best intentions,

---

9 Janz, 102.
it ultimately fails to hold together. Lacking Palestrina’s intricate and delicate harmonic structure, Nietzsche’s work has no harmonic or melodic regularity. In fact, the lack of continuity seems to arise largely out of his dogged adherance to the rules of voice leading. The setting of the text is, for the most part, effective, with metric emphases corresponding with stressed syllables. This seems logical, considering that Nietzsche’s knowledge of Latin would have made him especially cognizant of proper declamation. The most characteristic quality of the Miserere is an underlying tension between the self-imposed, sixteenth century stylistic constraints and the typically nineteenth century romanticism that the sixteen year-old Nietzsche wanted to convey. The fact that Nietzsche never completed the piece (although he attempted several versions) or submitted it to Germania indicate his own realization that the piece was ineffective. However, it may be added that later instances of counterpoint are more effective for this early musical experiment.

While also incomplete, the *Mariens Verkündigung* is a more successful and more unified piece. Nietzsche’s notebooks were filled with sketches and revisions of this particular piece which makes dating and compiling the piece difficult. As an added challenge, the Germania chronicles—an invaluable tool for dating his compositions—list both a *Mariens Verkündigung* and a *Mariensverkündigung mit Fuge*, one of which is dated before his exposure to *Tristan* and one of which dates from afterwards. If this were not confusing enough, Nietzsche compiled another Germania index the following year in which only one “Mariensverkündigung” is listed, supposedly completed in May 1861. Thanks to Janz’s careful investigations and intricately detailed bibliography the work can
be dated with a fair degree of certainty.\textsuperscript{10} The bulk of the work dates from February and March 1861, with few revisions and additions coming in June. Additionally, the June revisions contain little if any stylistic changes, and so if dating errors do exist, they are of minimal concern.

The \textit{Verkündigung} itself displays more unity than the introduction largely due to the narrative character of the accompanying text, a text Nietzsche could use to organize the musical form. Nietzsche sets Luke 1:28-38, a passage detailing the announcement to Mary that she will soon give birth to Jesus. The contrapuntal introduction contains a great deal of chromaticism and is structured around a descending line imitated with almost fugal regularity (ex. 5). These episodes are interspersed with more chordal passages in which Nietzsche uses chromatic suspensions and anticipations to gradually shift from one chord to another. The effect is one of mystery and almost ominous suspense. Although the sagging motivic nature could conjure up Wagnerian associations, its application in such an austere contrapuntal setting more closely resembles passages from Bach’s \textit{St. Matthew Passion}.

Immediately proceeding the vocal entrance (most likely a baritone solo, although no indication is given) Nietzsche brings the insistent harmonic motion to a sudden stop, and appears to begin a fugue. The “subject” is announced in the low registers then stops, a brief harmonic progression establishes the tonality, and the soloist enters. Twenty-seven measures later, the “subject” returns in the bass register to reveal that it is not a fugal subject at all, but a sort of motif (ex. 6). Its initial introduction sets the stage for the announcing angel, and its return corresponds with the text, “You have found favor with

\textsuperscript{10} MN, 187.
God.” In Attributing motivic status to this recurring melodic anomaly we are a long way from the motivic integration of the Ring cycle. Again, Nietzsche’s deployment of rhetorical devices seems more in keeping with the values of the Baroque era than the contemporary Zukunftsmusik.

In light of the value Nietzsche placed on content, the task of investigating the intended effect of this movement gains significance. The music and the setting of the text focus on Mary’s experience rather than the impending birth of Jesus. This contrasts greatly with the tone of the biblical passage. In the scriptural version, the angel tells Mary she will soon bear a son, Mary asks how this can be, and the angel replies that God has made it happen. At this point, Mary accepts the explanation and the entire situation is explained to her satisfaction in three verses. Nietzsche chooses to examine the psychological turmoil that must have accompanied such a shocking announcement. First he pointedly avoids a cadence between the verses “You will be with child” and “You will bear a son,” indicating the amount of shock Mary must have felt at such news. One can almost see Mary step back and catch her breath as the D7 surprisingly leads to a c minor chord (ex. 7). Then, the announcement is followed by a fugue reflecting the anxiety and confusion that she must have felt. By focusing on Mary’s experience, Nietzsche foreshadows his mature philosophical outlook present in Beyond Good and Evil. The event was momentous and unprecedented, and Mary first apprehended its consequences and then accepted it without resentment or fear. By implying the difficulties of the situation through the fugue, he recasts Mary’s peaceful acceptance in a context of strength.
Shortly after writing the *Mariensverkündigung*, Nietzsche submitted the second movement of the Christmas oratorio entitled, *Hirtenchor, Sternerwartung, Gesang des Mohren, Instrumentalstück*. Although Nietzsche did, in fact, have a penchant for long and overly descriptive names, Janz speculates that this conglomeration of pieces had less to do with any unity of the works and more to do with creating a substantial submission to Germania. Most likely, he did not intend the *Gesang des Mohren* to be part of the oratorio at all. It is possible that the name, *Gesang des Mohren*, was added to the unrelated piece (the title does not appear in the song’s text) in an attempt to link it to the oratorio. This possibility is strengthened by the fact that although the title, *Gesang des Mohren*, seems appropriate to the oratorio, it has little to do with the text or music of the piece. Regardless of its relation to the oratorio, the song is unique and worthy of close scrutiny. It is one of the first works completed after he and Krug examined the *Tristan und Isolde* reduction during Easter break. Although Nietzsche’s letters immediately after reading through *Tristan* do not indicate a sudden change of heart towards Wagner, a gradual shift in thinking had, by 1865, brought him into agreement with his Wagnerian fellow members. Gradually an increasing number of references to Wagner and the Wagnerian project appear, beginning around the winter of 1862. It is in his music that the beginnings of this aesthetic change of heart can be seen.

The *Gesang des Mohrens* represents a move away from the primarily diatonic harmonies of Nietzsche’s music up unto this time. The occasional odd harmony in previous compositions could be explained by diatonic coincidences or unexpected

---

11 It is interesting to note that Nietzsche more often than not praises the *spirit* of Wagner’s music, referring to the musical or aesthetic techniques rather infrequently. This again supports a view of Nietzsche jumping on a bandwagon he thought would take him where he wanted to go, only to jump off when he realized Wagner had a different destination in mind.
chordal movement. In the third movement of the oratorio, completed the December
before the Tristan event, an example of this unusual chordal motion can be seen (ex. 8).
The motion from one chord to another seems to indicate Nietzsche’s intention to depict
emotional tension and subsequent release to reflect the preceding text, “God! Give us
peace.” The failure of this passage, like many others, stems from two compositional
weaknesses: a limited harmonic vocabulary and a lack of large-scale harmonic or formal
structures. One can almost hear Nietzsche at the piano playing one chord and then
moving to an unexpected chord to create tension. Therefore the link between any two
sequential harmonies is one of surprise only, and there are no links between chords on a
larger scale.

It can be assumed that by reading through Tristan, young Nietzsche saw a fellow
composer with similar intentions and far more effective means. Although any discussion
of the “Tristan Chord”\(^\text{12}\) is bound to be controversial, it can be argued that it functions to
lead to an E\(^7\) chord, the dominant of A minor. Most importantly to Nietzsche, this chord
typified Wagner’s use of unexpected dissonance to set up far-stretching harmonic
consequences. Leading up to the half-diminished F chord (or its enharmonic equivalent,
with F-G#-B-D# rewritten as F-Ab-Cb-Eb) the melodic line implies F major, but the
sudden introduction of the Tristan chord sets up dissonances that demand resolution in an
entirely different key—A minor. Wagner then manipulates the tension for the next five
hours, giving direction and form to the intervening harmonies. This is, of course, an

\(^\text{12}\) The “Tristan Chord” will heretofore refer to its occurrence in the prelude to Tristan und Isolde as
illustrated in the reduction in example 9.
overly brief discussion of Wagnerian techniques, but it does highlight techniques that Nietzsche had sought in his previous compositions.

At the very beginning of the “Gesang des Mohren,” the wide melodic leaps and dotted rhythms show a change in Nietzsche’s style (ex. 10). The strictly contrapuntal style is here enriched with thicker harmonies and delayed resolutions. In these resolutions, Nietzsche can be seen experimenting with Wagnerian ideas. In the second beat of measure four, he inserts an unexpected harmony (a very Wagnerian half diminished A# chord) and lets it move towards an F# dominant seventh chord on the third beat of measure five. The F#7 then resolves to the expected B major, and in an unprecedented compositional accomplishment, Nietzsche has constructed an effective yet emotionally charged harmonic progression lasting three full measures. Although the vocal component of the Gesang comprises only the first eighteen measures, they are filled with Wagnerian idioms, including plunging melodic intervals and harmonically dense tremolos. Even the text is a radical change from the Biblical texts of his previous works. Contrast the prose of Luke with, “As my wild delusions whirl, by what means does wonder move my mind? Doubt refuses me peace. Find me, oh miracle, that the wildly excited courageousness of my soul will find calm and bliss.”13 As soon as the vocal component is completed however, an adagio section begins that is more reminiscent of Mendelssohn than Wagner.

Shortly after ending his work on Gesang des Mohrens, Nietzsche began another group of projects pertaining to his oratorio. It originally began as the sixth part of the oratorio, and included the chorale Ehre sei Gott, an instrumental movement, Heidenwelt,

13 MN, 259-60.
and another chorale movement, Der Könige Tod. Midway through the compositional process, he linked them together to create one larger work, Schmerz ist der Grundton der Natur” The latter work was scored for piano four hands and was most likely a preliminary sketch for later orchestration. The notebook from which the duet comes also contains a page prepared with enough staves for a full orchestration. The text of the first choir comes from Luke, 2:14, albeit somewhat out of context.

The chronology of this work foreshadows Nietzsche’s later abandonment of not only his Christmas oratorio, but the entire oratorio genre as well. The components written later show a marked decrease in emphasis on the vocal aspect. For example, the three movements compiling the sixth scene\textsuperscript{14} are predominantly instrumental with only twenty-one of the approximately two hundred measures set to text. “Ehre sei Gott” is set in a style reminiscent of Mendelssohn’s Elijah and contains the frequent cadences and vertical harmonies typical of Handel. This short section, however, represents the only Handelian influence in the scene, and Nietzsche almost seems in a hurry to move away from it to explore new and different ideas. The Wagnerian source of these new ideas becomes clear only one measure later when Nietzsche nearly plagiarizes the Tristan chord (ex. 11). A highly chromatic line stops abruptly at a chord comprised of a diminished fourth and an augmented fifth resolving upward through a passing tone to an altered Bb\textsuperscript{7} chord. The fifth of the chord is delayed, replaced with the raised fourth that then resolves upward to the fifth. Upon comparing Nietzsche’s progression with

\textsuperscript{14} The parts of the oratorio are frequently labeled “Szene,” and correspond to the roman numerals given to certain groupings. He is not strictly consistent in this nomenclature however, and the works are far too incomplete to begin hypothesizing about intended performance details.
Wagner’s (ex. 9) the close similarity is obvious. A difference of spelling and a slight difference in rhythm are all that distinguish the two.

Clearly Nietzsche had become intrigued with Wagner’s harmonies and sought to explore their use in his own music. This experimental spirit is characterized in the two immediate measures where the same progression is transposed and repeated. The repetition of the progression negates many of its inherent benefits, although Nietzsche’s youth and excitement shine through in the process. Reflecting the assumption that if once was good, twice will be even better, variations of the Tristan progression appear frequently throughout the scene. In the compilation, “Schmerz ist der Grundton der Natur,” the experimental quality of the work is emphasized through the omission of the opening choral material. Focusing purely on the instrumental components, a number of developmental techniques can be seen. In the opening section, a sort of chaconne is introduced that returns several times to provide unity. The length of the chaconne allows Nietzsche to hold together larger sections and acts as a canvas for experimental chordal expansions. Many of these include characteristically Wagnerian motifs (ex. 12), although extensions of his earlier Baroque contrapuntal techniques also reappear. The Wagnerian characteristics of Schmerz were not lost on Nietzsche either; after Parsifal was premiered twenty years later, he remarked on its similarity to his own Der Könige Tod—one component of Schmerz ist der Grundton der Natur.15

Schmerz also illustrates Nietzsche’s growing organizational abilities. While still very sectional (the borders between its original components remain obvious), he utilizes characteristic motifs and melodies to create symmetry and balance. Besides the above

---

15 HKB IV, 110-11.
mentioned quasi-chaconne, a stair-stepping line of thirds create a motif that reappears in different harmonic contexts to link various sections. Towards the end a descending line appears in different voices and accompanies a recollection of several of the earlier motifs. This recurrence of previous motifs stretching beyond sectional boundaries represented a major step forward in Nietzsche’s ability to tie together larger forms. It also foreshadows Wagner’s use of leitmotifs in his Die Ring der Niebelungen, a hint of which can be found earlier in Tristan and could have been consciously or unconsciously absorbed when he and Krug examined the score. His use of them here foreshadows more substantial applications in later works such as Ermanarich and Sylvesternacht.

Experimentation seems to have played a large role in Nietzsche’s musical growth, and his excursion into Wagnerian territory was no different. New techniques were studied, applied, and then synthesized into his overall style. Indicative of this synthesis is the effectiveness of the last half of the Gesang. Lacking any explicit Wagnerian characteristics, it nonetheless exhibits regular phrase structure, a tonal center, and a formal symmetry lacking in his earlier works. Components of the vocal introduction are even recalled and developed, and combined with Nietzsche’s knack for charming melodies, it is a highly effective work. Perhaps the demonstration of succinctness and proportion evident here for the first time can be attributed, ironically, to the notoriously long-winded and unpredictable music of Wagner. By appreciating the ability of small progressions to unify immense works, Nietzsche began using them in his own, much shorter, compositions.

Another weakness Nietzsche began to overcome at this time was his tendency towards improvisation. By comparing the earlier Germania submissions with those
submitted later, a picture of Nietzsche’s struggle to rein in his improvisatory nature comes into focus. As he himself acknowledged,

The monthly submissions of treatises and compositions, and the criticisms derived from the quarterly get-togethers, force the spirit to regard with precision this small but stimulating territory, while simultaneously working against the cursed influence of “Fantasies” through well-grounded study with a composition teacher.  

This tendency explains the fragmentary and incomplete nature of many of his earliest works. When confronted with the demands of written submissions, he was forced to consider issues of proportion, form and proper notation. Indicative of this struggle are the frequent omissions of accidentals or key signatures in the oratorio movements. Obviously not accustomed to notating accidentals and key changes, his works frequently require the services of an editor accustomed to the Nietzschean style. Although some more obvious omissions are supplied by Janz, most of them are left to the performer, even in his most polished works. Bringing his works to a satisfactory conclusion also represented a difficulty for the young Nietzsche, as the empty measures at the ends of many works indicate. In this regard, his substantial progress can be charted by comparing the earlier oratorio movements with his subsequent lieder and short piano works.

16 HK III, 68. The composition teacher to whom he refers is surely Krug, in whose composition technique Nietzsche placed a great deal of trust.
Chapter 4

New Ideas and Genres

“Giving style to one’s character—a great and rare art! It is exercised by those who see all the strengths and weaknesses of their own natures and then comprehend them in an artistic plan until everything appears as art and reason and even weakness delights the eye.”

It was not long after his Wagnerian experimentation, in the vicinity of spring 1862, that two immensely important developments began. First, Nietzsche began in earnest to map out a musical aesthetic, and secondly, after finally abandoning his Christmas oratorio, he began to focus on short piano works and lieder. These developments led directly to his highest musical and philosophical achievements, and were engendered by his participation in Germania. The frequent discussions and arguments resulting from Krug’s Wagnerism and Nietzsche’s conservatism inevitably led the ever-fleißig scholars to put forward their views in essays. At one point, Nietzsche lobbied, unsuccessfully, to make “On the Nature of Music” a required topic for a month’s submissions. Notes for his entry survive, and provide valuable insight into his thinking during this time. Personally touched by both the mathematical, formal aspects of music as well as the emotive power, he sought to explain music’s dual nature. Socratically addressing a doubter, Nietzsche explains,

If you smile at the idea that within form lives the culmination of the music… others shake their heads as you stand there, despite your intellect, struck dumb by the power of the music before the passionate waves of Tristan und Isolde. Both Albrechtsberger’s contrapuntal fugues and Wagner’s love scenes typify music, they must jointly contribute to the essence of it.

---

1 GS, 232: IV, 290.
2 HK II, 114.
It is apparent in this quote, that through his exposure to Wagner’s music and theories, he had come face to face with music’s potential for brute emotional force.

The motivation behind revealing music’s true nature remained centered on its communicative capabilities. Nietzsche’s belief in the naturalistic, transcendental qualities of music and its ability to express fundamental realities did not change throughout his life. From his earliest notebooks to his final published work, music plays an integral role in supplying truth and enabling individuals to rise above the follies of their age. His move towards a more even split between emotion-centered music and form and structure-centered music reflected his growing understanding of and exposure to different kinds of music. In the same pursuit, Nietzsche marshaled the sciences of linguistics and philology to better understand music. From an early age Nietzsche showed signs of extraordinary linguistic abilities. By the time he was studying in Pforta, he quickly distinguished himself in his Greek and Latin classes and began studying French and Italian as well. His collected notebooks from this time reflect his interest in ancient Greek and Scandinavian literature. From his detailed study of languages, he began to assemble a theory of linguistic/musical development. From further notes for his unfinished “On the Nature of Music” essay, the seeds of this theory—a theory that would find fruition in *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* eight years later—can be examined. He was especially fascinated with the inclusion of tone and pitch in language. In a largely unsubstantiated but highly interesting hypothesis, Nietzsche proposes “Through linguistics we find that the older a language is, the richer in tone it is; in fact,
one cannot distinguish between speech and song.”3 He goes on to explain that these proto-languages supplemented their small vocabulary with inflection and tonal variety to communicate passions, needs and feelings. He then traces the gradual refinement of vocabulary and grammar and links it to the objectification of experience. The more effectively language could quantify and qualify reality, the more its signs became confused for that which was signified and the more “tone was separated from words.”4 This contributed to the decline in understanding of true reality. We began to think that our language of precise concepts and black and white distinctions accurately reflected that which we described. It was, therefore, only through a return to music, the ultimate proto-language, that we could again express the chaos that truly surrounded us.

Therefore it is not surprising that for this marriage of expressive capabilities with formal and structural integrity Nietzsche looked to ancient Greece. Throughout his life, Nietzsche held the ancient Greeks in the highest esteem and particularly admired their aesthetic endeavors. In a letter to a friend in 1861, Nietzsche defends his “favorite poet,” Hölderlin5, and attributes his greatness to his adherence to Greek ideals. He calls Hölderlin’s Empedocles, “…this most important dramatic fragment, in whose melancholy tones reverberates the future of the unhappy poet, his grave of long madness, and not as you say in unclear talk but in the purest Sophoclean language and with an inexhaustible fullness of profound ideas.”6 And later in the same letter: “But nowhere has the longing

---

3 Ibid., 89.
4 Ibid.
5 Hölderlin’s ties to Greek literature were furthered by his extensive translations of Greek poetry. When Nietzsche felt it necessary to defend the poet, he was primarily known for his translations, and it would not be until the early 20th century that his poetry gained widespread acceptance.
6 Middleton, 5-6.
for Greece been revealed in purer tones; nowhere, either is the kinship of soul between Hölderlin, Schiller, and Hegel, his close friend, more plain to see.” In this latter quote, Nietzsche’s association of Greek classicism with German literary classicism comes into plain view and highlights an important association that extends throughout his work. Although musicians associate the term “classicism” with the music of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and other composers of the same time period, Nietzsche uses the term in the literary and historical sense, referring to ancient Greece and Rome. Therefore his use of the term “classical” to describe aesthetic ideas should not be confused with the narrower concepts of the eighteenth century musical period.

The second shift in Nietzsche’s thinking at this time involved his adoption of new musical genres. Instead of writing large-scale works, such as his Christmas oratorio, he began writing short piano pieces and simple lieder. The reasons behind this change were most likely pragmatic. His oratorio submissions to Germania were never fully completed, and Nietzsche - more than Krug or Pinder - took the submission requirements very seriously. Composing works for one or two instruments did not require the orchestral scoring for which the larger forms called, a skill in which he had little or no experience. Furthermore, the feedback he had received from his fellow members surely highlighted the disorganization and formlessness of his previous submissions. Those excerpts in which he had excelled displayed his melodic gifts and charming use of harmonies—skills that could be used most effectively in lieder and piano character pieces. Krug had remarked on Nietzsche’s contrapuntal characteristics and warned him
not to “…make too much of a dry impression.”7 In the same letter he had praised certain sections of Nietzsche’s music and implied that many of these, if given his complete attention, would be quite beautiful. Nietzsche seems to have taken this to heart, and dedicated his time to small pieces that could be finished and polished rather than long, epic works that never managed to progress beyond rough outlines.

It can also be assumed that his aesthetic theorizing had brought to light the inconsistencies between a Biblical oratorio and his own views on music’s inherently subjective and fleeting nature. If music, at its best, accurately expresses the chaotic and highly unique circumstances experienced by an individual, then the entire concept of an oratorio seems riddled with contradictions. How can one composer accurately reflect the experiences of several characters without misrepresenting all but one. Justifying the use of a chorus as mere orchestration of music felt by an individual only serves to again highlight Nietzsche’s orchestrational weaknesses, and even if valid, was technically unfeasible. The use of a biblical text negates any first-person expression, and limits the composer to speaking through pre-existing characters. Although Nietzsche took advantage of this circumstance in his *Mariensverkündigung*, the overall concept was far too artificial to find agreement with Nietzsche’s now refined aesthetic principles.

Through his lieder and piano works however, Nietzsche was able to create music of a far more expressive and authentic quality. His first fully completed lied was *Mein Platz vor der Tür*, finished in the fall of 1861 and first published in the 1924 collection of Nietzsche lieder by Göhler8. Musically, this song marks the beginning of his mature style

7 HKB I, 369.
8 See p. 19 and corresponding footnote for information on the Göhler collection.
and the first valid contribution to the musical world. It also represents a distinct break with both his contrapuntal, neo-Baroque writings and his Wagnerian experiments. Instead of the frequent chromaticism and omnipresent diminished and augmented chords found in his later oratorio movements, *Mein Platz* begins with harmonies reminiscent of Schubert lieder (ex. 13). Aside from a few passing chords inserted for color, it is primarily diatonic. In fact, the difference from his earlier pieces (some written only the month before) is remarkable. This sudden change in harmonic usage presents an excellent example of Nietzsche’s tendency to quickly embrace a new idea, experiment with it, and then move on, synthesizing particular components he finds useful. Janz and Love both comment on this tendency,⁹ and it is especially applicable to his musical works.

   Given the new genres in which he was writing, it is natural that there should be some formal experimentation. Many subtle (and several not so subtle) changes to the standard forms used in lieder and short piano character pieces can be found throughout Nietzsche’s music from this time. The form of *Mein Platz* most closely resembles rounded binary form, although significant departures from aspects traditionally associated with the form make its application here questionable. It begins with an eight-bar phrase comprised of two near repetitions of a four-bar melody. Another eight-bar phrase follows and begins in the relative minor (e). After reaching a cadence on the dominant, the original melody returns and an authentic cadence ends the section. This opening section is remarkable for its adherence to late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century

---

⁹ MN, 329.
forms and harmonies. It could easily be mistaken for an early Schubert lied and possesses a charm and grace not found in Nietzsche’s earlier works.

It is not until the B section begins that Nietzsche’s individualism asserts itself in the form of several unexpected harmonic shifts (ex. 14). The F naturals suggest a move to C major, representing a somewhat unusual move to the subdominant rather than the dominant. This evaluation, however, is put in doubt the next measure when a passing chord resolves to E major. In a clever harmonic move, Nietzsche reveals the E major chord to have been an applied dominant of A minor, the relative minor of C major, and further reinforces this relationship by writing a descending line ending on a held unison C. Expecting the predictable return to G in the last half of the B section, Nietzsche surprises his listeners with a highly chromatic adagio section beginning in G minor. After several unexpected harmonies, enharmonic shifts and a series of applied dominants, a D⁷ chord appears suddenly on the antepenultimate word (ex. 15), establishing a perfect authentic cadence to end the vocal line. The inclusion of a trill on the leading tone in both the vocal and piano part creates the sensation of having just heard a cadenza, a feeling reinforced by the improvisatory atmosphere resulting from its harmonic instability.

The final five measures, instead of reaffirming the original tonality and predictably concluding the piece, present a considerable interpretive and evaluative challenge to the listener. Nietzsche calls for the ending to be played “presto” and ceases to write within the time signature, indicating (it can be assumed) a rhythmically free interpretation. The unison line differs little from the opening phrase except for the substitution of sixteenths for the original eighths in the pick up notes. The adoption of
opening material for use in a conclusion is hardly unusual, but here Nietzsche only adopts half of the phrase and therefore ends on the dominant. The uncertainty of this ending is emphasized by the marking of “pianississimo.” Nietzsche’s intentions in writing this unusual ending are entirely left to the listener as no documents exist that might explain his strange choice. It is inconceivable that he merely forgot in which key the piece began—his circuitous harmonic journey through the “cadenza” could not have accidentally led back to G major—rather it is indicative of a conscious choice to return to the tonic. It is also illogical to wonder if Nietzsche knew pieces generally began and ended in the same key—his training and exposure to music would have surely taught him that. The only choice left us is that he chose to abandon the tonic and end the piece with an impression of uncertainty.

The text of the song presents a logical point of departure, but on first glance, the text of this piece does not lend itself to such an ending.

The path along our fence, how wonderful it was.
I’d go there every morning up to my knees in the grass
and play there till dusk in the stones and the sand;
in the evening Grandad would come to fetch me
and lead me home by the hand.

Then I wished that I were bigger and could see over the fence.
Grandad would say: “Don’t worry! You’ll see it soon enough!”
And so I did: I’ve seen the world outside – it wasn’t half so fair
as the world at my door was then.10

The poem itself has a pleasing symmetry in which the opening description of the fence is recalled in the final line. The development occurs in the grandfather’s advice to enjoy life now and not be too quick to enter adulthood. Nietzsche embellishes the line by

setting it to the adagio section that is ripe with unusual harmonies and minor tonalities. Specific emphasis is given to the line “Let it be!” through three held notes in octave doublings. Through the distinct change in mood present in the adagio section, Nietzsche distinguishes between the narrator and the grandfather. In light of this interpretation, it follows that the grandfather’s words and the adult reality they reflect had an effect on the narrator, making a simple, happy ending impossible. A rhetorical explanation, such as this, seems especially appropriate considering both the simple form and short length involved, and Nietzsche’s belief in music’s communicative purpose. The unusual ending of *Mein Platz* serves to indicate the depth of impact this recollection possesses.

The text for this work comes from Klaus Groth, a poet and amateur anthropologist who edited and compiled old German folksongs. Nietzsche ultimately set three of them to music, composing *So lach doch mal* and *Da geht ein Bach* the next summer (1862). Although formal experimentation is also found in these pieces, an image of Nietzsche’s individual characteristics begins to come into focus. All three pieces begin with two phrases, each consisting of eight or twelve measures and each ending with an obvious cadence. Next comes a return to the first section, albeit frequently altered or juxtaposed with other material. For example, in *Mein Platz*, the left hand is embellished, and in *So lach doch mal*, the return to the A material is varied with the insertion of a descant (ex. 16). What follows can best be described as a mini-development in which different tonalities are explored and there is a great deal more metric freedom. In *Da geht ein Bach*, the development section comprises the entirety of an unusually long first ending, and culminates in a gradually shifting harmony suspended over a six measure pedal point.

---

11 Of 28 total measures (not counting the repeat) ten of them are in the first ending; MN, 13.
After the development follows a brief return to the opening material, although it is usually truncated and sometimes interspersed with later material.

The foreshortened “recapitulation” (if the author may use that term somewhat out of context) leads to a conclusion that can vary widely, depending on the spirit of the piece.

In the previously discussed Mein Platz, this dictated a conclusion in an indistinct tonality due to the transformative nature of the piece’s spirit. Nietzsche frequently uses the term “Geist” when describing music (translated here as “spirit”). In reference to his music, it describes the essence of the moment, the content of the specific experience, and the part that moment played in the individual’s growth as an entity. In as much as Mein Platz describes an awakening to the harsh reality of the world, Nietzsche rhetorically ends the piece differently than it began. In So lach doch mal, the piece begins and ends in the same key, and although the above formal structure still applies, its mini-development is much smaller. The text for the piece (he did not set this text to music, the piece merely shares the same title as the Groth poem) mirrors the static formal nature:

Would that I could move my heart;
And laugh just once! Feel joy just once!
Already the lark strikes out at the heavens,
And the nightingale comes out in the wood,
At what do you stare in the evening gloom?
The flowers smell sweet in the grass, the birds sing overhead,
Yet you stay still and pale.

The sadness of the opening lines is only deepened by comparison to the beauty of nature, and the poem—like the piece—fails to lift itself out of the gloom.
Although originating with the Groth lieder, Nietzsche used this form for virtually all of his lieder, to great effect. While on first hearing they may resemble Schubert lied with Mahler-esque conclusions, upon closer scrutiny a unique, coherent, and individual musical style emerges. They are works that take us inside the moment; taking the original text as a point of departure and then further plumbing the depths of its meaning. It was this richness and insight that led Dieskau to record the works and praise their composer. It is that same insight that makes these pieces worthwhile today and justifies the effort required to rediscover Nietzsche’s lieder repertoire. For those interested in performing his songs, appendix A lists all his completed works. In addition to the above-mentioned songs, *Aus der Jugendzeit, Beschwörung, Ständchen* and *Es winkt und neigt sich* are also effective and charming works in the same vein.

The three Groth texts come from his compilation, *Quickbornlieder*, a collection of folksongs gathered by Groth in the mid 1800’s. This work, originally published in the niederdeutsch or “low German” typical of peasant folksongs, was later translated into the more accessible hochdeutsch or “high German” in 1856 by A. von Winterfeld. Nietzsche chose the high German translation, somewhat sacrificing historical authenticity but compensating in clarity. He thought very highly of Groth’s collection, as his quest to set them to music attests. In one of his notebooks from 1858, Nietzsche lists *Quickbornlieder* right next to the *Frithjofssage*, the *Cid, Nibelungen*, and the works of Münchhausen as some of his most important books.¹² His acclaim for these books place him in the middle of a literary movement called “National Romanticism” in which Wagner was also very involved. Proponents of national romanticism sought to revive

¹² HK I, 400.
historical literary works and paint them in a nationalistic light. The Frithjofssage (or Frithiof’s Saga as it is usually translated) is an Icelandic example of this. Rediscovered by Bishop Esaias Tegné, the story tells of Frithiof, a son of a commoner, who falls in love with and betroths an Icelandic princess. After the tragic death of several benevolent patriarchs, power falls on Frithiof’s evil brothers who, jealous of their brother, exile him to the high seas. The adventures that follow make up the bulk of the story and include stories typical of mythical epics. What makes the collection an example of national romanticism instead of literary archaeology is Tegné’s treatment of the story. The brutality and pitiless ambition of the characters is glossed over and replaced with Victorian notions of nobility and chivalry. Twelfth-century characters with no conception of a nation state improbably give rousing, nationalistic speeches glorifying sacrifice for the state. Most characteristically, specific virtues inherent in the characters were attributed to a corresponding “national character” and served to promote the virulent racial theories the permeated the late nineteenth century.

In many ways these racial theories—along with national romanticism—were two facets of the same philosophy that swept through western Europe after the revolutions of 1848. As a bright young German in an elite boarding school, Nietzsche was surely caught up in them, as his earliest philosophical works show. His use of Friedrich Rückert’s text in Aus der Jungendzeit attests to his familiarity with and appreciation of another author associated with nationalist ideologies. Although Aus der Jungendzeit comes from an early collection (Italienische Gedichte), Nietzsche was no doubt familiar

---

13 In setting Rückert’s texts to music, Nietzsche followed in the footsteps of Robert and Clara Schumann who had set several of his characteristically pastoral poems little over a decade earlier. He also anticipated Mahler’s “Vier Lieder nach Friedrich Rückert” and the famous “Kindertötenlieder.”
with his patriotic and anti-French *Geharnischte Sonette* or “sonnets in armor.” In fact, it would not be until much later that he freed himself of the last vestiges of nationalism. In the meantime, his fascination with the Norse epics and German folk songs were yet another interest he unknowingly shared with Richard Wagner. Wagner’s interest in Norse mythology is well-documented, and his firm belief in the corresponding nationalism and race theories of his day are also well documented in both his “Oper und Drama” and “An der Juden.” Although Nietzsche’s own interest in Münchhausen and the Frithiof’s Saga clearly predate any knowledge of Wagner’s studies, the initial appearance of Groth’s texts shortly after reading through *Tristan und Isolde* points to a Wagnerian influence. If nothing else, Nietzsche’s eyes were opened to the possibility of uniting ancient literature with music, the most ancient of languages

---

14 His list of epics and folksongs dates from 1859, and his first documented exposure to *Die Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* – the most likely source from which Nietzsche learned of Wagner’s studies - is not until 1861.
Chapter 5

Pre-Wagnerian Piano Works

I favor any skepsis to which I may reply: ‘Let us try it!’

It was the same nationalist romantic literary sources that spurred Nietzsche to write out his earliest surviving solo piano works. His interest in Frithiof’s Saga led to a familiarity with the *Edda*—one of the foremost collections of Norse mythology. His notebooks indicate that he had access to Pinder’s copy of the Edda, translated by von Simrock’s in two volume since November 1858. From this collection that included such characters as Siegfried, Brunhilde, Wotan and the Nibelungen, Nietzsche developed an attachment to a character named Ermanarich. The Edda is awash with actual historical figures who have been woven creatively into the tapestry of Norse mythology through the centuries, and Ermanarich seems to be one of these. Most scholars agree that this was actually Jörmunrek, a fourth century Ostrogoth king, who ruled in what is now the Ukraine. Like Attila the Hun - who also makes frequent appearances in the sagas - the historical figure Jörmunrek should be regarded only as a starting point from which a purely fictional adventure departs. Nietzsche’s first mention of the character appears in his notebooks from March 1861. For the next two years, Ermanarich would become a frequent subject of his letters, essays, and comparisons. The examples show a structured study of the character and include: a Latin assignment from several weeks later including

---

1 GS, 115: I, 51.
2 HK I, 27.
3 “Jörmunrek” is the German spelling of the Hungarian king and differs somewhat from the Hungarian or English spellings. Since it here appears in the context of its influence on Nietzsche, the German spelling seems most appropriate.
4 HK I, 244.
references to “Ermanaricus,” notes detailing the evolution of the character through other sagas, a list of texts to set to music, a thirty page “historische Skizze” of “Ermanarich, Ostgothenkönig,” a poem relating Ermanarich’s love for Swanhilde, the libretto for an envisioned Ermanarich opera, and letters to his mother, sister, aunt, and even a classmate who was interested in studying Nietzsche’s Ermanarich research. Because his interest in Ermanarich led directly to two completed musical compositions, and indirectly influenced several others, an understanding of the specific Ermanarich story is necessary.

The story begins with the beautiful Swanhild living in Denmark after her mother, Guthrun, married King Jonakr following the death of her earlier husband, Atli or Attila the Hun. King Jörmunrek the Great hears of Swanhild's great beauty and decides he must marry her. He sends his son Randver to Denmark on his behalf to ask for her hand, and entrusts him to bring the young woman to him. Bikki, counselor to Jörmunrek, accompanies Randver and encourages him to consider marrying Swanhild himself rather than give her to his elderly father. Randver and Swanhild agree. Bikki then betrays Randver by telling the king that his son and Swanhild are in love, at which time Jörmunrek has his son arrested and taken to the gallows. Just before the execution, Randver plucks the feathers from his father’s hawk and asks that the bird be sent to his father. When King Jörmunrek sees the naked hawk, he realizes (amazingly enough) that just as the hawk was now unable to fly, he had dishonored his own kingdom by

---

5 Ibid., 257.
6 Ibid., 258.
7 Ibid., 259.
8 HK II, 280-313.
9 HK I, 300.
10 HKB I, 186, 232, 234, 274.
11 Guthrun is also closely related to the events portrayed in Wagner’s Die Ring der Nibelungen.
condemning his only heir. He tries to call off the hanging, but he is too late. The tragedy continues as King Jörmunrek blames the innocent Swanhild for his misfortunes. In one version, he rides in from the forest after hunting with his men, and as Swanhild is sitting bleaching her hair, has them ride over her, trampling her to death. In another version, she is bound to the castle gate and the king's men are instructed to ride their horses over her. But because of her great beauty, when she looked at the horses, they refused to move any further. The treacherous (but ever-helpful) Bikki then has a sack put over Swanhild's head, ending her enchantment of the horses and leading to her death under their hooves.

When Gudrun (Swanhild’s mother) learns of this, she incites her sons, Hamdir (Hamthir), Sorli, and Erp, to vengeance. She tells them to attack the old king in his sleep, and gives them chain mail and helmets so strong that iron cannot pierce them. They come up with a plan whereby Hamdir and Sorli were to cut off Jörmunrek's arms and legs, while Erp would cut off his head. The three brothers get in a fight on the way, however, and Hamdir (Hamthir) and Sorli killed Erp. As the two surviving brothers attack the king and cut off his arms and legs, the king wakes up and calls out to his men. They quickly realize that if they had not killed Erp, the king would have died before he could alert the guards to their deed. Jörmunrek's men, on the king's last command, stone Hamdir and Sorli to death. The story then ends with Ermanarich, Swanhild, Randver, Hamdir, Sorli and Erp all dead, driving Guthrun to kill herself and pursue her enemies in the afterlife.

The idea for the first of Nietzsche’s projects on the Ermanarich theme - *Heldenklage* - began at the latest in the summer of 1861. At that time Nietzsche listed it as one of several creative works he would pursue based on the *Edda* material, but had probably begun several months earlier when he wrote a school paper describing several
Serbian folksongs. Throughout his interest in the story, he closely associated it with Serbia, and even considered naming his “symphonische Dichtung”\textsuperscript{12} after the region instead of the hero. In the paper, he writes of the Serbian “Heldengedichte” and their inspirational capacities and natural qualities.\textsuperscript{13} Although Nietzsche was mistaken in conflating the Edda with Serbian folklore, the connection stayed with him throughout the period in which he wrote these works.

Although begun in mid-1861, there is no record of the completed piece until Easter 1862, at which time he submitted it to Germania. Formally, it closely resembles the lieder, and its early date (before first encountering Tristan) suggests that the formal developments were unrelated to any Wagnerian influence. The piece opens in f# minor with an extended eight-bar phrase cadencing on the tonic (ex. 17). The second phrase begins in the relative major (A) and is twelve measures in length, cadencing on the tonic. A return to the opening material follows, with the characteristic embellishments associated with the “recapitulations.” In this case the embellishment is an arpeggio figure spread between the two hands and a transposed and edited version of the opening melody. The second half of the B material (the section in the tonic) begins the coda, which then descends through both registers and tonalities, ending the piece in d minor.

Several characteristics first appearing in this piece can be seen in his later works, including his unusual phrase extensions. The opening phrase closely follows standard rules of composition, returning to the tonic after four measures and then exploring the dominant shortly before returning to the tonic. Its uniqueness stems from the two bar

\textsuperscript{12} The subtitle for his later work, “Ermanarich.”
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 266.
extension tacked to the end of the eight measure phrase. Nietzsche apparently felt it necessary to devote an additional two measures to reaffirming the tonic harmony. In fact, he felt it was so important to the phrase structure, that the embellished return to the opening material preserves the ten-measure length, including the two measures of tonic harmony. A similar harmonic extension and repetition is found in the opening phrase of *Da geht ein Bach*, as well, and less structured but very similar constructions can be found in *Ermanarich*.

The reason behind this structure’s inclusion is hardly clear. Nietzsche was a great lover of poetry, and a gifted poet himself. Even at a young age, his notebooks are full of fine examples of his poetic abilities. His belief in the deep connection between speech and music has been addressed above, and in later works he repeatedly compares poetic meter to musical rhythm. Therefore proportion and balance in regard to phrase structure would seem to be a foregone conclusion in Nietzsche’s music. Like many of Nietzsche’s solo piano works, *Heldenklage* also seems to be a song without words, resembling his lieder not only structurally but also melodically. These extensions, however, feel out of place and strain the proportion of the phrase—draining the piece of momentum and creating a sense of becoming “bogged down.” Such extensions are, of course, not unheard of, and its application in creating echo effects can be found in both the works of Schubert and Schumann (ex. 18). A search for possible rhetorical implications comes back empty however, and we are left with a distinctive, although not

---

14 See esp. GS, 138-140: II, 84; “Thus one tried to *compel* the gods by using rhythm and to force their hand: poetry was thrown at them like a magical snare.” And later, “…it (poetry) appears as a philosophical doctrine and an artifice in education; but long before there were any philosophers, music was credited.”
altogether successful sound. Unfortunately, Nietzsche does not achieve the same success with this technique as that of his predecessors.

Aside from the proportional glitches, the piece does possess a certain amount of charm, and creates the heroic impression its name implies.\textsuperscript{15} It is also a credit to Nietzsche that \textit{Heldenklage} presents an un-romanticized perspective on heroism. True to his philosophical writings, the hero is praised, but tragedies and setbacks are not minimized or misrepresented. The piece simultaneously implies royalty and majesty (through the dotted rhythms and the sweeping arpeggios)\textsuperscript{16} while also creating an aura of sadness and sacrifice as implied in the repeated questioning motif in the phrase extensions. Despite some awkward constructions, this piece has become a favorite in the small community of Nietzsche-aware pianists, finding its way onto almost every recording of Nietzsche’s music.\textsuperscript{17} Its positive qualities outweigh the negative ones, and—due to its short length and moderate technical challenges—could be used as an effective teaching piece and deserves addition to recital programs.

The other solo piano works from this time are less effective, but still contain intriguing aspects. His \textit{Ungarischer Marsch} displays a rhythmic complexity that his simpler lieder lack. It also displays developmental abilities not implied by his other works. These include an accompanimental figure that evolves from a simple ragtime pattern to later presentation in dotted and double dotted rhythms, and an effective and varied use of dynamics and register placement. Its harmonic structure is a bit awkward

\textsuperscript{15} Or perhaps more accurately, a \textit{snapshot} of heroism; its short length and lieder-form hardly mesh with typical ideas of heroic music.

\textsuperscript{16} See Example 14, mm. 1-3 and 23-26.

\textsuperscript{17} See discography for a listing of Nietzsche recordings.
however, and the four-measure phrase (upon which the whole piece is based) is forced to end too soon. Édes titok represents Nietzsche’s experimentation with larger, freer forms. Originally entitled “Süßes Geheimnis,” then “Still und ergeben,” and later “Sei still mein Herz,” it is Hungarian for “secret sweetness.” It is the first of Nietzsche’s music to fully emerge from the vocal genre, exhibiting neither the clear, accompaniment/melody division nor the strictly contrapuntal texture of his oratorio works. It can best be described as a fantasy, a distinction further suggested by the tempo marking, “Rhapsodisch—mit viel Gefühl vortragen.” (Rhapsodic, to be performed with much emotion). Nietzsche’s inexperience with the new format is reflected in the vague nature of the piece. It exhibits little sense of closure or development because of metric inconsistencies and an overabundance of harmonic surprises. For example, the strange metric placement fails to establish a sense of meter until the closing of the first theme, at which time an unusual pause again disrupts the meter (ex. 19). The second half of the piece is more successful, combining the free phrase structure Nietzsche was exploring with an adequate metric foundation to allow the listener to enjoy the “secret sweetness,” undisturbed.

Nietzsche’s obsession with the Ermanarich character culminated in the “symphonic poem” of the same name.18 In a letter to his mother, Nietzsche wrote of his research and of his need to do justice to the story.19 Originally intending to express the tale through poetry, he found that he was “too moved” and “not distanced enough” to present an objective account. He explained that “…from music comes the essence of my

---

18 His piece, “Ermanarich” is subtitled “Symphonische Dichtung,” see MN, 17.
19 HK II, 101-103.
mood, through this the Ermanarich saga has been fully incarnated.” The objectivity he sought was also aided by finding a story in a foreign land. He described the piece as depicting “…not Goths, not Germans… I dare say they are Hungarians.” He went on to describe Franz Liszt’s *Hungaria* as a model for his work, and that it was, in fact, because of *Hungaria* that he had originally thought of entitling the piece, “Serbia,” in the tradition of nationalist epics. Modern-day ethnomusicologists will most likely disagree with Nietzsche’s claims of it being “wholly Hungarian,” but for that matter, the same criticism can be ascribed to Liszt’s work as well.

This piece is noteworthy for its programmatic differences from all Nietzsche’s earlier works. Whereas his lieder and songs without words sought to capture the moment of existence, *Ermanarich* was designed to portray a whole series of events—a complete narrative. In fact, the narrative comprises the whole of the formal content as well, replete with captions indicating narrative progress at certain points in the music. Nietzsche placed letters at specific points throughout the music, each of which was linked to a short synopsis listed in a legend at the end. For example, an “A” is written above the first measure, and the legend following the piece indicates:

A—The first section—heroic and gloomy—the old Ermanarich is presented to us, a serious, wildly heroic personality, with a hint of mildness and sweetness, who coldly looks from above on his faded life experiences.20

The piece is comprised of fourteen of these sections, each indicated with a letter. They range from the musically specific - “In the distance one hears the sounds of a national march as the procession comes nearer;” to the more abstract - “…Randwe perceives the discrepancy of the relations of strength and passion, the discrepancy between his love and

---

20 MN, 17.
his father’s love; so embittered by life’s pain that his love destroys.” These captions summarize only a section of the entire Ermanarich saga, beginning at Ermanarich and Swanhild’s wedding procession, detailing Randwe’s interruption and attempt to claim Swanhild for himself, and ending after Ermanarich kills his son with a dagger and collapses to the floor in grief.

As the piece progresses, a vocabulary of motifs is developed in a way that helps tie together the disparate sections. Although not strikingly original, and on occasion even predictable, they effectively tie narrative details to the music. An alternating triplet figure voiced in chords underneath the ascent of a fifth comprises the “wedding march” motif (ex. 20). Its repetitive nature supposedly recalls traditional Hungarian wedding music, and the use of triplets is likewise associated with Slavic music. As in the case of Nietzsche’s earlier claim to a “wholly Hungarian” style, this association comes from equally dubious sources. Most likely influenced by the above-mentioned national romantic movement, Nietzsche would have been exposed to German-stylized “Hungarianism” à la Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsodies rather than more authentic folk traditions. In any case, the characteristic rhythmic qualities of the motif can be readily associated with a wedding march, and as such serve their purpose within Nietzsche’s musical narrative. The B section introduces a new, passionate, melodic motif associated with Randwe and the hot-bloodedness of youth (ex. 21). This motif returns whenever Randwe enters or when Ermanarich thinks about him. The third and final motif appears whenever Swanhild is mentioned or gazed upon.21 According to its related caption, the

---

21 Despite the great number of intriguing female figures in Norse mythology, Nietzsche’s many projects completely ignore the female characters, portraying them only as objects to be desired. Throughout his life
motif introduces Swanild with “…harp sounds ‘gently, like the sunbeam that shines in the halls’ (from the Edda), but shot through with apprehension when she sees the old, gray, lightning-eyed Ermanarich.”22 The harp effect is produced through right hand arpeggiation over long left-hand pedal points (Nietzsche specifically labels the left hand thusly, see ex. 22). The arpeggiation drift through several harmonies, recalling the gradual harmonic shifts found throughout the development sections of his lieder.

Yet any simple retelling of the story through musical devices would jeopardize the musical integrity that he had always prized. Nietzsche’s solution to this problem was to portray several moments at key junctures throughout the story. In this way, he can maintain his ideal of musical integrity, and still use the fruit of narrative technique—before and after relationships—to add depth to his portrayal. For example, one section portrays Randwe seeing Swanild and becoming overcome with love. That moment spawns a section of the overall piece, and includes a distinctive combination of motifs. Later, when Randwe decides to interrupt the wedding, the Swanild motif returns to give depth and motivational insight into Randwe’s decision-making process. The use of motifs is certainly not new—not even for Nietzsche,23 but his mature use of them in Ermanarich represents a significant addition, for better or worse, to his compositional arsenal.

While experimenting formally in Ermanarich, he was simultaneously experimenting stylistically with his Unserer Altvordern eingedenk, also entitled Zwei

---

22 MN, 19.
23 See the discussion of the Christmas Oratorio above.
polnische Tänze or “Two Polish Dances.” These two works were composed while Nietzsche was finishing his Ermanarich and were inspired by similar sources. The national romanticism that inspired renewed interest in Scandinavian sagas also led to the popularity of folk music in the mid and late nineteenth century. As with the sagas however, the rampant nationalism of the day anachronistically imposed distinctly nineteenth century notions of race upon the antediluvian folk song traditions. In fact, it is likely that the “Two Polish Dances” were intended as part of a larger suite of Ungarische Skizzen. The Germania chronicles indicate Nietzsche’s submission of this set that included, Heidenschenke, Wilde Träume, Ungarischer Marsch, Nachts auf der Haide, Heimweh, and Zigeunertanz, of which only Ungarischer Marsch and Zigeunertanz survive. These works were submitted in two groups in January 1862 and May 1862. Letters from the same period refer to Nietzsche’s enthusiasm for folk music and further substantiate the existence of these lost works. “There must be many wonderful folksongs in existence that have not even been collected yet. If I were lucky enough to raise up some of these treasures it would be the sweetest reward.”

That Nietzsche did find several folksongs and set them to music—with or without words—is almost certain. His research into the Ermanarich saga illustrates both his research abilities and tenacity. But because only piano solo works come down to us from this collection, we may never know which songs are represented. We are also left to wonder as to his choice of titles and groupings. Why, for example, would Nietzsche intend on grouping Zwei polnische Tänze with his Ungarische Skizze? This question, as

24 MN, 331.
25 HK II, 98, 121.
26 HKB I, 88.
well as Nietzsche’s earlier interpolation of Serbian and Hungarian descriptions, may be explained by examining Pan-Slavism. Advocated by various individuals from the seventeenth century on, it developed as an intellectual and cultural movement in the nineteenth century. It was stimulated by the rise of nationalist romanticism, and it grew with the awakening of the Slavs within the Austrian and Ottoman empires. Nineteenth century conceptions of the Slavic race had grown to include populations from Poland, Hungary, Bohemia, Romania, Serbia, and Croatia, and some larger conceptions even included those from White Russia and the Ukraine. Slavic historians, philologists, and anthropologists, influenced by Johann Gottfried von Herder, helped spread a national consciousness among the Slavs, and some dreamed of a unified Slavic culture to replace an allegedly declining Latin-German culture. The first Pan-Slav Congress was held at Prague in 1848 and presided over by Palacky, and was therefore contemporaneous with Nietzsche’s own schooling. It must, therefore, be in light of this unusual racial paradigm that Nietzsche’s ideas of national characteristics (and by extension, his attempts at ethnomusicology) be evaluated.

Even in such a permissive light however, certain stylistic abnormalities are highly unusual, most noticeably his version of the Polish mazurka. After Chopin’s popularization of the dance, mazurkas could be heard in almost any middle-class home containing a piano. Nietzsche surely heard many mazurkas, both through his own studies and in social gatherings at the homes of his musical friends. He would have known, therefore, that a mazurka was characterized by a quick triple meter with frequent subdivisions of the first beat. Yet the piece he entitled, Mazurka is written in two/four time. Although the tempo, subdivided first beat and accompanimental figure are all
appropriate to the genre, the time signature presents a significant stumbling block. The possibility of a simple mislabeling is made unlikely by the carefully written manuscript; it was obviously re-copied with some care.\textsuperscript{27} If Nietzsche intended this as a sort of challenge to traditional forms, no discussion comes down to us in his letters. As it was presented to Germania, surely Pinder and Krug would have had something to say about the first-ever 2/4 mazurka. Perhaps Nietzsche did write it to be provocative, in which case the provocation must not have extended past the Germania recital in which it was debuted.

Despite its misnomer, the mazurka and its companion piece, \textit{Aus der Czarda}, are charming and their inclusion in piano recitals is warranted. Both contain regular phrase structures and employ a small-scale variation technique to build interest and tension throughout the work. The mazurka is more straightforward, employing an A-B-A’ form. The A section is comprised of two eight-measure phrases beginning and ending on the tonic. The B section begins in the relative minor and contains a dramatic contrast to the light-hearted first section, culminating in a flurry of octaves leading to a sudden drop in register and intensity (ex. 23). The following twelve bars explore the dominant harmony and create a searching affect, as if casting about for the tonic after the sudden collapse in measures 20-21. The final section includes two repetitions of the A section with a clever move to the dominant linking the two tonic-centered phrases (ex. 24).

The companion dance, \textit{Aus der Czarda}, actually \textit{is} a mazurka according to the traditional definition of the term. It is in triple meter, has a subdivided first beat and a heavy peasant-dance feel. It also falls neatly into eight-bar phrases, but their relation to

\textsuperscript{27} MN, 331.
each other is more complex than in the *Mazurka*. Beginning in F major, it can best be described formally as A-B-C-B-A’-B-A’.

Each section has unique tonal centers, allowing Nietzsche to create tonal development in conjunction with motivic development. An example of this combination can be found in the A’ sections (ex. 25). The melodic material is derived from the embellished return of the B section while the tonal center is associated with the A section. The combination of the two allows the A’ section (and the piece itself) to end in the sub-dominant, Bb. Remarkably, despite the relatively short length of the piece (sixty-one measures) the conclusion in Bb major does not sound like the sub-dominant. The gradual introduction of secondary alterations into the opening material gradually casts the tonic as a dominant, allowing Nietzsche to end the piece in Bb.

---

28 The C section is significantly different enough from the surrounding material to preclude describing it as a simpler binary-related form.
Chapter 6

Aesthetic Refinements

_I tell you: One must still have chaos in one to give birth to a dancing star._1

Nietzsche’s restless use of different musical forms sheds light on an important facet of his musical development. His philosophical genius led to a constant refinement of his aesthetic theories; theories which then took form through his musical compositions. The variety of formal systems he uses point to an underlying form-content problem Nietzsche wrestled with throughout his life. In editing _Der musikalische Nachlass_, Janz also found such a trend, and compiled many of his findings in an article directly addressing the issue.2 Although this article concentrates less specifically Nietzsche’s music then might be expected from the editor of his musical works, it provides an excellent overview of Nietzsche’s evaluations of others’ music and contrasts his early criteria with those used in his later judgments. The center of the issue revolves around the proper relation of form to content and vice versa, an issue that has been debated by music critics, composers and performers from the Baroque era to the present day. Put simply, is music’s form an organizing container into which content is poured, or is the form, in itself, the content of music? Georg Simmel puts this question another way when he asks, “whether the presentation of this content or the presentation of the content determines the sense and the worth of the work of art.”3

1 TSZ, 17: I, Zarathustra’s Prologue, 5.
Through much of Nietzsche’s life he favored music’s content over its form, an ideology in keeping with his cognitive theory of music. This preference is especially evident in his early years and is therefore—due to the early date of most his musical compositions—most applicable to his music. The evolution of his aesthetic views in such later works as *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and *Nietzsche contra Wagner* is a point of considerable debate amongst Nietzsche scholars, and Janz’s view that the mature Nietzsche was “absolutely oppose[d]” to a content-centered aesthetic is overly simplistic and will be discussed in later chapters. It is safe to say that Nietzsche began his aesthetic theorizing from the position of romanticism, and from that point his views evolved as his thinking became more refined. His early rhapsodic writings exalting music’s transformative powers are unspecific, often contradictory, and betray the youth and inexperience of their author. To repeat a quote from the introduction, “Music unites all attributes in itself; it can uplift, it can flirt, it can encourage, with its gentle, appealing tones it can break down the roughest disposition. But its main purpose comes when it directs our thoughts and goals toward higher things, when it lifts us up and causes us to question.”

Certain aspects of this praise for music ring throughout Nietzsche’s works, including its transformative effect on the listener, and its use in leading individuals to something higher. The differences between early Nietzschean thought and his later thought concern *how* music must be applied, and towards *which* “higher things” it should lead us.

---

4 Janz 1988, 98.
5 HKB I, 136.
His early music reflects a belief that the transcendental nature of music allowed for fuller and deeper self-expression than could mere words, and that it helped the individual process and absorb his experiences more richly. In his crusade to do so, he adopted forms familiar to him, including the oratorios of Handel and Mendelssohn, and the songs of Schubert and Schumann. As was discussed in Chapter Two, he credited these composers with producing the highest accomplishments of music, and reinforced his praise by positing the music of Liszt and Wagner (with whose music he had little familiarity at the time) as diametrically opposed to that of their forbears; a designation that included an opposite qualitative as well as stylistic value. It was not surprising, therefore, that Nietzsche’s first compositions utilized the forms associated with oratorios and lieder. This decision was based on familiarity rather than any judgment of formal merit—an evaluation supported by the complete lack of formal discussion in the writings from this period. Young Nietzsche, surely cognizant of the partisan musical atmosphere of his day and feeling a close kinship with the classical idioms heard in his childhood, most likely felt obligated to defend “his” music against the diatribes of the proponents of the “Zukunftsmusik.”

After countless discussions with Krug and Pinder over the merits of Wagner, Nietzsche gradually opened his mind to the music of his day. His letters between 1861 and 1864 display a gradual acceptance of Wagner’s music until he eventually became an enthusiastic Wagnerian himself. His adaptation of freer forms can surely be attributed to his increasing exposure to Wagner and the other proponents of the New German School, but Nietzsche never saw formal characteristics as predominantly indicative of an

---

6 “How good bad music and bad reasons sound when we march against an enemy,” D, 224: V, 557.
aesthetic theory. For him, music always did something, and form was important primarily in its use as a medium for music’s content. Rather than creating an epiphany whereby Nietzsche abandoned classicism and embraced the New German School, Nietzsche’s gradual exposure to Wagnerian ideas provided increasing validation for more elastic forms. The more music Nietzsche came into contact with, the more freedom he felt he had in which to express him musically. The underlying purpose of music had always been content based, but he now realized he had more room to express this content. The writings and compositions discussed up to this point provide plenteous examples to substantiate the content-dominated aesthetic of his youth. It is, however, important for a thorough understanding of Nietzsche’s later works—both philosophical and musical—to realize that Nietzsche’s fundamental views toward music remained the same as he grew older. Therefore, throughout the discussion of Nietzsche’s aesthetic refinements, his views toward the form/content problem will be closely examined.

Two authors played especially large roles in the development of Nietzsche’s thought during his early college years. The first of these was Schopenhauer, with whose thoughts he became familiar after finding his magnum opus The World as Will and Representation in his friend’s bookshop. In this work, Schopenhauer draws significantly on Kant’s concept of transcendental idealism. According to Kant, we can never have direct, objective knowledge of things in themselves or Ding an sich. Any knowledge we think we have comes to us through our senses which are acted upon through secondary processes. For example, we “know” a book is red because light reflects off the book and reaches our eyes, providing certain data to our brains. We interpret this as “redness,” although any association of our conception of “red” with the book itself is fragile at best.
Too many filters exist between things in themselves and our conceptions of them. According to Kant, the world is a combination of things in themselves and our observation of them. In order to understand the world, we impose certain rules such as space, time, and causal relationships. These rules exist only in our minds and not in our surroundings. Therefore, the world as we know it can only exist when both the things in themselves and the subjective observer are both present. Without us, the world still exists, but not in anyway we could ever conceive.

Schopenhauer accepts much of Kant’s theory, but adds to it a rejection of individual things in themselves. Whereas Kant discussed the way in which objects came to be, Schopenhauer discussed how we are deceived into believing that objects exist at all. He reasons that the assumption that an individual object possesses “reality” as a fundamental quality is just as questionable as assuming that the object’s color or taste comprise its object-ness. Where Kant removes secondary qualities from the things in themselves, Schopenhauer removes individuation. Schopenhauer is left with the relation of the “will”—an analog of Kant’s thing-in-itself, albeit without the individual things—and “representation,” a term that corresponds to our mode of experience. Representation for Schopenhauer is illusion, and as such, is worthless. Any attachments to aspects of our own representation are hollow and empty. What makes Schopenhauer a nihilist extraordinaire is his view of the remaining metaphysical component: the will. His use of the term “will” does not refer to our common usage. The will, for Schopenhauer, is the fundamental seeking, desiring, and yearning. The human experience of willing is but one manifestation of the overall genus of will, and we must be careful not to confuse the goal-oriented nature of our willing with will itself. Because individuation is a human
construction, the world in itself is will. It is not a will or the will, or even will towards something; it is a blind, meaningless seeking. As such, there is no value in it either. Faced with such a yawning pit of existential nothingness, the individual can only transcend mere representation, face the will in its meaningless horror, and reject it.

Nietzsche quickly latched on to Schopenhauer’s theories and saw in them elements of his own thought. What especially caught his eye was the privileged status Schopenhauer granted to music. Like Nietzsche, Schopenhauer believed that music had the unique ability to pierce the veil of representation and reveal the underlying reality of the world. Although such a glimpse revealed chaos and nothingness, the act itself redeemed man by temporarily removing him from the realm of illusion and error. As soon as he first encountered Schopenhauer, Nietzsche became an enthusiastic supporter and wrote to everyone he knew proclaiming Schopenhauer’s genius. Krug also appreciated Schopenhauer, and the two of them often joked about friends they had “converted.”

Before moving on, it is important to quickly note Nietzsche’s unique (and some may say un-Schopenhauerian) interpretation of Schopenhauer. The World as Will and Representation gloomily concludes that we can know nothing for certain, and that our existence has absolutely no meaning or purpose. Nietzsche takes Schopenhauer’s principles, makes the same conclusion, yet finds the new situation to be liberating and empowering. Without metaphysical absolutes to restrain human activity, the individual is released from his servitude to an invisible, otherworldly master, and free to create his own world. Whereas Schopenhauer had seen metaphysical truths such as God, things-in-

7 HKB II, 45.
themselves, or a Hindu nirvana\textsuperscript{8} as comforting and their negation frightening and disconcerting, Nietzsche found their destruction liberating. From his very first encounter with Schopenhauer, Nietzsche’s view of nihilism as a life-\textit{affirming} concept sets him apart from other Schopenhauer enthusiasts, and clearly foreshadows his later writings.

There is no documentation as to whether Nietzsche knew of Wagner’s own love for Schopenhauer’s writings, but it is probable that Nietzsche knew that at least some connection existed. His overnight conversion to Schopenhaurianism, however, implies that Nietzsche previously had no knowledge of Schopenhauer’s theories, and therefore his knowledge of Wagner’s connection to Schopenhauer could have been only vague at best. In fact, Wagner’s appreciation of Schopenhauer was one of the reasons Nietzsche later sought out the composer, and contributed significantly to his enthusiasm towards Wagner, the man. Wagner’s devotion to the philosophy of Schopenhauer is not surprising when one considers his own views toward music. His belief in the oracular characteristics of the artist is strengthened immensely by Schopenhauer’s philosophical system. Simmel sums up Schopenhauer’s aesthetic by explaining “…that the work of art exists for the sake of its content, namely its idea, that everything which one could name as the functional in art, that all interest in this, receives its tenure only from the interest in the idea that constitutes the respective content of the work”\textsuperscript{9}

The very next year, Nietzsche encountered Friedrich Albert Lange’s \textit{History of Materialism and a Critique of the meaning of Opposition}. Lange also begins from a

\textsuperscript{8} Schopenhauer was deeply influenced by eastern religions and his negation of Kant’s individual things-in-themselves is seen by many scholars as a response to the metaphysical one-ness described in Hinduism. See especially Christopher Janaway’s \textit{Schopenhauer}.

\textsuperscript{9} Simmel, 121.
Kantian background, but reaches far more extreme conclusions. For him, the entire conception of opposition is a human construction, akin to the categories of space and time. In other words, just as space and time are taken to lack any objective reality in Kant’s system, opposition also emerges as a mental phenomenon in Lange’s system. Of the many oppositions we routinely create, the one causing the most problems is that of idealism/materialism. In reality, there are only things (hence “materialism”) and we, as things, interact with them. It is only as a result of our unique mode of experience that we impose the concept of opposites on the world. Like Kant, Lange believes they are necessary for us to function, but they lack any external justification. Lange goes on to describe philosophy as the constant conflict between idealism and materialism. Because materialism accounts for the world, and idealism accounts for our perception of it, neither is truly wrong until it is applied in an inappropriate theater. Reasoning from our dualistic mode of thought to an assertion that some unified “will” underlies the “illusion” of individuation is one of these inappropriate applications. Lange recognizes Schopenhauer’s “will” as just one in a long chain of metaphysical entities that stands in opposition to reality as we know it. Instead, metaphysics as a whole is bankrupt, and previous philosophers had fallen down the “abysses of metaphysics.”

Nietzsche himself sums up much of Lange’s philosophy in one of his earliest published articles:

> When one speaks of humanity, the idea is fundamental that this is something which separates and distinguishes man from nature. In reality, however, there is no such separation: "natural" qualities and those called truly "human" are inseparably grown together. Man, in his highest and noblest capacities, is wholly nature and embodies its uncanny dual character. Those of his abilities which are

---

terrifying and considered inhuman may even be the fertile soil out of which alone all humanity can grow in impulse, deed, and work.\textsuperscript{11} Nietzsche’s absorption of this work was extensive and immediate, and one Nietzsche scholar goes so far as to say he “virtually adopted it as his own.”\textsuperscript{12} Whereas Nietzsche’s appreciation for Schopenhauer is widely known, thanks in part to his frequent writings on the subject,\textsuperscript{13} his fondness for Lange’s works often goes unrecognized. First encountering Lange’s works in 1866—the year after first reading Schopenhauer—the former’s influence quickly makes its way into Nietzsche’s journals and correspondences. In 1866, Nietzsche notes that our inner and outer sensations are similarly the products of our organization. The next year he writes, “The form is something that exists for us. Once we conceive the form as a cause, we lend to an appearance the value of a thing in itself.”\textsuperscript{14} It is difficult to understand how Nietzsche could have been so adamant towards both Schopenhauer and Lange when the latter so strikingly contradicted the former. Perhaps he appreciated only components of the two works or saw them both as part of the Langean materialism/idealism conflict.

In any case, it becomes readily apparent that Nietzsche—with Schopenhauer and Lange acting as the catalyst—refined his aesthetic theories and eliminated many inconsistencies, while maintaining certain foundational ideas. First among these is the sense that man is responsible \textit{to} himself and \textit{for} himself. The transcendental entities that haunted mankind for millennia might have comforted early man as he struggled to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} James I. Porter, \textit{The Invention of Dionysus} (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000), 5.
\item \textsuperscript{13} These works include \textit{Schopenhauer as Educator}, \textit{Ecce Homo}, and \textit{Twilight of the Idols}.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Porter, 168.
\end{itemize}
survive in an unfathomable world, but we have grown out of our need for such entities and now they hold us back. By deflecting our own responsibility, we are weakened and made unable to achieve mankind’s potential. Although the full extent of these theories would not be laid out until *Beyond Good and Evil, On the Genealogy of Morals,* and ultimately, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* the core of these thoughts is obvious as early as early 1862, when Nietzsche wrote to his Germania cohorts:

> Once we recognize that we are responsible to ourselves alone, that we have only ourselves to blame and not any sort of higher powers for our failings in life, then we finally will strip the foundational ideas of Christianity of their outer covering and get at its core. [...] The delusion of a world beyond has cast human spirits and minds in a false relation to the earthly world: it was the product of a childhood of peoples.\(^\text{15}\)

Where does this leave music? Surprisingly, Nietzsche still privileges music with the ability to convey deep, underlying meaning. What changes from his earliest works, is the *source* of that meaning. It no longer comes from some meaning-laden substratum that is mystically hidden from view. Where it *does* come from is a highly complex and multi-faceted issue in Nietzsche’s works. To delve into this issue, one must confront many of Nietzsche’s most controversial and galvanizing ideas, including the infamous “will to power,” and the “Übermensch” or “Superman.” To say that meaning for Nietzsche comes from the artistic creation of an individual with “overflowing power and abundance”\(^\text{16}\) may grossly simplify Nietzsche’s thought, but let it here act as a guidepost to aid in assembling his frequently paradoxical theories as they are presented.

In Nietzsche’s first published book, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music,* he establishes a base from which later writings can critique modern culture and

\(^{15}\) Cited in Porter, 7.

\(^{16}\) *GS,* 347: V, 382.
society. Although published in 1872, it provides an accurate portrayal of his aesthetic thinking throughout his college years. Most notably and persistently, he attacks our blind acceptance of the “gift” of ethics and morals from the metaphysical realm. Nietzsche’s agreement with Lange here is evident, but what distinguishes him is the application of these theories to contemporary cultures. The underlying, historical misunderstanding of dualism created a chain of societal errors: essences vs. appearances, good vs. evil, moral vs. immoral. At some point during human development such divisions invaded our very experience and we lost sight of the inherently subjective quality of dualism, mistaking it for an objective truth. Materialism, at its very core, is a monistic concept that precludes any discussion of metaphysics—such is the objective state of affairs. The human mind—an element of reality no more privileged or different than any other element - imposes dualism in order to create a scaffolding on which we can exist and know. Throughout Nietzsche’s works, he returns to the characters of Apollo and Dionysus to describe this dualism created through the anthropomorphized conception of existence.

Dionysian art is associated with music and states of wild intoxication, while Apollonian art is associated with form, symmetry and the plastic arts. The Apollonian comforts men by idealizing aspects of reality and then reconstituting them as beautiful works of art. As such, art objectifies existence and comforts the onlooker by separating

---

17 Nietzsche attributes this change to Socrates, see BT, 81-93: 12-14.
18 Although it may seem paradoxical to establish a Dionysian/Apollinian dialectic to address the errors of dialectics, its appropriateness is established when one considers the dualistic nature of our mode of existence. In Nietzsche’s early works (especially the Birth of Tragedy) his use of these antipodes is not as clearly metaphorical as in his later works. This should not be confused with a complete change of heart. His Langean denials of metaphysics resound throughout his work, from the mid 1860’s to his descent into insanity in 1888. See esp. Porter for this discussion.
the horrors of existence from his own being. In fact, it is the Apollinian characteristics
that guarantee individual existence by establishing and fortifying the subject/object split
that underlies the principle of individuation. Dionysian art, on the other hand, revels in
unity of existence. It glances behind itself at the chaos and bare existence that the
Apollinian act of individuation caused man to turn its back on. The Dionysian festivals
consisted of dramas with choruses, in which the audience participated as an integral part.
In the course of the festival, participants lost their sense of self, and identified instead
with the primal whole. The tragedy of Dionysus - the great tragic figure of the festivals -
became the tragedy of all involved and pain and suffering was appreciated in its full
measure. Given the immediacy of the experience, and the complete immersion of the
individual into the tragic void, the will is stripped of all outlets. Suffering cannot be
averted, no true knowledge can ever be obtained, and all existence is a mere chimera.
One encounters the possibility of not willing; one comes face to face with the paradox of
being a willing subject with no will. At this point, aesthetic sensibilities allow the
participants to go beyond the paradox, and revel in the sublime. As Nietzsche writes,

…art approaches as a saving sorceress, expert at healing. She alone
knows how to turn these nauseous thoughts about the horror or absurdity
of existence into notions with which one can live: these are the sublime as
the artistic taming of the horrible, and the comic as the artistic discharge of
the nausea of absurdity.19

Therefore, through Dionysian art one truthfully confronts existence in all its absurdity
and horror and appreciates aesthetically the sublime nature of such a confrontation.

Throughout Nietzsche’s works, the demand for one to be true to oneself reappears
incessently. It is due to this demand that excessively Apollonian artwork is criticized.

19 BT, 60: 7.
He who gazes at the beauty and perfection of Apollonian art as a remedy to the suffering of the everyday is lying to himself. He bathes himself in illusion instead of facing the difficult truth. He has realized the inherent chaos of existence, but instead of grasping its aesthetic significance or facing the prospect of a will-less existence, he turns to illusion so as to give outlet to his will. These illusions become the culture of societies in decline. When a society’s or an individual’s spirit is depleted, he lacks the ability or courage to face the horrors of existence truthfully. The elation achieved by one who confronts suffering and appreciates the aesthetic beauty of the eternal flux of life is inaccessible to he who is immersed in suffering everyday and values art insofar as it can temporarily veil life’s horrors. As an example of this, Nietzsche points to the Greeks’ decline and the simultaneous retreat from Dionysian art into Apollonian, personified by Socrates and Euripides.

Euripides sought to establish a proper relation between the public and the artwork. He felt that tragedy had become inaccessible to the public because it dwelled on the super-human and epic tales of the gods instead of the more everyday struggles that the average person faced. He sought to place the spectator on stage; thereby creating an illusion so similar to oneself that one could be pleasantly surprised by one’s own eloquence and nobility. This popularization of tragedy represented a decline from the superior sixth century Greek tragedy in two ways. By focusing on the public, Euripides introduced a concept unknown to his dramatic predecessors; one that eliminated the Dionysian unity that had given tragedy its inherent value. While the tragic chorus identified so closely with the tragedy that it became one with all the other participants,

---

20 Ibid., 77: 11.
the new distinction between public and actor emphasized the falseness and illusory nature of tragedy. No longer was the experience of reality’s horrors the effect of tragedy, rather the playwright aimed to create a beautiful story one could objectively observe, analyze and poke at. Secondly, Euripides placed an all too real hero in the spotlight. Far from the epic heroes of earlier writers, common people appeared in these tragedies, all for the sake of realism. But this realism did not accurately portray the truth of existence, instead it emphasized the culture’s flawed conception of it.

Do these Dionysian “essences” and “fundamental truths” reveal a persisting metaphysical vein in Nietzsche’s early years? Nietzsche says himself, in his ”Attempt at Self-Criticism,” that he “tried laboriously to express by means of Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulas”\(^\text{21}\) the new thoughts that begin to appear in this early work. Furthermore, it seems to be from a Schopenhauerian perspective that Nietzsche lashes out at the realism of Euripides. But upon closer inspection, Nietzsche’s interest in artistic content returns to the forefront. Accurately portraying the substandard characters who themselves were raised on the deeply flawed perceptions that constitute our society’s “reality” serves only to reassert an erroneous world-view. That the heroes thusly represented are full of flaws and imbued with mediocrity may accurately reflect our experiences, but completely lacks the cognitive value Nietzsche feels is so important in art. Although the true magnitude of existence's sublimity can never be fully comprehended, through art we can briefly glimpse its immensity. The Schopenhauerian will is here replaced with the limitless capabilities of man, now unchained from metaphysical restrictions. Epic figures such as Prometheus and Oedipus cast such large

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 24: Attempt at a Self-Criticism, 6.
shadows that human capabilities could be proportionally deduced. Under Euripides’ pen, however, servants and neighbors entered the theater and any perspective that might embrace the true magnitude and depth of possibility could find no characters capable of climbing such heights. Nietzsche attributes many of Euripides’ missteps to a tendency he attacks throughout his works: comparing one’s self to others. According to Nietzsche, Euripides’ error can be seen both through his works and as the author of such works. In his plays, the general public is glorified and even the lowliest individual deserves respect merely on account of his humanity. Through the influence of such literature, men’s actions are measured in accordance with an antiquated human mean, and aspiring to a different ideal becomes an act of disrespect to the lowly that maintain this standard. In turn, the doting Hellenes wholeheartedly embraced this egalitarian mediocrity while simultaneously giving up “his belief in immortality; not only his belief in an ideal past, but also his belief in an ideal future.”

Nietzsche’s excoriations also reach Socrates, accusing him of bringing about the death of tragedy through his optimism. Both Dionysian art and the art endorsed by Socrates obtain their value cognitively, but their epistemological domains are vastly different. Dionysian art delves into the heart of existence and brings the spirit into a true

\[\text{\textsuperscript{22}}\text{Ibid., 78: 11.}\]
relation with life’s horrors and absurdities. Socrates, on the other hand, would encourage men to discover all truth through careful inspection of the objective world. Because discovering truth is a fundamental activity of humanity, art is beautiful only insofar as it is intelligible. 23 The irrationality of the cult of Dionysus is therefore shunned, and the beautiful illusions of Apollonian art become Socrates’ model for the aesthetic. Nietzsche believed this fundamental shift—brought about by Euripides and Socrates—was symptomatic of the decline of Greek culture. In an era where spirit was poor, the optimism of Socrates and Euripides gave the Greeks a more palatable view of existence. They gave up their position in eternity for an easily graspable present.

Having thus created a dialectic, Nietzsche goes on to collapse it by calling for a union of the two aesthetic models. While the Apollinian mode by itself lacks validity through its failure to address the metaphysical void, Dionysianism alone leads to paralyzing pessimism. It is this paralysis that Nietzsche quickly recognized in Schopenhauer’s philosophy. When recuperating from an illness while stationed in Naumburg during his brief service in the Prussian military, he worked out in detail the metaphysical inconsistencies in The World as Will and Representation. Confronted with a reality that, if not hostile, is so chaotic as to make any sort of pleasure astronomically unlikely, an individual has no motivation to do anything. In fact, Schopenhauer’s call for a denial of the will (not one’s own will, but the underlying, universal will) seems dangerously close to a call for suicide. The Dionysian festivals, in which Nietzsche placed so much stock, end in orgiastic excesses that, if taken as a societal paradigm, would create a culture doomed to near immediate extinction. “He who fights with

23 Ibid., 84: 12.
monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster... when you gaze long into the abyss, the abyss also gazes into you.”\(^{24}\) But it is not for practical reasons alone that Nietzsche felt he must temper the Dionysian temperament.\(^{25}\) Although Nietzsche seemingly addressed this problem from a different angle each time it arose, in the *Birth of Tragedy* he has, ironically, pseudo-metaphysical reasons. Having acknowledged the meaningless void, the ancient Greeks *sang*. What was this song and how could a realization of existence’s backdrop of nothingness engender it? Apparently, the “primal unity” of which Nietzsche spoke created an urge for expression. Positing music as the best and most accurate expression of the fundamental experience within the realms of human-necessitated dialectics and representations, he then asked, “As what does music *appear* in the mirror of images and concepts?”\(^{26}\) In a surprisingly simplistic answer that he later refined, music is the representation of the world’s essence.\(^{27}\) In *The Gay Science*, he explains this concept more clearly. “The total character of the world, however, is in all eternity chaos—in the sense not of a lack of necessity but of a lack of order, arrangement, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever other names there are for our aesthetic anthromorphisms.”\(^{28}\) Music, therefore, is the immediate product of that chaos filtered through our mental structures.

\(^{24}\) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, transl. R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin, 1973); (BGE); 102: IV, 146.

\(^{25}\) Although much can be attributed to Nietzsche, one thing he was decidedly *not* was pragmatic. In virtually every situation, the most efficient or the easiest alternative is also the *least* Nietzschean.

\(^{26}\) BT, 55: 6.

\(^{27}\) Nietzsche uses the term “will” here, but I have used the term “essence” in order to avoid confusion. In *Birth* he goes back and forth between an apparent Schopenhauerian conception of metaphysics and his own anti-metaphysical terminology. In his own critique, he comments on his use of the language of Schopenhauer and Kant for concepts that negate the terminology that describe them.

The conclusion is striking: aesthetics are inherent structures of our own mind. Nietzsche takes this dramatic conclusion one step further when he states that “...for it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified.”

We are aesthetic creatures who use artistic principles to invest our existence with meaning. Faced with the yawning void, “Art steps in to fill the gap.” This revision of metaphysics brings with it a whole slew of antecedents. Dualism, time, space, and the other mental constructs through which we perceive our experience now must be seen as aesthetic principles. Paradoxically, attributing our mental filters to aesthetics creates self-referential problems in its relation to metaphysics itself. Suddenly, metaphysics—now deprived of any fundamental reality and limited to an eternity of purely subjective reality—is our artistic creation par excellence.

To return to Nietzsche’s use of Apollo and Dionysus, they too are reinterpreted in the new aesthetic schema. The gods have no claim to a more authentic existence than anything or anyone else, and upon reflection, they are revealed to be manifestations of our own aesthetic productions. The Apollinian dream-state that creates surface appearances from mental characteristics has, in Apollo and Dionysus, created metaphors for two mental tendencies. Nietzsche hints at this conclusion in the very first section of Birth when he writes, “It was in dreams, says Lucretius, that the glorious divine figures first appeared to the souls of men,” and at another point, “…the Greeks, who disclose to

---

29 BT, 52: 5.
30 Porter, 171.
31 Consider, for example, the works of renaissance metaphysicians such as Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza, who are often credited with having created “beautiful” systems. Observe its resonance with the apparently heterodox appeal to beauty as a validation for certain medieval philosophical systems.
32 BT, 33: 1.
the discerning mind the profound mysteries of their view of art, not, to be sure, in concepts, but in the intensely clear figures of their gods.”33 Therefore it is the interplay between the Apollinian and the Dionysian that constitutes our reality. The Apollinian allows us to create surfaces upon which we can secure our mode of existence, while the Dionysian keeps in mind the illusive and superficial qualities inherent in our constructs.

In fact, with dualistic matrices excluded, the Apollinian and Dionysian themselves must be viewed as two sides of a unity. Beginning with constructed appearances necessitated by our mode of existence (“a primordial desire for appearance”),34 we occasionally intuit the appearance-ness of our appearances (der Schein des Scheins to which Nietzsche frequently refers) and infer a conflict. It is this perceived conflict that leads to a positing of an “other:” the metaphysical beyond. James Porter explains the unity of the Dionysian beyond and the Apollinian surfaces by describing a rippling surface. Being mere surface, it is inherently Apollinian and thoroughly in-line with Nietzsche’s Langean materialist philosophy. The ripples, however, create an illusion of depth, giving vent to our conflicted relationship with existence.35 Glimpsing the possibility that the world is nothing more than our own mentally constructed illusions triggers a response that can be compared to a survival instinct. Knowing that we have created the world precludes us from existing within it; we cannot simultaneously be outside the box and inside the box. Therefore, we turn to these pleats in the fabric of appearance to find that third-party authority that returns us to a contented existence upon the surface. Another analogy can be made by examining the event of realizing der Schein

---

33 Ibid.
34 BT, 41-44: 3.
35 Porter, 47-57.
des Scheins (the appearance of appearance). The discovery of one appearance leads us to that which projects the appearance, albeit with a more critical eye than we had used originally. The “projector” is then seen in its true light as yet another appearance and we look to its “projector.” After each disillusionment\(^{36}\) we move “down” and our critical eye gains momentum in each deconstruction, like a chain of dominoes gaining force and speed as more and more are toppled. Unlike dominoes, however, there is no end, because there is only illusion and appearance. The Dionysian is the vertiginous collapse of appearances, not a brief glimpse of the ground through the clouds of appearance. We continue to topple appearances until we feel the vertigo strongly enough that we can posit it as an appearance; one strong enough to pull us out of the downward spiral of cognizance. We call that appearance the Dionysian, and momentarily regain our feet.

If it seems like Nietzsche deconstructs his theories as fast as he constructs them, it is because he does. Nietzsche recognizes that we exist in a paradox, we created that paradox, and we are that paradox. It is from this realization that many of Nietzsche’s apparent contradictions are born. For example, the passages cited above demonstrate Nietzsche’s disagreements with Schopenhauer’s system as early as 1866, yet his 1872 \textit{Birth of Tragedy} repeatedly calls into service Schopenhauerian terms and concepts. Realizing that we need appearances and the resulting essences they engender to function, he draws on the “will,” the “Dionysian unity,” and the other metaphysic-laden terms for their rhetorical value. He can, therefore, contrast the Apollinian appearances with the Dionysian essences while maintaining later that both gods are mere appearances. In

\(^{36}\) “Disillusionment” is here used more literally than perhaps ever before.
reality (or more accurately, in apparent reality) Nietzsche himself is creating an appearance and as creator, is fundamentally free to create as he pleases.

It follows that art in general, and music more specifically, is based in action and creativity. They are the means for authentic existence. Therefore creation is one of the fundamental characteristics of humanity and it is even through creation that we affirm our identity. Experimentation necessarily plays a large role in an act of creation that lies within the confines of a metaphysical void. If there are no Platonic forms, no angelic models, no transcendent criteria of any kind, then any creator must be ever vigilant of blind acceptance of models or tradition. One must experiment in order to ensure the authenticity of a creation. Artists who blindly follow in tradition call down upon themselves several existential problems. First of all, it attributes a fundamental validity to Apollinian surfaces without the consideration of the Dionysian void over which they are assembled. Secondly, such an activity cannot rightfully be called “creation” in the absence of the necessary encounter with the metaphysical reality. Finally, a copier of other artistic creators fails, in the strictest sense, to “Exist.” To use a distinction hinted at by Nietzsche and fully developed by later thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, an individual can “exist” or “Exist.” The former is a passive state in which one might say, “I exist.” The latter is an active state best summed up by the statement, “I am existing.”

37 Qualifying existence with terms like “authentic” recurs throughout Nietzsche’s writings and is one of his most dynamic concepts. Having established his metaphysical (or anti-metaphysical as the case may be) foundation by the mid 1860’s, the rest of his life he spent establishing how to live in such a world. This will be discussed at more length in subsequent chapters.

38 See especially Sartre’s Nausea and Camus’ The Stranger for literary applications of this distinction. Heidegger, in his book Being and Time deals with the same problem more abstractly. I prefer the literary
Always the first to attack hypocrisy, Nietzsche took these conclusions to heart and unceasingly created and experimented. Perhaps it was due to his lack of musical training, in contrast to his extensive literary background, that his experimentation is most evident in his musical works. His use of different forms has been well documented and it seems that through this period of intellectual development he uncovered a philosophical justification for his preexistent propensities. That his tendency to experiment predates his aesthetic justification of the process is readily evident. His youthful attempts to emulate Handelian music, his experimentation with Albrechtsbergian fugues several years later, and his attempt to involve the Tristan chord into his oratorio all attest to experimentation. The same musical tendency has been commented upon by Frederick Love, Tali Makell, Curt Paul Janz and even Walter Kaufmann. Keeping this in mind, perhaps a different approach should be made to Nietzsche’s music. Assuming that many of Nietzsche’s unique ideas and perspectives were formed in his youth, it is in his youthful works that we should find evidence of this formation. Since, in Nietzsche’s case, a large portion of his youthful output was musical, it makes sense to look to this genre to find the seeds of his later thought. During his youthful experimentation with different ideas and outlooks, the musical works he created can be seen as “prototypes” for his later, more fully articulated philosophies.

At this point it is important to return to Nietzsche’s musical body of work, and examine a work that includes characteristics of both his earlier and later musical style: the 1863 melodrama, Das zerbrochene Ringlein. Although the melodrama form itself had

embodiments of existentialism over the strictly philosophical in that the former address existential issues in an inherently existential format – fiction.
been firmly established since the time of Benda and his *Ariadne auf Naxos* a hundred
years earlier, Nietzsche’s choice of simple piano accompaniment was unusual. Although
Schubert’s *Abschied von der Erde* and Schumann’s *Schön Hedwig* were both piano
melodramas, they received little recognition despite having been written by such well-
established composers. Their lack of notoriety makes it unlikely that Nietzsche ever
heard them performed, although he was most likely aware of their existence. A more
likely motivation for Nietzsche’s use of the piano melodrama genre arose from hearing
piano reductions of orchestral melodramas. Excerpts from Beethoven’s *Fidelio* and
Weber’s *Der Freischütz* were frequently reduced for piano to be played in the confines of
living rooms and salons, and the melodrama scenes in these works (act 2, scene 1 in
*Fidelio* and act 2, scene 2 in *Der Freischütz*) were among the most popular. It is
probable that Nietzsche heard piano melodramas first in this way. The genre contains
several characteristics that would have been especially appealing to Nietzsche’s evolving
aesthetic theories, including its lack of established form and the loose relation between
the vocal and instrumental parts. The similarities between the relationship of
spontaneous outcries to choral accompaniment in the Dionysian festival and the elastic
bond between speaker and pianist in the melodrama would have provided Nietzsche an
excellent means by which to escape formal constraints.

Within the elastic form of melodrama, Nietzsche set a text by Joseph von
Eichendorff, “Das zerbrochene Ringlein.” The text is as follows:

Deep in the cool of a valley
a millwheel turns.
My sweetheart who lived there
has vanished.
she promised she’d be true to me
and gave me a ring as she spoke.
She broke her word of honour,
and in two the little ring broke.

I’d like to roam the world
as a minstrel,
singing my songs
and going from house to house.

As a horseman I’d like to fly
into bloody battle
and lie beside silent fires
in open fields on a starless night

When I hear the millwheel turning,
I don’t know what I want.
But most of all I wish I were dead,
then all would at once be silent.39

Upon first reading, the text implies some sort of strophic form. The first two stanzas provide the narrative context while the third and fourth stanzas provide examples of the narrator’s reaction to the situation. The final stanza brings back material from the first and provides a conclusion—albeit a gloomy one—to the short narrative. It is easy to imagine a musical setting wherein the first two stanzas introduce the musical ideas, the third and fourth stanzas use the same or similar music for the two strophes, and the last stanza recalls the musical ideas of the opening. It is striking, therefore, that Nietzsche emphasizes the elasticity of the melodrama form by de-emphasizing the pre-existing formal implications of the text itself.

The melodrama is through-composed without any repetition of musical material in the different sections. There are moments of tone-painting in which the music reflects the words spoken by the narrator, but even these are limited and show considerable

---

39 Spencer, 29-30.
constraint on the part of Nietzsche. In the third through fifth measures a falling minor second motive repeats several times while the narrator mentions the millwheel (ex. 26). It might be assumed that Nietzsche would use this as a recurring motive but it does not reappear, despite its recollection in the final stanza (ex. 27). Another motive appears in conjunction with the “rider” stanza. A dotted rhythm in bass octaves begins with the text, “Ich möchte als Reiter fliegen” and continues until the speaker reads, “um stille…” (ex. 28). The “Spielmann” section is unified through the use of a downward series of first inversion chords in sixteenth notes (ex. 29). Although the first inversion chords are alluded to previously in with the ring (ex. 30) they are treated very differently in the Spielmann section.

In fact, the most striking formal aspect of Ringlein is Nietzsche’s avoidance of the text’s formal suggestions. While the text of the third and fourth stanzas each describe a different profession the narrator would like to pursue in order to deal with his grief, Nietzsche resisted the suggestion to compose two similar phrases in which to set the stanzas. The Spielmann episode, for example, contains very densely set text over only a few measures, while the Reiter episode contains extended passages for solo piano interspersed with short fragments of the text. The obvious formal implications of the text’s “Millwheel” symmetry are also avoided by introducing a new melodic and rhythmic pattern in the closing stanza.

Despite Nietzsche’s resistance to more obvious formal implications, his Ringlein retains a rhetorical continuity and a unified perspective. The melancholy nostalgia of the opening stanza is reflected in the falling second “sigh” motive that recurs throughout the first section. In sharp contrast, the conclusion exhibits an optimistic atmosphere, finally
concluding in Ab major after the piece began in Ab minor. The rhetorical significance of this is apparent when one considers the closing text, “But most of all I wish I were dead, then all would at once be silent.” By closing the piece in major he seems to be challenging the narrator’s own self-pity and creating a new text through his unique setting of Eichendorff’s original. The pain of the narrator’s betrayal proves to be justified artistically through the act of aesthetic creation. In this light, the melodrama exists simultaneously at several levels; it describes a sequence of events and it charts the transformation of the narrator through the very act of narration. Nietzsche overlooked the more pedantic formal applications obvious in the text, and instead fused form and content, effectively foreshadowing his *Also Sprach Zarathustra*.

Another example of Nietzsche’s musical prototyping can be seen in his lieder that end in different keys than they begin. That this technique is unprecedented may be debated, but that it ran against the musical sensibilities of his day is without question. The modulation’s oddity is only heightened in contrast to the short lengths of the works in question and the traditional methods of tonal reaffirmation employed in the openings. Although each individual may take away different conclusions—therein lies much of the value of such experimentation—many will surely respond with negative evaluations. In such a short span of time, establishing a key and then abandoning it creates frustration and undermines the mood established up to that point. At the same time though, it highlights the subject/object relationship between the listener and the artwork in an enlightening way. Accustomed to submerging oneself into the nostalgic and charming

40 See pp. 51-54.
lied from hearing countless Schubert and Schumann lieder, the change of key suddenly reasserts the objective (dare I say Apollinian) characteristic of the artwork.

Another example can be found in Nietzsche’s remolding of the mazurka. This can be seen as both a personal experiment that calls into question traditional definitions and a statement to others, urging them to question their inherited values. A mazurka in duple time begs the question, “What is a mazurka?” Is it the coexistence of several musical characteristics or is it the spirit of the piece? How many characteristics can be taken away while maintaining the spirit until entitling it a “mazurka” becomes erroneous? This unusual piece can be seen as Nietzsche’s boldest attack thus far on traditional structures. In On the Genealogy of Morals, he points out the blind adherence of modern individuals to values based on long disproved ideas. He asks how a self-proclaimed atheist can cling so tightly to ethical views based solely on the existence of God. In reference to the stubborn maintenance of religious ideals, he asks, “…how much the erection of every ideal on earth has cost? How much reality has had to be misunderstood and slandered, how many lies have had to be sanctified, how many consciences disturbed, how much ‘God’ sacrificed every time?” 41 Written over twenty years after his youthful “mazurka,” the seeds of his later attacks on all of modernity can be seen in his earlier innocuous attacks on musical nomenclature. If such imposing rhetoric appears to be out of proportion to his small and relatively unnoticed departures from musical tradition, Nietzsche’s own critics raised the rhetorical standard through comparisons of his music to

“the rape of Euterpe.”\textsuperscript{42} Nietzsche would, therefore, not have been out of line to point them to \textit{The Gay Science}, in which he writes,

\begin{quote}
What is new, however, is always evil, being that which wants to conquer and overthrow the old boundary markers and the old pieties; and only what is old is good. The good men are in all ages those who dig the old thoughts, digging deep and getting them to bear fruit - the farmers of the spirit. But eventually all land is depleted, and the ploughshare of evil must come again and again.\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

Besides these interpretations, there are surely countless other associations that can be made by investigating Nietzsche’s experiments. It is in this realm that Nietzsche’s philosophical genius provides validity and worth to the musical works that would have received deservedly little attention if written by others. By considering his use of musical prototypes, light can be shed on both his music and his philosophy.

\textsuperscript{42} A quote from Bülow’s “critique” of Nietzsche’s music, cited in Newman, 324.
\textsuperscript{43} GS, 79: 1, 4.
Chapter 7

College Years in Bonn and Leipzig

What does not destroy me, makes me stronger.¹

After excelling at the Schulpforta, Nietzsche enrolled at the University of Bonn in 1864 to study theology and classical philology. His interest in philology stemmed from his study of Greek and Latin at the Schulpforta and his close association with Greek culture to which previous chapters alluded. In Bonn however, he had several negative experiences that led him to cut short his studies and transfer to Leipzig. One of these was the generally conservative bent of Bonn’s faculty. As was the case at many schools of that time emphasis was placed on creating scholars in specific fields. Students enrolled in theology or philology, for example, were taught with the specific professions of classical philologist, cleric, or researcher as the ultimate end towards which the training prepared the students. Contrast this focused “job training” approach with Nietzsche’s interdisciplinary interests at the time. In 1864, Nietzsche was composing a great deal of music including his twelve lieder and the “Sylvesternacht,” a piece for violin and piano. He was also writing a number of poems and had immersed himself in the study of Byron and Shakespeare. Besides his varied interests, perhaps what most rankled his Bonn professors was his insistence on applying philology (historic and comparative linguistics) to contemporary culture and society. Attending school in the midst of Bismarck’s Prussia and the corresponding rampant nationalism provided Nietzsche many such opportunities.²

² From a letter to von Gersdorff in April of that year, “If the philosophers ruled, then ôô òèçèò (mass of the people) would be lost; if the mass rules, as it does now, it still behoves the philosopher, raro in gurgite
When taken in combination with his dismissal of Christianity only two years earlier and the resulting deconstructionist approach to theology this dismissal engendered, the conflicts between Bonn’s conservative academicians and the interdisciplinary interests of Nietzsche are apparent.

Secondly, and more importantly, Nietzsche felt deeply lonely and out of place in Bonn. Nietzsche was away from his close friends at Pforta, and further still from his family in Naumburg. This dislocation was heightened by the undisciplined social situation in Bonn. The large school had a very active social scene, replete with drunken parties and frequent trips to the town’s brothels. Coming from a strict Lutheran upbringing and the disciplined atmosphere of Schulpforta, Nietzsche had little experience with the frequent Bacchanals, and his decision to join a fraternity in order to combat his feelings of isolation only increased such exposures. In a letter home, Nietzsche describes his loneliness and relates a particularly disturbing experience in which his fraternity brothers lured him to a brothel. According to his account, the lurid surroundings so astonished and disgusted him that he could not move or speak, and it was only upon seeing a piano in the corner that his trance was broken and he spent the remainder of the night alone with his music. Although the validity of this letter’s account may be questioned upon considering its recipient, there are numerous other letters that corroborate his distaste for the Bonn social scene.

His studies there lasted only a year, and he transferred to the University of Leipzig in 1865, choosing to drop his theology studies and concentrate on philology.

---

vasto (from Virgil: “Only a few swimmers appear in the vast ocean”), like Aeschylus, äβ+=áÜééüô ôűôYáëô (from Agamemnon: “Separate from others, I think my own thoughts.”) Middleton, 13.

3 See page 81.
Throughout his year in Bonn, his dissatisfaction with Christianity—already strong—increased to such a point that his feelings toward theology moved from rebellion to disgust. Not only had Christianity lost its appeal, but the entire sphere of discussion had also become tainted in Nietzsche’s eyes. His professors taught the pros and cons of currently accepted issues, and had little patience for “thinking outside the box.” As Nietzsche was to later reveal in On the Genealogy of Morals, his conception was of a complete revaluation of religion. His allusions to such a goal no doubt threatened his professors, who had little patience for the young, socially challenged upstart.

Although his stay in Bonn was brief and his dissatisfaction is well documented, it would be wrong to claim it had no effect on his development. Despite his complaints, the conservatism of his professors found some resonance with the young student who, only a few years earlier, had voiced his disdain for the “music of the future” and claimed to be firmly grounded on late eighteenth century German cultural ideals. His letters to his mother and sister reveal a continuity in his generally conservative musical tastes and include requests for the music of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schumann. Although these same letters also display his first independent interest in Liszt’s piano music, it seems to have come more from Nietzsche’s need to study Liszt’s new ideas rather than any love for the music. It was also during this time that Nietzsche participated in the large Lower Rhenish Music Festival. An avid chorist, Nietzsche performed the conservatively classical repertoire of the festival with enthusiasm.

---

4 See HKB I, 301-333 for numerous letters home, complaining of Bonn’s provincial attitudes.
5 HKB I, 240.
6 Love, 29.
Such a return to classical tendencies is specifically apparent in his *Zwölf Lieder* written that same year. After experimenting with less structured forms in the preceding few years (i.e. *Ermanarich*), Nietzsche here returns to the well-established lieder. The nine of these that survive exhibit forms similar to his earlier lieder, but with less developmental material in the conclusions. They seem somewhat tempered by classical values of formal integrity and adhere more closely to a rounded binary or simple binary form. The lied, *Das Kind an die erloschene Kerze* displays the latter form and employs some interesting harmonic variants to enliven the short strophic song. Indicative of this is his insertion of an unexpected augmented chord to reflect a sudden expression of despair in the text (ex. 31). While Nietzsche had frequently used harmonic surprises in his earlier lieder, this particular instance shows significantly more sophistication. Unlike the earlier chromatic episodes that were truly surprises, Nietzsche works this chord into the surrounding fabric in a typographically coherent way. Following the V chord on the first beat of measure fourteen, the C+ chord initially appears to lack any deeper harmonic meaning than the mere “surprise” chords that fill Nietzsche’s earlier compositions. The next measure, however, reveals the C+ to be a partial V/ii over an anticipation. The bass C is revealed as the bass note of the subsequent ii 6/3 chord and the E and G# are the root and third of the E major chord (V/ii). This interpretation is reinforced in the last half of measure fifteen and the first half of measure seventeen, where the V/ii → ii progression is repeated over the same anticipation. In this passage, Nietzsche combines structure and affect in a way not found in his earlier lieder. In a passage that even Hanslick would have appreciated, Nietzsche appeals to the intellect and the emotions.
The attention to detail found in *Das Kind an die erloschene Kerze* can be found throughout these lieder and, taken in conjunction with their charm and pleasing proportions, make them worthy of performance. It should not be assumed, however, that in writing these pieces he abandoned the knowledge gleaned from his earlier experiments. In fact, of the nine surviving lieder from this group, five of them end in different keys than the keys in which they began. Only *Beschwörung*, *Nachspiel*, *Das Kind*..., and *Es winkt und neigt sich* maintain the same key throughout the piece. In the case of *Verwelkt*, Nietzsche completes the transition from one tonic to another within the span of only sixteen measures! The text of *Verwelkt* (“Wilting”) lends itself well to a melodramatic setting, and Nietzsche’s non-tonic ending contributes a good deal of melodrama. The text by Sandor Petöfi is as follows:

You, in truth, were my only flower.
Now that you’ve withered, my life is bare.
You were the radiant sun for me,
you left-now night enfolds me.

You were my soul’s lightest pinion,
you broke – and now I can never fly.
You were my lifeblood’s warmth,
you fled – the frost will surely kill me.\(^7\)

Each line is set to a four bar phrase in which the first two measures contain an upward melodic contour and the last two measures move downward, ending on the dominant. Nietzsche’s setting of “Verwelkt” to this point is unsurprising given the established rhythm of contrasts within the text itself. Nietzsche makes a significant change in the final line however, inserting a subdominant pedal in the penultimate measure (ex. 32). In

\(^7\) Spencer, 34.
the previous three systems, the subdominant harmony had always continued to a dominant half-cadence. In the conclusion however, the subdominant “gets stuck” and pulls the harmonies towards itself, eventually ending without any sign of a cadence. In an ingenious bit of tone painting, the bass line “succumbs” to the frost while the overlying harmonies gradually lose momentum and fall into the subdominant tonality. The union of Nietzsche’s unique musical tendencies with a higher degree of musical refinement can be seen throughout this set of lieder, making them some of his best works. That Nietzsche himself realized the quality of these works is evidenced by his collection of the seven Petofi and Chamisso lieder into a bound volume. He presented the collection to his mother at Christmas, 1865, along with a copy of his own poem, “Es wingt und neigt sich.”8 In light of such musical successes, Nietzsche’s thoughts of abandoning philology and devoting himself to music seem less like delusions (as Earnest Newmann would later call them) and more like a valid career choice. If it were not for certain experiences shortly after the “Zwölf Lieder” were written that caused Nietzsche to take a sabbatical from composition, his life may have been radically different.

As a philology student in Bonn, Nietzsche attended lectures by Otto Jahn and Friedrich Wilhelm Ritschl. Jahn was a biographer of Mozart and had studied at the University of Berlin under Karl Lachmann - a philologist known both for his studies of the Roman philosopher Lucretius and for having developed the genealogical method in textual recension. Ritschl was a classics scholar whose work centered on the Roman comic poet Plautus. Although Nietzsche claimed to have fled Bonn “like a fugitive,” his discussion of Lucretius in The Birth of Tragedy attests to the lasting impression made by

---

8 MN, 332-333.
his Bonn professors. One of these professors was Hermann Deiters, who was later to write an authoritative biography of Johannes Brahms. Through their interaction Nietzsche gained an appreciation of Brahms that would stay with him the rest of his life.9 In addition, Frederick Love suggests that it was through this association that Nietzsche first encountered the works of Eduard Hanslick. Hanslick was perhaps the most influential musical critic of the nineteenth century and is generally regarded as a staunch conservative. According to Peter Kivy, “Hanslick is famous, even infamous, for his view that expressive properties play no essential role in music…”10 A gifted writer, Hanslick was perhaps best known for his harsh critiques of Wagner’s music. Nietzsche first came across his book, On the Musically Beautiful, in the spring of 1865 and studied it as closely and carefully as he approached all of his intellectual acquisitions.11 Based on Nietzsche’s genius for comprehending subtleties, it can be assumed that he went beyond the oversimplified evaluations of Hanslick that summarize his thought in the phrase, “music for music’s sake.”

Although Hanslick denies that music can express human emotion, it does not follow that he believes music cannot be expressive. His critiques address, rather, the misconception that composers should attempt to translate their emotions into their music. Musical genius exists in the ability to create intricate formal structures that delight not only our intellectual faculties, but create emotional responses as well.

---

9 See chapter 9 for Nietzsche and Wagner’s dispute over Brahms’ Triumphlied.
11 A well-worn copy of the book - filled with copious notes – was found in Nietzsche’s library after his death.
... as the creation of a thinking and feeling mind, musical composition has in a high degree the capability to be itself full of ideality and feeling. This ideal content we demand of every musical artwork. It is to be found only in the tone-structure itself, however, and not in any other aspect of the work.\textsuperscript{12}

Elsewhere Hanslick more directly states that, “the ultimate worth of the beautiful is always based on the immediate manifestation of feeling.”\textsuperscript{13} It is, therefore, not difficult to imagine that Nietzsche saw much in Hanslick’s writings that agreed with his own aesthetics. The idea of music as a mere vehicle for transmitting an individual’s passing moods reduced music’s inherently noble station and placed it on a par with a cheaply bought cliché or greeting card. While Hanslick would argue that music’s structure admits of no mere mapping of emotion to musical composition, Nietzsche would add that even if such a thing were possible, it would grossly misuse music’s nearly limitless expressive ability to convey ideas easily encoded in language. In any case, Hanslick’s harsh criticisms of formal and harmonic excess must have struck a chord with Nietzsche as far as his own music was concerned. Already made aware of his technical weakness through his exposure to Bonn’s musical society, Hanslick’s association of musical beauty with detail and precision further undermined Nietzsche’s musical confidence. In a discussion of his compositional skills he writes, “I will become a little more critical so that I may no longer deceive myself.”\textsuperscript{14} His critical attitude was heightened by the emotional gloom that settled over him during his year in Bonn. Nietzsche found himself alone and lonely in Bonn, and deeply missed his friends and family. Impatient for his transfer to Leipzig, the wrote “I am very much cheered by the idea of a completely different life in Leipzig,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid., xxii.
\item \textsuperscript{14} HKB I, 333.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
where I will be with dear friends and near Naumburg and in the middle of a city filled with music."\textsuperscript{15} It was this same atmosphere that caused Nietzsche to swear off composition altogether in early 1865.\textsuperscript{16}

While Nietzsche did, in fact, return to composition, the almost six month break represents the longest period of inactivity since he had begun composing in earnest. It was only on the occasion of his sister’s birthday that he began to compose again. In a letter accompanying his musical birthday present, he explains his loneliness in Bonn and the sweet memories he has of their familiar birthday celebrations. It was to assuage this nostalgia that he again turned to composing, although a distinct note of irony in this new composition attests to the strength of his earlier resolution and the continuance of his newly heightened critical sensibilities. In the song, \textit{Junge Fischerin}, Nietzsche departs from his well-established lied-form and borrows a page from “Zukunftmusik.” In the same letter, he explains, “It is a song in the highest futuristic style (Zukunftsstile) with the requisite crying-out (Aufschrei) and all the ingredients of similar foolishness.”\textsuperscript{17} In light of such an appraisal, \textit{Junge Fischerin} can be seen variously as a caricature of new music or an attempt to understand it.

Perhaps the most striking difference to be found in \textit{Junge Fischerin} is its mood. Nietzsche's own angst-ridden poem is accompanied by a jagged melody filled with chromatic alterations to create a work filled with emotion. The poem itself was written several years earlier in the summer of 1862. Its use of mythical figures reflects his

\textsuperscript{15} HKB, 323.
\textsuperscript{16} In a letter to von Gersdorff at the end of the summer Nietzsche writes, “Perhaps I wrote you around the new year that I would no longer compose music or poetry.” HKB I, 333.
\textsuperscript{17} HKB I, 331-332.
interests at that time, and can be seen as a poetic response to his research into
Scandinavian and Slavic epics. Besides the subject matter, the poem sharply contrasts
with his other works. The affirmation of life, replete with its miseries and ecstasies is
here replaced with a longing for death and negation. In *Das Kind an die erloschene
Kerze*, Nietzsche’s characteristic embrace of all aspects of life is evident:

```
You poor, poor candle, you’ll give no more light,
so quickly has your flame
gone out, your bright and cheerful flame!
For so it had to be!
You poor, poor candle, you’ll give no more light!
It’s not because I now have to lie here in darkness!
If only you still burned,
and if only your dear light
gave joy to others!
It’s not because I now have to lie here in darkness!
You poor, poor candle, you’ll give no more light!
It’s not because I’m all alone
in the dark and crying,
I like to be on my own!
You poor, poor candle, you’ll give no more light!18
```

Note especially the phrase, “It’s not because I now have to lie here in darkness,” and its
background of contentment. While not denying the miseries of life, and in many
instances actually glorifying them, Nietzsche chooses texts for his songs that explore the
darker aspects of life in order to bring out its glories. Now compare this to the nihilism
of “Junge Fischerin.”

```
Of a morning I dream in silence
and watch the clouds go by
whenever the young day trembles
gently through the trees.

The mists seethe and surge,
over there lies the dawn.
```

18 Spencer, 36.
Oh, no one knows
how sad I am.

Coolly and softly the sea surges past,
restless and tireless,
and I shudder strangely.
I close my eyes.

I don’t want to see the mist.
Does death lurk within it?
Ah, no one can understand
why I am so faint-hearted.

With tear-moistened eyes
I seek you.
In the bright red of dawn I see a light,
it is you that greets me.

You come through the veiling mists,
riding upon the wind,
you come to calm my heart
the heart of the poor fishermaid.19

The longing for death inherent in this poem can be compared to themes running
throughout Tristan und Isolde, to which Nietzsche had been exposed only shortly before
writing the text. That he would send his sister such an ironic inscription might indicate a
recognition of the Wagnerian aspects of his poem.

Departing from this turbulent origin, the music also surges with late romantic
angst. Although still based on eight bar phrases that approximately match the poetic
lines, Nietzsche allows himself more freedom when balancing his phrases. In his "Zwolf
Lieder," for example, eight measure phrases are composed of two balanced four-measure
sections that frequently display the same or similar harmonic progressions and strikingly
similar melodies. Now, however, the second four measure section departs further from

19 Spencer, 39-40.
the first section while maintaining enough similarities to tie together the eight measure phrase. In the opening stanza, the first five measures (including a measure of introduction) lay out a melodic motif and a harmonic expansion of I (F major). The second four measures include a similar melodic contour, but with significant melodic and rhythmic embellishments. The underlying harmonies also depart from the earlier statement, moving from the tonic to the relative minor. Employing this level of alteration so early in the lied distinguishes *Junge Fischerin* from his earlier lieder and perhaps this is what he meant in the letter to his sister when he referred to its "Zukunftsmusik" characteristics. Despite a change of degree in strophic embellishments, the overall form and harmonic vocabulary remains very similar to his earlier works. This similarity, however, is hidden under a layer of heretofore unseen affects that easily mask more familiar structures. It is this surface appearance of a change in compositional techniques that prompted Love to refer to *Junge Fischerin* as "...an extravagant departure from ... his 'serious' Lieder."\(^{20}\) The mini-developments of earlier works is also evident here in the form of an instrumental interlude with a quasi-improvisational vocal cadenza (ex. 33). The piece ends with the requisite recollection of the opening material and comes to a surprisingly traditional conclusion in the tonic. Behind the chromaticism and rhythmic adventurousness however, it remains a characteristically Nietzschean lied. Through an examination of this "aberrant" lied, several Nietzschean characteristics come into focus. Beyond his formal idiosyncracies and harmonic vocabulary, his works can be seen as fundamentally rhetorical. The underlying theme of the text dictates the choice of musical material within the lied form. A mood of uncertainty in the text is mirrored in

\(^{20}\) Love, 29.
corresponding harmonic or melodic alterations, and the macroscopic structure is derived from the text's content. A text describing a dynamic emotional state will spawn a musical accompaniment with a dynamic tonal atmosphere and a text that delves into a single facet will be accompanied by music that explores a narrower harmonic region. Upon realizing the inherently rhetorical structure of Nietzsche's music, it becomes easier to evaluate such wide-ranging genres as the oratorio, lied, and symphonic poem under a unified rubric.

Upon transferring to the University of Leipzig later that year, Nietzsche discarded his theology studies altogether and devoted his time—academically at least—to philology. His choice of Leipzig had much to do with Ritschl’s disillusionment in Bonn and subsequent move to Leipzig. Following his teacher, Nietzsche unknowingly transferred to Wagner’s alma mater and placed himself in close proximity to Wagner’s family—a circumstance that would shortly lead to the two men’s meeting. Once in Leipzig, Nietzsche quickly established his own academic reputation through his published essays on Aristotle, Theognis and Simonides. Through studying these writers, Nietzsche developed a keen interest in Greek and Roman conceptions of rhythm and meter. In fact, he would write an article a few years later on the Danae fragment by Simonides and attribute the beginnings of his interest in the subject to his time in Bonn.

What he discovered was a system of rhythm (both spoken and musical) completely alien to western tradition. While western rhythm is organized around uniform collections of temporal units, with an internal hierarchy of emphasis within each collection, the Greek system is characterized by lack of accents and metric regularity. Instead of indicating an

21 HK V, 255.
23 HKB II, 102-103.
organizational hierarchy through volume or timbre, it is indicated by duration. Certain notes are held longer than others (frequently associated with spoken habit), and all the tones represent various integer accumulations of an underlying pulse or *chrono*.

Aristoxenus describes this “atomistic” system as follows: “…*chronoi* are the minima of rhythmical *synthesis*, or composition, that get thrown into complex interrelations, the perceptual effect of which is rhythm. They are, in effect, *atoms of rhythm*.24 Therefore while modern western rhythm is *metric*, ancient Greek rhythm was *quantitative*.

In the midst of his rhythmic studies, Nietzsche composed two short works setting texts by Lord Byron. Nietzsche’s “Sonne des Schlaflosen” and “O weint um sie” were composed in December 1865 and January 1866; both unfinished, the former was scored for voice and piano, and the latter for accompanied choir. Though incomplete, both pieces exhibit enough continuity and detail to establish certain unique traits; in fact, the second of these was deemed complete enough for performance at Concordia University in Montreal in 1992-1993 under the watchful eye of Mr. Janz. Both pieces display an unusual rhythmic pattern in which a persistent eighth note pulse appears and reappears throughout the works. In itself, an eighth note ostinato is not unusual and can be found in many of Schubert’s lieder and Beethoven’s piano sonatas. Two aspects of this application, however, make it worthy of note: the unusual juxtaposition of the ostinato with the melodic material, and its odd, inconsistent appearance. In both cases, they represent significant departures from Nietzsche’s earlier works that - although also employing eighth note ostinati—do so in a highly conventional, if not clichéd, manner.

Compare, for example, measures 10-12 of *Sonne des Schlaflosen* with any measure in *Ständchen* (ex. 34). In the latter song, the eighth notes are used to create an accompanimental pattern and have a rhythmic and harmonic shape that emphasizes the meter. In the former, the eighth notes do little to establish the harmony and change their melodic pattern frequently.

The melodies of both pieces exhibit a rhythmic complexity that weakens the meter. The pick up notes and frequent syncopations of the opening to *O weint um sie* make any identification of a triple meter difficult and imply, if anything, a sort of alternating meter between duple and quadruple (ex. 35). The opening of *Sonne des Schlaflosen* presents an even greater challenge to the listener with its pentuplet, overlapping quarter and dotted quarter notes, and tie across the bar line (ex. 36). Throughout both works conventionally emphasized beats are de-emphasized and flourishes are placed on conventionally weak beats. After such rhythmically ambiguous introductions, the intermittent eighth note pulse acts as a measure of durations and provides proportions between melodic notes. In this unique setting, traditional notational implications are deconstructed and shown in a new light. Traditionally, a note with a duration of two and a half beats is most frequently notated as a half note tied to an eighth note. The implication of this is that a syncopation is involved and the eighth note becomes a rhythmic anticipation or suspension. The half note almost always appears on the first or the third beat of the measure (the strong beats in common time) and the eighth note represents the syncopation of that beat. When the system of metric emphases is weakened however, so are the implications of rhythmic notation. The performer may still react to such nomenclature by stressing notes as if a syncopation existed, but the
framework of expectation that creates the surprise and rhythmic interest inherent in syncopation is absent.

In both Byron fragments, Nietzsche repaints individual rhythmic values as durations, rather than metric indicators. The half note tied to an eighth note is therefore reduced to a note lasting the equivalent of five eighth note pulses (an eighth note receiving half a beat in common time). The rhythmic emphasis of placement is here replaced with an emphasis of duration. In the short phrase, “ihr Tempel wüst, ein Traum ihr Land,” “Traum” and “Land” are emphasized by having the longest durations (four beats) despite their appearances on the second beat and the third beat, respectively (ex. 37). Highly unusual for mid-eighteenth century composition, Nietzsche’s use of quantitative rhythm is more comparable to that of Steve Reich’s than to most of his contemporaries. Lest Nietzsche’s use of quantitative rhythm be overstated however, the inconsistent and brief manner in which he applies the technique in these works must be stressed. Alternating with the above mentioned passages one finds traditional metrically oriented passages. But despite the limited use of quantitative rhythms, the probability of a connection between this unusual musical experiment and his simultaneous study of ancient Greek and Roman texts on meter and rhythm is difficult to refute.

Shortly after composing the Byron lieder came Nietzsche’s momentous yet accidental discovery of Arthur Schopenhauer’s The World as Will and Representation in a local bookstore owned by Rohde’s father. Much has been made of this event, so much so, in fact, that it has taken on mythic proportions. It does not help that Nietzsche himself is quoted as saying he heard a demon whisper in his ear, “Take this book home with
you.”25 Despite the fact that Nietzsche quickly read and absorbed the work and made numerous references to Schopenhauer throughout his life, one must not assume Nietzsche’s philosophical output is a mere revision of Schopenhauer’s thought. As was discussed earlier, Nietzsche absorbed Schopenhauer’s language and concepts in order to enrich his own, highly unique and highly rhetorical philosophy. In the “Critique of Schopenhauer,” from 1867, he summed up this dualistic evaluation when he wrote, “The errors of great men are venerable because they are more fruitful than the truths of little men…”26 Schopenhauer’s impact can best be seen as a catalyst that throughout Nietzsche’s life repeatedly engendered critiques and observations.

In addition to Leipzig’s academic benefits, Nietzsche also saw Leipzig as an opportunity to further his musical knowledge. As his investigation of Liszt’s music showed, Nietzsche was not content with his limited understanding and exposure to contemporary music. Although Germania had broadened his horizons considerably, he still lacked first-hand experience of the “Zukunftmusik.” The conservative attitudes of the University of Bonn had been echoed in the town itself, and the music performed there was rarely more recent than Schumann. In a letter from 1865, he states his hopes that he will be able to hear more modern music in cosmopolitan Leipzig.27 When Nietzsche first arrived in Leipzig, it appeared as if he would get his chance to hear the music of Wagner and Liszt performed. A series of ten “Zukunftsmatineen” were to be performed in Leipzig that school year and were to include concert settings of several Wagner operas.

26 Cited in Kaufmann, 30.
27 HKB I, 333.
As was frequently the case with performances of Wagner’s works, the ambitious plans resulted in modest performances, and only four of the ten are recorded to have been held. From a lack of correspondence concerning the concerts, it can be assumed Nietzsche did not attend any of these performances. In spite of his increased exposure to contemporary music, by his second semester at Leipzig Nietzsche could still write, “Three things allow me to convalesce, albeit rarely, my Schopenhauer, Schumann’s music, and endless hikes.” Attention should be paid, however, to Nietzsche’s use of the term “convalesce.” It has been well-documented that he had, by this time, located several flaws in Schopenhauer’s system and was aware of his own divergence from the author of *Will and Representation*. Calling his works a means to “convalesce” (otherwise translated as “relaxation” or “rest”) points to a sort of guilty pleasure. It can be reasoned, therefore, that Nietzsche’s attitudes toward Schumann had begun to reflect his new aesthetics. Listening to music that did not directly engage the aesthetic principles he intricately investigated, although surely pleasurable, had begun to produce the devout intellectual pangs of guilt.

That spring Nietzsche had the opportunity to study the piano reduction of Wagner’s *Die Walküre*. It is unclear if he purchased the book or borrowed a friend’s copy, but his detailed critique attests to his study of the work. Nietzsche’s exposure to Hanslick’s detachment and abstraction can be seen as he takes on the air of professional critic. He begins by pointing out Wagner’s unique aesthetic and the unusual position in

---

28 From the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, cited in Love, 35.
29 HKB II, 45.
30 HKB II, 97-98.
which it places the critic. “Because the purported education of R. Wagner is not yet completed and the last fruits to be ripened by these new principles are not yet harvested, each judgement over his output as a whole is necessarily prejudiced.” Showing an objectivity to Wagner’s art that he would never again demonstrate, Nietzsche claims the principles behind “Wagner’s singular art” to be filled with both “virtues and mistakes,” and claiming, rightfully, that the attribution of either valuation would vary with the critic. In true Hanslickian fashion, Nietzsche then goes on to criticize Wagner’s indication of “Stürmisch” for the overture. An orchestra can not play “stormily,” nor can the conductor encourage “storminess,” if anything, the label can only apply to the composition itself. In any case, claims Nietzsche, “only the reader would know it describes a storm.” He goes on to criticize other programmatic indications, holding to the irreconcilability of music and literal programs.

Although Nietzsche would have most likely given a different critique had he heard the overture rather than reading a piano reduction of it\textsuperscript{31}, his critique highlights several important distinctions between Nietzsche and Wagner’s views toward music in general and opera in particular. The next few years witnessed a sharp decline in Nietzsche’s musical output. It seems that his composition of “Junge Fischerin” truly had been an individual response to an emotional circumstance, and that the factors behind his resolution to cease composing remained strong. While the years from 1860-1864 included dozens of compositions and sketches, he worked on only four pieces from 1865-1870, completing only one. His notebooks and letters from these years still indicate a

\textsuperscript{31} It would not be until October of 1868 that Nietzsche first heard Wagner’s music performed. He heard, and fell in love with, \textit{Der Meistersinger}. 
passion for music, and continue to mention his continued improvisation at the piano, but he rarely attempted notating them. His study of Hanslick, as well as lectures by Deiters must have given him a greater appreciation for the intricacies of musical composition. Perhaps in response to this, Nietzsche seems to have begun learning more music written by others. In contrast to his earlier letters in which he writes of improvising with friends or performing his own compositions at social gatherings, his letters from Leipzig allude to the increasing number of Liszt and Wagner pieces in his performance repertoire. In one letter to Rohde, Nietzsche mentions a song from Der Meistersinger that he had previously played for him, and in other letters to Sophie Ritschl mentions piano “concerts” he had given her. Characteristic of Nietzsche is his life-long habit of completely immersing himself in any topic in which he was interested. His earlier absorption of Nordic and Slavic epics is mirrored repeatedly in his academic studies as well. His studies of Lucretius’ works, for example, entailed reading every scrap of material available to him at the time. It is, therefore, fitting that he would attempt to ingest as much music as possible to append any compositional weaknesses he felt. That he was addressing these weaknesses by absorbing Wagner’s music would reap unforeseen benefits only a few months later when he met the composer in person.

---

32 HKB II, 265.
Chapter 8

Wagner

Companions the creator seeks, not corpses, not herds and believers. Fellow creators the
creator seeks--those who write new values on new tablets. Companions the creator seeks,
and fellow harvesters; for everything about him is ripe for the harvest\(^1\).

In the middle of his stint at the University of Leipzig, Nietzsche enlisted in the
Prussian army for his mandatory one-year military service in October 1867. He served in
an artillery regiment and managed to receive an assignment in his hometown of
Naumburg. Although he enjoyed being so close to his dear sister and mother, his active
military service was brief. In his training early that winter he was thrown from a horse
and injured his chest. The rest of that year was spent recuperating, although he somehow
managed to earn a promotion to lance corporal in April of the next year (1868). From
that point onward his health was very delicate. Many believe that the injury in 1867
cause not only his subsequent chronic health problems, but also started a deterioration
that eventually led to his insanity in 1889. Another, more probable theory, ascribes
Nietzsche’s poor health to syphilis, most likely contracted from prostitutes while studying
in Bonn. Evidence to support the latter theory includes the previously mentioned letter to
his mother. According to this theory, the severity of his military injury could have
weakened him enough to allow the syphilis to manifest itself. Without the presence of
syphilis, it is difficult to account for his consistent sickliness and eventual insanity. Still
other explanations supported by the testimony of his close friends assert that Nietzsche
never had sexual relations with anybody in his entire life, and that if he did, in fact,

\(^1\) TSZ, 24: Zarathustra’s Prologue, 9.
contract syphilis, he was exposed to it while treating soldiers in the Franco-Prussian War. Regardless of competing syphilitic theories, Nietzsche’s health took an incontrovertible turn for the worse after his military injury; his headaches occurred more frequently, his already poor eyesight continued to deteriorate and his sensitive digestion worsened.

During his recuperation, Nietzsche detailed his departure from Schopenhaurianism and became more interested in Wagner’s music. A friend and fellow philology student, Ernst Windisch, visited him in Naumburg and suggested he recuperate in Leipzig at the home of their professor, Friedrich Ritschl. During his stay at the Ritschls, he became good friends with both Professor Ritschl and his wife, Sophie. Always better at socializing with women, Nietzsche charmed Frau Ritschl with his conversation and his pianistic abilities. Their frequent musical soirees included Nietzsche’s performance of several transcriptions from Wagner’s *Meistersinger* as well as piano works by Schumann and Beethoven. In October 1868, his mandatory year of service completed, Nietzsche was discharged from the army and returned to school. Back in academica after having been surrounded by military men for a year, and having had his cultural tastes whetted by his stay at the Ritschl’s, he vowed to make the most of his re-entry into Leipzig society. In a letter to Erwin Rohde, he wrote:

> I plan on becoming more of a member of society: in particular, I am focusing on a woman of whom I am told miraculous things, the wife of Professor Brockhaus, sister of Richard Wagner with respect to whose capacity friend Windisch (who has visited me) has an amazing opinion...the Ritschls almost exclusively socialize with the Brockhaus family.

---

2 In one letter, Nietzsche jokes by calling her, “My intimate friend.” HKB II, 229.
3 HKB II, 259-60.
Thanks in part to Windisch, Nietzsche obtained invitations to various social events and eventually made the acquaintance of Professor and Ottolie Brockhaus neè Wagner.

Later that month, on 28 October, Nietzsche finally had the opportunity to hear Wagner’s music performed. The concert consisted of the introduction to *Tristan und Isolde* and the overture to *Der Meistersinger*, and any criticisms Nietzsche previously had were swept away after hearing Wagner’s music performed.

Tonight, I was in the *Euterpe* that had begun its winter concerts and which delighted me with both the Introduction to *Tristan und Isolde* and with the Overture to *Der Meistersinger*. I can not find it in my heart to remain critically-cool towards this music; every fiber, every nerve in me twitches, and I have not had such a lasting feeling of transport than in listening to the last-mentioned overture, in a long time⁴.

Throughout the rest of his life, even in the midst of scathing attacks on Wagner, Nietzsche never swayed from his firm belief in the genius of *Tristan*. If anything, Nietzsche’s later attacks on Wagner were intensified to combat the strong power Wagner’s music could exert on its listeners. In later letters, both before and after his split with Wagner, he refers to this first experience with *Tristan* and adds to the symptoms listed above; mentioning also the sweating, dizziness and tingling he felt that night.

Little more than a week later, Richard Wagner returned to Leipzig, his hometown, to visit his sister, Ottolie. One evening when the Ritschls were visiting, Wagner sat down at the piano and played the “Meisterlied” for the guests. Mrs. Ritschl told him she was already familiar with the piece, having heard Nietzsche play it, and went on to recount the young student’s enthusiasm for Wagner’s music. Intrigued by her description of the brilliant young man, he requested a meeting. The next day, after presenting a paper at

---

⁴ Middleton, 35.
Leipzig’s annual philology conference (a high honor for a student), Nietzsche returned home to find a note from Windisch asking him if he would like to meet Wagner in person. In an amusing letter to Rohde, Nietzsche described in great detail the events of that night. Having recently purchased a new suit, Nietzsche was anxious to have it tailored before going to meet “Der Meister.” The tailor agreed to send a messenger to Nietzsche’s lodging with the new suit, but upon Nietzsche’s receipt of the suit, the messenger demanded to be paid in full. Nietzsche explained that he did not know this messenger and would deal with the tailor in person when he next saw him. This did not satisfy the messenger and their argument led to a scuffle, and as he tried to take back the clothes, Nietzsche tried to put them on. In Nietzsche’s own words:

A scene. I fight, standing there in my shirt, since I want to put the new trousers on. Finally: Collecting my dignity, I solemnly threaten him, curse my tailor and his helper, swear revenge: during the course of this, the little man vanishes with my clothes. End of the second act: In my shirt, I sit on my sofa and look at my black suit coat and ponder if it is good enough for Richard.5

Reduced to wearing his old suit, Nietzsche arrived at the café late and winded.

Upon their meeting, the two men immediately fell into lively discussion and each was impressed by the other. They discussed Schopenhauer, Wagner lambasted the conductors in Leipzig, Nietzsche explained how he had come to know Wagner’s music, and Wagner played extensive excerpts from Der Meistersinger. In the same letter to Rohde, Nietzsche describes Wagner’s “fiery” and “colorful” personality, and his magnetic and powerful presence. According to all accounts, Nietzsche was just as drawn

5 Ibid., 36-37.
to the man as he had been a week earlier to the music. The highly enjoyable meeting ended as,

Then, he read a passage from his biography that he is writing at this time, a very amusing scene from his Leipzig study years, of which I even now cannot think without laughing; by the way, he writes extremely well and with great wit. Finally, when both of us prepared to leave, he warmly shook my hand and invited me in a very friendly way to visit him in order to talk about music and to discuss philosophy, he also asked me to introduce his sisters and his relatives to his music, what I solemnly took on as my task. 

Nietzsche truly did take this as his solemn task, and became a vocal Wagner-phile.

Writing to his mother, sister and friends of Wagner’s “genius” and “revolutionary aesthetic,” Nietzsche’s immediate enthusiasm was immense.

His association with Wagner might have been limited to that one encounter were it not for several other extraordinary coincidences. Shortly after meeting Wagner, Nietzsche was awarded a position at the University of Basel in Switzerland (February 1869). Nietzsche’s official title was “extraordinary professor of classical philology”—the inclusion of “extraordinary” resulting from several factors. Practically speaking, the “extraordinary” referred to it being a one-year replacement position. (The next year Nietzsche became “ordinary professor of classical philology” upon his permanent appointment.) Most remarkably, albeit less pragmatically, the “extraordinary” reflected Nietzsche’s being awarded the post before completing his degree requirements in Leipzig. His final dissertation had been waived and earlier essays accepted in its place because of his extraordinary gifts and long list of academic accomplishments. His research into the poetry of Theogenis, to provide one example, had brought him such acclaim that he began delivering well-attended lectures to his fellow students, and several

---

6 Ibid.
other papers had been published in various philological journals. Such an exception was never made in the strict Prussian academic world, and Nietzsche’s treatment caused a stir throughout the academic community. In addition to the early date of his graduation, a glowing letter from his mentor, Friedrich Ritschl, sealed the Basel appointment. Among other compliments, he described Nietzsche as the best philology student he had supervised in his thirty-seven years of teaching, and foretold great and wonderful things from the young man.\textsuperscript{7}

In April, Nietzsche left Leipzig and headed to Basel to begin his professorial career. Being relatively close to Tribschen—the Wagners’ home—Nietzsche was able to accept the friendly invitation he had received back in November. His first visit, on 25 May, was a cause for much nervousness in the younger man. Having been invited for Wagner’s birthday (22 May) and being unable to attend due to professional obligations, Nietzsche came soon after. Upon arriving, Nietzsche was notified by Wagner’s servant that the master was not to be interrupted while he worked, and that Nietzsche should try back the next morning. When he finally was admitted to the household, he, Cosima von Bülow (soon to be Cosima Wagner) and Richard Wagner greatly enjoyed each other’s company; so much in fact, that Nietzsche became a regular visitor there for the next few years. Having made plans to travel to Paris with Rohde that summer, Nietzsche cancelled them in order to work on his various projects. Remaining in Basel also allowed Nietzsche to make frequent visits to Tribschen, quickly becoming a regular member of the household and even attending the birth of Wagner’s son, Siegfried. In a letter to Rohde he confessed that he visited almost every weekend. His letters to Wagner during

\textsuperscript{7} Kaufmann, 7.
this time highlight the inherently unequal relationship of the two men. After their second meeting, Nietzsche wrote, “How long have I intended to express unreservedly the degree to which I feel grateful to you; because indeed the best and loftiest moments of my life are associated with your name.”

In another example, the two men had a rare argument over Nietzsche’s vegetarianism. Both enlisted the most absolute and fundamental reasons for their respective opinions, and Wagner especially became very angry. Cosima reported in her diary that, “Richard became angry because the professor acknowledges that Richard is right and yet remains abstinent.”

Shortly thereafter, Nietzsche gave up his vegetarianism, and in a letter to von Gersdorff explained that, “…intellectually productive and emotionally intense natures must have meat. The other mode of living should be reserved for bakers and bumpkins who are nothing but digesting machines.”

While this indicates Nietzsche’s willingness to undergo major lifestyle changes to suit the master, Wagner viewed Nietzsche as someone to do his Christmas shopping, entertain his wife, and write letters for him.

At this point it becomes valuable to differentiate between two modes of evaluation Nietzsche applied to Wagner and Wagnerian topics: the emotional, intuitive mode and the intellectual, reflective mode. As the excerpts from his letters show, he experienced deep emotions in response to both Wagner’s music and Wagner’s personality. His reaction to Wagner’s music needs no explanation. There have been countless audience members over the last century who experienced the same sensations.

---

8 Middleton, 53.
10 Middleton, 59.
and attested to the incredible power of Wagner’s music. His personal attachment to Wagner, the man, deserves more attention. Throughout his letter to Rohde his description of Wagner - “…that lively illustration of that which Schopenhauer calls ‘genius’”—resembles that of a love-sick teenager. Many scholars have commented on the obvious father-figure role Wagner most likely filled in Nietzsche’s life. Wagner was born the same year as Nietzsche’s father and supplied the strong masculine influence Nietzsche had not known since his eighth year. The absence of a paternal model was only reinforced by being raised in a family of women, including his grandmother, mother and sister. Nietzsche’s recognition of Wagner’s revolutionary genius also provided him with the role model he had never had. His descriptions of Schopenhauer had frequently pointed out the elder man’s role as intellectual father, but in Wagner he had a flesh and blood mentor who demanded everyone’s respect and, through the force of his personality, held court virtually anywhere he went.

A close look at Nietzsche’s notebooks from periods temporally removed from Wagnerian experiences (both musical and social) reveal a continuum with his earlier writings. When allowed to decompress from the effects of Wagner’s music and personality, Nietzsche’s reflections on aesthetic issues maintain characteristically Nietzschean traits that would be easily recognized as those written by the author of Nietzsche contra Wagner, Der Fall Wagner, or Ecce Homo. It is, therefore, not surprising that Ernest Newman, the Wagner biographer, criticizes Nietzsche for being an “overworked, humorless, over-intellectualised, (sic) perhaps under-sexed young
hierophant.” 11 It was, after all, in his reflective, intellectual moments that he exerted his individuality, and it was in these moments that the fundamental differences between his and Wagner’s philosophies came into most striking contrast. While Newman describes Nietzsche’s post-Wagnerian years as indicative of his “over-intellectualised” mentality, his earlier works display the same principles. The common notion—accepted by Newman and many others—that Nietzsche fell under Wagner’s spell in 1868, fell out of it around 1876, and spent his remaining twelve years of sanity in an attempt to eradicate Wagnerianism, should be adjusted. Nietzsche fell under Wagner’s spell every time he heard his music or visited Tribschen and slowly emerged from its effects after removing himself from his Wagnerian environment. The conflict between Nietzsche’s carefully articulated philosophical arguments and the blind hero-worship of Wagner took several years to identify, and it took him several more to finally extricate himself from the situation.

Seeds of their differences can be found throughout Nietzsche’s early notebooks and published works, and an investigation into them will not only shed light on the deterioration of their friendship, but also on Nietzsche’s music composed during this time. To do this, we must first evaluate Wagner’s aesthetic and compare it to Nietzsche’s. Although it would seem appropriate to look through Nietzsche’s own writings to uncover his own unique interpretation of Wagner’s views, he left virtually no detailed analyses of “Der Meister’s” theories. Again and again Nietzsche refers to

11 Newman, 334; italics added.
Wagner’s genius but does not delve into the qualifications consulted in applying that term. In fact, Nietzsche’s familiarity with Wagner’s many articles in which he sets out his aesthetic theories can even be called into question. In the many letters to friends and family telling them of Wagner’s genius and calling on them to read Wagner’s writings, he never quotes these works. For example, his letter to Rohde contains the following: “A recent book of Wagner’s on Beethoven will give you a good idea of what I desire of the future. Read it—it is a revelation of the spirit in which we—**we!**—shall come to live.”

Or in another discussion of Wagner’s idealism, “…which is what relates him most closely to Schiller: this glowing high-hearted struggle for the dawning of the ‘day when men shall be noble.’” The fact that Nietzsche resorts to quotations of others to give validity to Wagner’s prose speaks volumes on his precarious intellectual position.

Lacking Nietzsche’s own explanation of Wagner’s aesthetic, a more sterilized and standardized definition must suffice. On a very general level, Wagner believed music should be felt more than understood; that music must appeal to the emotions as much or more than to the intellect. To reach this end, Wagner sought to unify drama and music and coined the term, “Gesamtkunstwerk,” or “Total Art Work” for this new union. As the artist, Wagner wrote the text, composed the music, designed the sets, and conceived of the costumes. The unification of all aspects of art allowed the artist to be faithful to his vision without sacrificing anything to the demands of external constraints. Opera would no longer be hemmed in by “aria” and “recitative” designations, nor would the composer have to shape the music around someone else’s libretto. Wagner’s break with

---

12 Refer to Nietzsche’s many letters during his infatuation with Wagner. Mentions of Wagner’s name without the descriptor “genius” are extremely rare.

13 Middleton, 74.

14 Ibid., 65; Nietzsche’s quote is from Goethe’s poem “Epilog zu Schillers Glocke.”
traditional opera was so extreme, in fact, that it was referred to as “music drama” to indicate the significant differences.\textsuperscript{15}

Thematically, Wagner’s music dramas dealt with epic stories and displayed a level of sensuality never before seen. He shocked audiences with Tristan and Isolde’s passionate love that was more carnal than ideal, and with a whole gamut of incestuous relationships in the ring cycle. To portray this new aesthetic musically, Wagner abandoned many traditional musical constructs. Not only were individual numbers eliminated, but melodies themselves were sacrificed in favor of “eternal melody;” a style in which the traditional framework of phrases and melodic repetition was replaced with an ever-changing melodic line without internal divisions. He took through-composition to a new level, essentially applying it to an entire fifteen-hour opera. Within this broad framework seemingly defined only by what it is not, Wagner inserted his own positively charged constructions: \textit{leitmotifs}. These short melodic fragments were associated with particular aspects of the music drama, with one motif referring to love, one to anvils, one to Siegfried, etc. Although Berlioz and Weber had used motifs earlier in the form of the \textit{idée fixe}, Wagner employed them on such a grand scale that a new terminology became necessary.

Wagner justified such revolutionary changes to western musical traditions in part by pointing to an ancient Greek practice. In his article, \textit{Oper und Drama}, he attributes the ideas of music drama to the Greeks and explains his current works as attempts to recreate the Greek drama and its audience. Important in this regard is the unique role the

\textsuperscript{15} Wagner himself did not use the term – it was coined by others from Wagner’s frequent use of the word “drama” instead of opera.
audience played in the Dionysian festivals to which Wagner (and Nietzsche) refer.\textsuperscript{16} The objectifying glance of the audience common to pre-Wagnerian opera was to be replaced with the audience’s complete immersion in the total experience. Beyond his aesthetic claims to ancient Greece, Wagner also borrowed thematically from his ancient predecessors. Observe, for example, the similarities between Aeschylus’ \textit{Oresteia} trilogy and Wagner’s own ring cycle.\textsuperscript{17} Not only are the two plots very similar, but Aeschylus’ use of the triology format is adapted and magnified in Wagner’s tetralogy. Wagner himself acknowledges his debt to Aeschylus, especially in regards to the relationship between speech and music. From what little is known about Greek music, it can be gleaned that the music closely followed the natural speech rhythms of the text. While the vocal line was to be a faithful servant to the text, the orchestra took on the role of the Greek chorus, using the \textit{leitmotifs} as reminiscences or presentiments.

Wagner’s adherence to ancient Greek ideals provided yet another point of agreement between him and Nietzsche, and their letters are filled with frequent discussions of Greek aesthetics. For Nietzsche’s part, he was also hard at work exploring Greek conceptions of music, text and rhythm, although his approach was markedly different from his mentor’s. Whereas Wagner frequently constructed his prose works around his own views and then searched for evidence to support his claims, Nietzsche followed a more academically rigorous research plan. It would be erroneous, however, to attribute pure objectivity to Nietzsche’s research and dismiss Wagner’s work as propaganda. Wagner had done significant reading of ancient Greek dramas and was

\textsuperscript{16} Refer to p.87 for a description of the Dionysian festivals.
well-versed in the corresponding dramatic theses, and Nietzsche frequently allowed his personal motivations to play a large role in his scientific endeavors. The marked difference arises primarily from the depth of the two men’s understanding of Greek theories. Wagner’s amateur fascination with the ancient plays paled in comparison to Nietzsche’s thorough philological training. By the time of his appointment at Basel, Nietzsche had published several papers on Greek poets, given numerous talks throughout the German academic world, and was widely seen as one of the foremost experts on Theogenis.¹⁸ That thorough academic training also allowed Nietzsche to somewhat distance himself from personal attachments (i.e. Wagner) when pursuing his research endeavors. A case in point is his essay, “On Words and Music,” completed in 1871, but begun several years before.

Begun as a discussion of Greek theories of word and music, “On Words and Music” quickly became an ahistorical investigation of the phenomenon utilizing sources ranging from Aeschylus to Raphael to Beethoven to Schopenhauer. The article begins from the assumption that all art forms are media of communication. In a Schopenhauerian vein, Nietzsche assents to our inability to directly interface with reality, and then builds upon his predecessor’s ideas by implying that our attempts at communication allow us to construct a relation to reality. That music allows for the most direct interaction¹⁹ is accounted for by an interesting adoption of Darwinian ideals.

¹⁸ In the first few months of 1869 alone, Nietzsche published two reviews in the *Literarisches Centralblatt für Deutschland*, and an article entitled: "De Laertii Diogenis fontibus scripsit Friedericus Nietzsche," in the *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*.

¹⁹ Although Nietzsche does not make issue of his differences with Schopenhauer in this work, he frequently apologizes for the strictly metaphysical qualities Schopenhauer attributes to the “will” and reinforces the superficial and illusory quality of all our experiences and creations. All our sensations, even the most base, are “…known to us – as I am forced to insert here in opposition to Schopenhauer – after a most rigid self-
Music’s unspoken *metaphysical* attributes hinted at by the fourteen year-old boy listening to Handel oratorios in his church are replaced by the mature scholar with *anthropological* attributes. Instead of preceding language on a psychical level, music precedes it on a paleo-historical level, wherein early man’s crude grunts or howls comprised the first language. These grunts contained information through tonal inflection, and it was only through a long process of communicative evolution that the tonal variance was disengaged from the strictly linguistic aspects. Our modern-day words are therefore symbols of symbols—disembodied representations of their original, quasi-musical incantations. Nietzsche explains this in the following passage:

All degrees of pleasure and displeasure—expressions of one primeval ground that we cannot see through—find symbolic expression in the *tone of the speaker*, while all other representations are designated by the *gesture symbolism* of the speaker. Insofar as this primeval ground is the same in all human beings, the *tonal background* is also universal and intelligible despite the differences between languages.20

The “gesture symbolism” to which Nietzsche refers is the movement of the mouth to shape and divide the “tonal background” into linguistic units. The pure tone is a representation of that “primeval ground” common to us all, and language is a secondary representation, twice removed from that to which it refers. Having created a hierarchy of communicative media, Nietzsche next sets out to justify the inclusion of words with music.

Remaining in the paleo-anthropological mode of his earlier assertions, Nietzsche first refers to the ancient vocal traditions that predate most instrumental forms. In

---

20 Ibid.
addition to the Greek examples he alludes to many other ancient cultures, although with enough vagueness to call into question the depth of his research into these other cultures. Regardless, the close historical association between the voice and music is enough to suggest the applicability of text to music. Nietzsche’s main concern in this essay is not, however, whether words and music may be combined (and by extrapolation, the combination of any or all of the arts), but what their relation must be. Because music represents a first-degree metaphor for that primeval ground, it must provide the motivating principle behind any other, more metaphorically distant art forms. Music creates the schema of representation, and other art forms find their expression through a relation to that schema. Any attempt to write music for a poem is therefore akin to “…a son beget(ting) his father.” The other art forms are therefore dependent on music in a way reminiscent of Schiller’s “musical mood.” In *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* Nietzsche explains that, “Schiller confessed that, prior to composing, he experienced not a logically connected series of images but rather a musical mood.”

It follows that when words are added to music, they necessarily play a secondary role, essentially providing the raw phonation through which music may come into being. He refers to Beethoven’s Ninth symphony as an example of this, postulating that “we simply do not hear anything of Schiller’s poem,” and later quotes from the symphony, “O friends, not these sounds, but let us strike more agreeable and joyous ones.”

---

21 The obvious metaphysical implications here conflict with Nietzsche’s simultaneous anti-metaphysical writings discussed in earlier chapters. Some have suggested that he was hesitant to establish his own system in a public medium without the corroboration of a pre-established metaphysics – in this case, Schopenhauer’s.

22 WM, 33.

23 BT, 48-52: 5.

24 WM, 38.
reference to the ancient Dionysian festivals, Nietzsche goes on to explain that words are the individual’s attempt to interpret the music in which he is a participant. The words, therefore, are only known by the singers, while the listeners confront it as *absolute* music. Opera, on the other hand, is constructed to convey the words to the audience. Traditional opera interchanges drama and music in the hierarchy of meaning and uses music to reflect the drama. Due to the erroneous preposition on which it is based, most opera is doomed to fail. Although Nietzsche *does* concede that a gifted composer may still manage to create great music, the incongruous action of the singers would then serve only to distract the audience.

In the course of his critique of opera, Nietzsche’s harshest attacks are aimed at the degradation of music to the status of “dramatic music.” Great operatic music can only serve to distract us from the drama, and correspondingly, great drama requires no music to carry us along in its spell. The only music that can accompany drama is one that points, refers and reminds the audience, or one that shamelessly excites the audience. Nietzsche compares the former to mnemonic devices that point out dramatic events that we must not miss. Similar to the trumpet blast that commands the horse to trot, this use of music reminds the audience of what the drama is attempting to relate. Marches indicate a military component, woodwinds indicate the outdoors, trumpets point to an important announcement; in short, the orchestra becomes an audio version of the program notes. As for the second category - music that aims to excite - Nietzsche calls it “a stimulant for dull or wearied nerves.”25 Designed only to overwhelm the audience, it contains nothing in itself, and exists as a vacuous intensifier of generic emotion. After

---

25 Ibid., 45.
combining these two types of music, the resulting mixture of drums and bugle calls must then be cloaked to hide its crudity and patronizing nature from the audience. Considering the hopelessness of this situation, Nietzsche sarcastically bemoans the composer’s plight:

…what despair for the dramatic musician, who must mask the big drum by good music, which, however, must nevertheless have no purely musical, but only a stimulating effect! And now comes the great Philistine public nodding its thousand heads and enjoys this ‘dramatic music’ which is ever ashamed of itself, enjoys it to the very last morsel, without perceiving anything of its shame and embarrassment.\(^{26}\)

Nietzsche provides no solution to the problem of drama, although several points may be deduced. Opera can only maintain its integrity if its source is a musical one. Any constructivist approach in which manifestations of other art forms are juxtaposed and made to fit degrades all the mediums involved. Because opera is associated with an extended narrative, any acceptable work recognizable as opera would have to be the result of music that coincidentally inspires a lengthy, coherent story. If the Dionysian festivals are any indication, a level of coincidental narrative sophistication seems unlikely, as these “plays” usually dealt with little more than the act of Dionysus’s death. The other example Nietzsche provides, that of Beethoven’s ninth symphony, utilizes a poem that can hardly be described as a dramatic narrative. Even if one assumes that Nietzsche would allow for a dramatic text to be joined to the music after some reflection (a text created from the composition’s “musical mood”) it seems unlikely that the text would be coherent if required to compliment and never distract from the music itself.

A second point that can be assumed is that Nietzsche felt Wagner’s music dramas did not constitute a degradation of music. His subservience to and praise of Wagner

\(^{26}\) Ibid., 45-46.
indicate nothing but the most intense approval of everything Wagnerian. Yet so many of Nietzsche’s critiques find their mark most precisely in Wagner’s works. Nietzsche’s mocking of “mnemonic devices” that “remind the spectator of something that he must not miss while watching the drama,” immediately call to mind Wagner’s use of leitmotifs. His critique of “music that aims at excitement as a stimulant for jaded or exhausted nerves” reminds one of Nietzsche’s own description of hearing the prelude to *Tristan*, and foreshadows almost word for word Nietzsche’s later attacks on Wagner. Compare to a passage written seventeen years later in *The Case of Wagner*:

> Wagner represents a great corruption of music. He has guessed that it is a means to *excite weary nerves*—and with that he has made music sick. His inventiveness is not inconsiderable in the art of goading again those who are weariest, calling back into life those who are half dead. He is a master of hypnotic tricks, he manages to throw down the strongest like bulls.27

Finally, his attack on opera’s audience deserves a full quotation due both to its vitriol and its similarity to later descriptions of Wagnerians.

> …feel how agreeably its fur is being tickled, for it is receiving homage in all sorts of ways—though it is a sybarite craving diversions, faint-eyed, in need of excitement, well-bred and thinking much too well of itself, as used to good drama and good music as to good food without ever making much of any of this, a forgetful and absent-minded egoist who has to be led back to the work of art by means of force and bugles because selfish plans concerning profit or enjoyment keep going through his mind all the time.28

In a bewildering bit of irony, Nietzsche seems to have been so overcome by Wagner’s musical “stimulant” that he was unable to recognize his own immediate proximity to the very thing he detested.

---

28 Ibid.
Certainly there are several aspects of Nietzsche’s “On Music and Words” that compliment Wagner’s new style—most notably his conception of “Gesamtkunstwerke.” Modeled after the ancient Greek lyric poets, the concept of the “total art work” fits the prototype Nietzsche sets forth in this and other essays. In another psychological turn of events, Wagner’s interest in ancient Greece and Nietzsche’s expertise in the area caused Nietzsche to feel appreciated and valued—and by a celebrity genius no less. That Wagner did not compose the music and subsequently create a text that complimented it either did not occur to Nietzsche, or did not strike him as significant in light of other circumstances. Most likely, his firm belief in Wagner’s genius spared the composer the close scrutiny Nietzsche paid to other opera composers. Nietzsche’s dedication to Wagner was even more firmly established with the publishing of his first book, The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music. Because the main ideas of this book have been discussed earlier, only the biographical events surrounding the book will be discussed here.

After the pomp and circumstance surrounding Nietzsche’s extraordinary appointment at Basel and the exceptions made for his quick graduation from Leipzig, the philological world anxiously awaited this young genius’s first published work. When The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music (later re-titled simply, The Birth of Tragedy) was finally published, Nietzsche’s fellow philologists received a substantial shock. Rather than contributing a scholarly study of ancient texts, the Birth was a book filled with cross-historical comparisons, a great deal of praise for Wagner, and relatively little documentation to support any of it. The least of Nietzsche’s concerns, however,  

29 See pp. 86-92.
were with those who were merely shocked. Many others wasted no time bringing the young wunderkind back down to earth after his surprising ascent to philological stardom. Most notable of these were Ulrich Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and his polemical article, “Zukunftspolitologie!” Making light of both Wagner and Nietzsche—the latter for his (perceived) inappropriate interest in the former’s music—the pamphlet sardonically examined the characteristics of this new “philology of the future,” including its lack of footnotes or Greek quotations. Nietzsche’s good friend, Rohde, replied by publishing a response to Wilamowitz’s attack, entitled “Afterphilologie.” Rohde’s response was as vindictive as Wilamowitz’s had been, and even inspired Wilamowitz to a “Zweites Stück” (Second Part) to his original critique.

Throughout the tumult, Nietzsche’s mentor, Ritschl, remained above the fray, an inaction that spoke volumes about his reaction to Nietzsche’s first book. This so surprised Nietzsche that he wrote Ritschl, “You will not grudge me my astonishment that I have not heard a word from you about my recently published book, and I hope you will not grudge me my frankness in expressing this astonishment to you.” A gifted and talented philologist, Ritschl had contributed much to the field that he loved and respected, and it was surely a disappointment to see his prized pupil commit such a disservice to the discipline. What Nietzsche had written, if considered a work of philology at all, either introduced an entirely new style or was a patently poor piece of research. In retrospect, The Birth of Tragedy was more a piece of aesthetic theory than a work of philology, and as such it has had a profound influence on aesthetic thought. As Nietzsche later wrote in

30 One translation of this is “Ass Philology.”
31 For a further description of Wilamowitz’s and Rohde’s articles, see Kaufmann’s preface in BT, 5-6.
his “Attempt at a Self-criticism” (appended to the Birth in 1886): “What I had to say then—too bad that I did not dare say it as a poet: perhaps I had the ability. Or at least as a philologist…”32 Perhaps that is why its few supporters came mainly from the artistic world. Not surprisingly, the Wagner’s were among the book’s biggest advocates.

To them, the book’s adverse affect on Nietzsche’s credibility and career possibilities was secondary to the service done for Wagnerianism. In an excerpt from Cosima’s diaries she writes that she is, “…particularly pleased that Richard’s ideas can find an extension in it (The Birth of Tragedy).”33 To add insult to injury, she goes on to critique the book’s non-Wagnerian sections34 and suggests that it could be more effective if edited down to a smaller volume. “Anyone can have wise and great thoughts, but everything depends on their being put forward in a compact and developed form.”35 When Rohde’s defense of The Birth was printed, Cosima complained that it dealt too little with the personalities involved—namely Richard Wagner—and therefore missed the point of Nietzsche’s book. At this, the first signs of Nietzsche’s dissatisfaction with Wagner’s megalomania appeared in complaints to Rohde.36 After the furor surrounding The Birth had subsided, Nietzsche’s standing in the philological community had been badly damaged. As he reported to Wagner at the beginning of the 1872 term, “…our winter semester has begun, and I have no students at all!”37 Although Nietzsche undoubtedly realized by this time that his genius was better suited for realms outside

32 BT, 20: Attempt at a Self-Criticism, 3.
33 Newman, 326.
34 Sections 1-15 are generally accepted as the substantive portion of the book, while the final ten sections degenerate into poorly conceived propaganda for Wagner.
35 Ibid.
36 Middleton, 94-95.
37 Ibid., 110.
simple philology, being ostracized by his peers and former friends was difficult. Few in Leipzig would correspond with him and the University of Basel had suffered a corresponding loss of prestige.

“I have suddenly acquired such a bad name in my field that our small university suffers from it! This agonizes me, because I am really very devoted and grateful to it, and want least of all to do it any harm. … Until last semester the number of students in classical philology was constantly growing—now, suddenly, they are all blown away!”

Correspondingly, Nietzsche’s loneliness returned, creating a situation that drove him more strongly than even towards Tribschen and Wagner.

38 Ibid.
Chapter 9

Compositions During the Wagner Years

I believe that artists often do not know what they can do best, because they are too vain and have fixed their minds on something prouder than those small plants seem to be that really can grow on their soil to perfection and are new, strange, and beautiful.1

As was earlier discussed, Nietzsche’s rate of musical composition dropped off considerably after he began his university studies. After securing an academic post several years later and moving with Wagner’s circle, he again turned to composition as a creative outlet. His return to composition hardly constituted a return to old compositional styles however, and his musical output from 1870-1873 exhibits significant differences from his earlier works. No longer considering a career in music, and faced with Wagner’s incomparable works in a very immediate sense, his music took on a more personal characteristic. The experimentation that indicated an attempt to hone his musical skills in his lieder and short piano works was largely replaced with rhetoric in these later compositions. The increased attention to detail and proper musical notation found most notably in his Zwölf Lieder of 1864 seems to have been forgotten. As an active participant in Wagner’s musical revolution and through the role of Wagner’s academic ambassador, Nietzsche’s musical priorities shifted from music’s “nuts and bolts” to an attempt to portray through music these new ideals. This led to musical forms that were either achieved spontaneously or were dictated by rhetoric. Such rhetorically mandated compositions ballooned to lengths that dwarfed his earlier miniatures, and sharply highlighted Nietzsche’s problems with large-scale compositions. If Nietzsche

1 GS, 142-143: 87.
had only intended such compositions for his own enjoyment or for that of his friends and family, such excesses would be understandable. Unfortunately for Nietzsche, he chose to present these works to the greatest musical minds of his time, thereby significantly increasing the standards against which his works were measured and subjecting him to withering criticisms.

Before examining his “rhetorical works”\footnote{Nietzsche’s works from 1871 to 1874 exhibit such striking stylistic similarities that establishing a subset of his works is extremely applicable and convenient. Therefore, his works from that time – “Manfred Meditation,” “Nachklang einer Sylvesternacht, mit Prozessionslied, Bauerntanz und Glockengeläute,” “Monodie à deux,” – will be referred to as his “rhetorical works.”} in detail, a bit of historical context must first be established. Throughout the late 1860’s, Otto von Bismarck—chancellor of Prussia—had been engaged in intense political maneuvering to unite the disparate German states. The romantic nationalism rampant in Europe was felt most strongly in the German speaking areas where a united nation had not existed since Charlemagne and the Holy Roman Empire of the high middle ages. Playing on both nationalism and race theory, as well as geopolitical struggles between the Hapsburgs and the French and English, Bismarck manipulated the suspicions and prejudices of nearby nobility to pull more and more states into the Prussian sphere. As Bismarck’s Prussia grew to encompass the majority of German speakers, the German’s themselves began to envision a powerful Reich that would finally represent German interests on the international stage. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the German-speaking world witnessed a cultural renaissance the magnitude of which compared only to that of the ancient Greeks. While such grand historical comparisons are certainly a matter of
debate, there was a strong feeling throughout modern-day Germany that the *Reich* was the natural evolution from cultural superiority to political superiority.

Nietzsche too had been caught up in the fervent nationalism surrounding Bismarck’s successes and felt compelled to do his part to advance German ideals. Having given up his Prussian citizenship to take up Swiss citizenship for his post at Basel, Nietzsche entered the war as a volunteer. Due to his previous military injury, as well as his remarkably poor vision, he was assigned to assist the medical orderlies. The war was a short one—by September the Prussians had captured Emperor Napoleon III and by the following January Wilhelm had been crowned German Kaiser in the palace of Versailles—yet even shorter for Nietzsche. Shortly after reaching the front lines, Nietzsche took ill and had to return to Basel to recuperate. Whether he contracted a disease while administering to sick soldiers or the stresses of military service brought on a relapse of earlier maladies, Nietzsche would never truly recover his health. His records after his military service show repeated sabbaticals due to his poor health and his letters indicate a constant state of illness. His poor eyesight combined with his ravenous intellectual appetite for books led to chronic migraines that would leave him incapacitated for days on end, with such episodes sometimes occurred on a weekly basis. His poor digestion—the motivating factor for his ill-fated experiment with vegetarianism—limited his meals to only the blandest and simplest fare. All of these factors served to heighten Nietzsche’s sense of the tragic, and in an interesting

---

3 The Italians, to mention just one culture, would certainly disagree with the oversight of the Renaissance, as would the Islamic world in reference to their centuries of cultural and scientific advancements.
psychological sidebar, contribute a likely motivation to his embrace of suffering as a means of spiritual growth.

On his way to the front lines to begin his service in August 1870, Nietzsche wrote *Ade! Ich muß nun gehen*, a brazenly patriotic vocal quartet. The style of the composition is an anomaly when compared to either his subsequent “rhetorical” style or his earlier lieder. The text itself is a formulaic restatement of a soldier’s farewell to his true love, including references to greater purposes and willing martyrdom for his country and ideals.

Farewell! I am now leaving for war along the Rhine.
My German brother stand there,
I want to join their line.
I know you truly,
Will join with heart and soul,
To save the Fatherland.⁴

The sixteen measure piece is divided into two complimentary eight bar phrases, each of those comprised of two four bar sections. Harmonically it is far simpler than any of Nietzsche’s earlier pieces and is rhythmically rudimentary. Perhaps this piece can best be seen as a bit of musical pragmaticism. Marked “Marschartig” (in a marching style) the simple rhythms and conventional harmonies would make it easily performed by soldiers with limited musical training. Nietzsche’s sister claims he and his fellow soldiers sang it on the train to the front line, a claim that - although not substantiated in Nietzsche’s own writings - remains probable.

It is difficult to simultaneously account for his views in “On Music and Words” and this blatantly clichéd music. In the former, Nietzsche attacks what he calls “dramatic

---

⁴ MN, 84-85.
music” that serves only to inspire feeling in wearied nerves and makes unfavorable comparisons between mnemonic music and horns that call armies to battle. Is Ade not merely a call to battle? Instead of achieving a communion with the unknown beyond, this march marks time for those marching to war. The very creation of pragmatic music seems to run counter to Nietzsche’s aesthetic views. The fact that he would go on to write “On Music and Words” only a few months later brings the apparent conflict into even greater relief.

Perhaps the best explanation is to attribute this to the extraordinary atmosphere in which Nietzsche found himself. Throughout his youth (and in some respects, all the years preceding his break with Wagner) Nietzsche was vulnerable to situations that gave him a sense of belonging. The calls for a united German people would have resonated with a young man finding himself socially and intellectually isolated. One needs look no further than Nietzsche's volunteer entry into the Prussian ranks to find proof of the Reich's allure. Composing marching songs for his newfound comrades on the train to the front line is a natural extension of his patriotic fervor. That it flew in the face of his carefully delineated aesthetic writings was of no concern to Nietzsche the soldier. Only a few years after the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian war, Nietzsche would begin his harsh criticisms of the new German state - the seeds of which can be found in his earlier works. The gulf between his ideals and his actions in this respect provides an excellent analogy to his musical discrepancies.

Many in Germany felt a strong connection to ancient Greek culture, due significantly to the sustained cultural accomplishments of the two societies. In the span of a few centuries, the Greeks laid down the foundations for virtually all our current
academic disciplines. The list of fundamental breakthroughs is astonishing: Hippocrates and medicine, Euclid and geometry, Socrates and logic, Plato and politics, Aristotle and the natural sciences, Homer and epic poetry, Aeschylus and drama, Pythagoras and music. Moreover, throughout the Greeks' golden years they were a relatively small political and military force - capable of defending themselves and maintaining their political integrity, but avoiding the expansionist policies of their contemporary rivals. The German culture of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had undergone a similar cultural breakthrough. Kant and Hegel revolutionized philosophy, Bach, Mozart and Beethoven embodied the pinnacle of western music, and Schiller and Goethe created some of the greatest prose and poetry in western culture. Similarly, the Germans during this time maintained relatively little political and military presence, existing in small principalities or under the auspices of larger, foreign empires. The similarities between the two societies led many academics to appeal to the Hegelian conception of historical evolution for an explanation of past German accomplishments and a prediction of future achievements. Among these was Wilhelm von Humboldt, a scholar of Greek antiquity. He proposed that the process of scholastic splintering into increasingly partitioned disciplines prevalent in the early and mid nineteenth century needed to be remedied in order to sustain the intellectual growth of the preceding century. The key to such a unification was to re-emphasize the study of ancient Greek culture, in which the only pre-existent model of unified intellectual growth could be found.

Nietzsche, due to his intricate knowledge of the ancient Greeks and familiarity with the works of such academics as Humboldt, was uniquely impacted by these theories, although in contrasting ways. His enthusiasm for all things Greek in combination with
his love for the German masterpieces of Bach, Beethoven, Goethe and Schiller made him sympathetic to the pan-historic allusions and patriotic speeches of Bismarck and his supporters. Simultaneously, Nietzsche knew that it was precisely the nationalism and politicization everywhere evident in 1870's Prussia/Germany that had led to Greece's fall from glory. Extravagant military expenditures coupled with several military fiascos drained much of the Greek's energies - energies that had previously been directed to the arts and sciences. From his notebooks from late 1870 he goes so far as to write, "A state that cannot attain its ultimate goal usually swells to an unnaturally large size. The worldwide empire of the Romans is nothing sublime compared to Athens. ... The strength that really should go into the flower here remains in the leaves and stem, which flourish." To compound the problem, the move from culture to politics involved not only a reallocation of resources, but also a shift in societal values. Even more than a lack of money and manpower, it was the latter that led to Athens' eventual descent.

These very same themes run throughout the Birth of Tragedy. Nietzsche repeatedly refers to the overflowing of Greek power and its discharge through the arts. The society’s immense psycho-spiritual strength allowed it to come face to face with life's underlying chaos. Through these interactions, their Dionysian side was developed and allowed to mature. In "Homer's Contest" Nietzsche points to struggle and battle as the underlying motivation of all art and creation. The strength harnessed from life's trials was channeled into contests that spurred the combatants to greater and greater heights. It was only when they began to lose their strength—when their superfluity of power degenerated into impotence—that they turned to politics and the Apollonian for solace.

---

5 Cited in Kaufmann, 32.
In fact, the state can be seen as an Apollonian artifice par excellence. What is it if not a carefully constructed illusion intended to reassure and pacify an anxious populace? While such observations remain primarily within the context of ancient Greece in the Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche’s subsequent books eagerly bridge the centuries long gap between ancient Greece and the young German state and excoriate the nationalism symptomatic of societal decline. The "plop and relapse into old loves and narrowness" associated with nationalism does nothing but advocate, “…race hatred and to be able to take pleasure in the national scabies of the heart and blood poisoning that now leads the nations of Europe to delimit and barricade themselves against each other.” That this composition of Ade is best considered as proof of his momentary absorption by the nationalistic furor of his day is further supported by a letter written the next year in which he completely ignores the vocal quartet. In it, he discusses a piece he had just written and mentions, "I had composed nothing for six years, and this autumn stimulated me again."

After returning to Basel, he began working on the first of his rhetorical works, the Nachklang einer Sylvesteracht mit Prozessionlied, Bauerntanz und Glockengeläute. The unwieldy length and odd specificity of the title was not lost on Nietzsche, writing to von Gersdorff, "That is a jolly title; one might well have expected even too much: 'With Punchbowl and Wishes for the New Year.' Overbeck and I play the piece - it is now our pièce de résistance - with which we outdo all four-handed people." From his letters, it is evident Nietzsche was very fond of this piece, and performed it for anyone who would listen. He and Overbeck - by this time Nietzsche's roommate in Basel - found occasion to

---

7 GS, 339: V, 377.
8 Middleton, 82.
9 Ibid., 83.
perform it for several of their professorial acquaintances. Nietzsche's fondness for
dedications here exceeded the norm, as two dedications emerge from his letters. In his
Christmas letter to his family, he dedicated it to his mother and sister for New Year's Eve
and asked them to have Gustav Krug perform it for them.\textsuperscript{10} Only a few days later
however, he had written Rohde: "To Frau Wagner, whose birthday is on 25 December
(and to whom I would write if I were you!), I have dedicated my Nachklang, and am
excited as to what I shall hear about my musical work from there, for I have never heard
a competent judgment."\textsuperscript{11} True to both his words, he sent a specially prepared
manuscript to his mother and sister, and had an additional copy prepared for delivery to
Tribschen in lieu of his personal appearance. The details surrounding the Nachklang's
reception by the latter are famous enough to warrant their inclusion here.

Although he had spent the previous Christmas with the Wagners, he had turned
down their invitation in 1871 in order to stay in Basel and work on his lectures. This, in
itself, irritated both Richard and Cosima, who felt that their invitation had been a gracious
and generous gift in itself—a view that reflected their general lack of respect for
Nietzsche's non-Wagnerian interests. Partially as an attempt to rectify these hurt feelings,
Nietzsche sent Cosima the piece as a birthday/Christmas present\textsuperscript{12}. In doing so Nietzsche
was following in a tradition established the previous year by Richard, when he had
arranged for a small chamber group to awake the family Christmas morning with his
Siegfried Idyll; dedicated to Cosima for her birthday. Having been there for Richard's
gift the year before, Nietzsche felt justified in presenting his own musical gift the

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 86.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 85.
\textsuperscript{12} Cosima's birthday was December 25\textsuperscript{th}. 
following year. Following his directions, Cosima played the duet with their friend, Hans Richter. After a disparaging remark by their servant - "that doesn't appear to be too good to me" - Cosima became overcome with laughter and had to stop playing. Wagner himself fidgeted through the first half of the piece before leaving. Cosima summed up the family's reaction in her remark, "here we are, having been in contact with this man for one and a half years without having any clue of this, and now he approaches us stealthily, with his score under his cloak." To Nietzsche, they were more polite, albeit patronizing. "You compose too well for a professor."

In Nietzsche's defense, he also received several positive critiques for Nachklang. Cosima had sent the score to her father, Franz Liszt, and in a letter to his sister Nietzsche mentions the virtuoso's favorable evaluation of Nachklang. Gustav Krug, Nietzsche's old childhood friend and respectable musician in his own right, also spoke highly of Nietzsche's latest effort. “Where your first ‘Sylvesternacht’ was fantastic but somewhat disorderly, the new piece steps with firmness and certainty and with the correct distribution of colors. Therefore the first impression was much more favorable (than the first Sylvesternacht) and increased with each further listening.” In a telling letter to Krug asking for his assistance in the above-mentioned "premiere," he explains the piece is intended to convey his feelings and memories. Although he believed he had captured the memories to which the title alludes, his concerns were that, "...what one can perceive

---

13 Much has been made of Nietzsche’s affection for Cosima. Although Wagner was many years his senior, the much younger Cosima was only seven years older than Nietzsche. His many gifts and enthusiastic correspondence with her further supports the suspicion and a letter written after his collapse proclaims his love for her. The Oedipal connotations of this relationship are obvious and for a more detailed discussion see: Carl Pletsch, Young Nietzsche: Becoming a Genius (New York: Free Press, 1991).
14 Cited in Walther.
15 Ibid.
16 MN, 336-337.
17 Ibid.
in this music without my feelings, God alone knows.\textsuperscript{18} The piece originated as an attempt by Nietzsche to rewrite his earlier work, \textit{Sylvesternacht} - a work for violin and piano. While borrowing the thematic material and several rhythmic motives from the earlier work for use in the first section, the majority of the later work is original.

The piece's structure is built around rhetorical expressions of the various activities mentioned in the title. Subsequently, there is a Prozessionslied (processional song) section, a Bauerntanz (farmer's dance) section, and a Glockengeläläute (Bell's Chimes) section. In reality, the piece begins with a lengthy introduction even before the processional begins; an introduction that is almost wholly derived from the earlier “Sylvesternacht.” Dominated by a quarter note—half note pattern, the triple meter introduction rambles on for forty measures until the processional enters. While touching on themes that appear later in the various sections, the opening lacks direction and wanders thematically as well as tonally. In certain respects, Nietzsche seems to have modeled it after the beginning of the last movement of Beethoven’s ninth symphony. That such a qualitative discrepancy can exist between two applications of a similar rhetorical device simultaneously attests to Beethoven’s genius and Nietzsche’s difficulty with large forms. Perhaps if “Nachklang” had been scored for orchestra (as Nietzsche hints he would have liked to have done) the lack of organization could have been disguised with orchestral color and contrast. With a piano four-hand scoring however, the thin texture only highlights the lack of structure.

The processional begins with a hesitant announcement that is closely followed by dotted rhythm in double thirds that comprises the motivic content of the section (ex. 38).

\textsuperscript{18} Middleton, 90.
This motive continues in one part or the other for the next forty-nine measures with only a few respite. Accompanying the thirds motive are long note values that meander through several harmonies as the intensity builds through a constant crescendo. The cessation of the thirds motive (most likely a welcome event for listeners) corresponds with a recollection of material from the introduction - material that is quickly married to an altered form of the thirds motive (ex. 39). The new combination of motives persists, without pause, for the next twenty-five measures until the entire section appears to wind down as the tempo slows (“Langsam”), the texture thins and the register drops. However, the section is not over; instead the thirds motive resumes and we are treated to another twenty-five measures of this, by now, all too familiar material.

The other two sections—the farmer’s dance and the ringing of the bells—are not as redundant as the first but share many of the same problems. The farmer’s dance begins with a charming ländler that readily conjures up images of festive peasants stomping and dancing (ex. 40). But as his earlier works show, creating charming melodies was never Nietzsche’s problem. His greatest difficulty is prolonging the musical idea beyond the eight bar phrase—a difficulty that is evident throughout Nachklang. Throughout, Nietzsche’s answer is invariably repetition. Most often, the repetition is on such a small, motivic scale that it only serves to highlight the repetition itself rather than the material it is repeating. In the farmer’s dance, for example, he chooses to repeat the four eighth notes of the concluding measure (ex. 41). The final section is characterized by a return of all of the motives. Although they are occasionally layered on top of each other for an interesting result, all too often they appear singly and are repeated to build tension and excitement. The piece concludes with twelve soft B’s,
indicative of a clock striking twelve. Nietzsche’s is a soft clock however, and the “pianissimo” and “pianississimo” marked in the conclusion create an anticlimactic ending and insinuate a rather strange New Year’s Eve party wherein everyone leaves or falls asleep around midnight.

Nietzsche’s other rhetorical pieces, Monodie à deux, and Manfred-Meditation, unfortunately share Nachklang’s failings. With little skill for thematic development, Nietzsche invariably stoops to mere repetition to fill in the large gaps between rhetorical gestures. Exemplary of this is a fifty measure stretch of Manfred Meditation in which Nietzsche falls into his thirds motive from Nachklang. (ex. 42) The rhetorical gestures that border the vast expanses of redundancy themselves are all too obvious and predictable. Subsequently the whole works functions almost as a parody of itself. That Nietzsche wrote seriously flawed music is not surprising - the occasional appearance of such music is to be expected in light of his lack of training and experimental tendencies. What is surprising is his own enthusiasm towards these pieces. His letters are filled with requests for his friends and family to listen to his duets. Many of the faculty at Basel found themselves lured into performances of Nachklang or Manfred Meditation by Nietzsche and Overbeck. Perhaps this can be explained by his new social status resulting from his close friendship with Richard Wagner. Wagner’s own confidence and optimism may have spilt over onto Nietzsche, particularly in respect to his musical abilities.

Regardless of what may have caused Nietzsche to have such a high opinion of his rhetorical works, by 1872 he felt confident enough to send a copy of his Manfred Meditation to Hans von Bülow for a critique. Although any professional musician to whom Nietzsche would have sent the score could not have been expected to return a
favorable verdict, extenuating circumstances made Bülow a particularly poor choice.

Cosima, of whom Nietzsche was so fond, had been Bülow’s wife and had taken up residence with Wagner long before officially divorcing Bülow. In fact, several of Bülow’s children lived in the Wagner household, a situation that often required him to make the humiliating trek to Tribschen where he could visit his children in the home of his usurper. It was on one of these visits that Nietzsche, in fact, met Bülow. In combination with the poor quality of Nietzsche’s submission, these factors led Bülow to write a scathing critique. As for the “Manfred Meditation” in particular, he found it,

“...the most fantastically extravagant, the most unedifying, the most anti-musical thing I have come across for a long time in the way of notes put on paper. Several times I had to ask myself whether it is all a joke, whether, perhaps, your object was to produce a parody of the so-called music of the future. Is it by intent that you persistently defy every rule of tonal connection, from the higher syntax down to the merest spelling? Apart from its psychological interest—for your musical fever suggests, for all its aberrations, an uncommon, a distinguished mind—your Meditation, looked at from a musical standpoint, is the precise equivalent of a crime in the moral sphere. ...

And as for Nietzsche’s music in general, Bülow had the following comments:

You yourself, not without reason, describe your music as ‘terrible’. It is indeed more terrible than you think—not detrimental to the common weal, of course, but something worse than that, detrimental to yourself, seeing that you can find no worse way of killing time than raping Euterpe in this fashion.”

Nietzsche received Bülow’s critique around July 1872 and took the criticisms, outwardly at least, with considerable aplomb. In a draft from a letter never sent, Nietzsche sets out a reply to Bülow that thanks him for his honesty and grasps at Bülow’s suggestion that Nietzsche must have been overcome with some sort of fervor in order to commit such musical blasphemies. “Yet sometimes I have been overcome by such a

---

19 Cited in Newman, 324.
barbarically excessive urge [to compose], compounded of defiance and irony, that I have as much difficulty as you in perceiving sharply what is serious, what is caricature, and what is derisive mockery in my latest music.”

This outward appearance of grace and humor hid the fact that his pride had been hurt and, by realizing his compositional limitations, an important emotional outlet had been forever poisoned. As he confided to his old friend, Krug, in a letter later that July,

“…as I busied myself with my ridiculous fortissimi and tremoli always before me, I saw your wonderful voice leading and became ashamed [having recently read through a piece of Krug’s]… I have sworn off making music for at least six years. ‘The ocean has thrown me again on the land;’ last winter the name of that sandbank was that famous composition [Manfred Meditation].”

Although Nietzsche did not follow through on his pact to foreswear composition for six years, his musical output from that point forward slowed to a trickle. From the summer of 1872 until his death in 1900—a span of twenty-eight years—he wrote only the Monodie à deux as a wedding gift to a friend, Hymnus auf die Freundschaft, three adaptations of the Hymnus, most of which are fragmentary, and a one or two uncompleted works, the dating of which is uncertain. To have his beloved music criticized so ferociously and by such a respected expert must have been far more painful then his letters would imply. As late as 1869, while finishing his studies in Leipzig, Nietzsche had considered abandoning philology and focusing entirely on music, writing:

“…since my ninth year, music was what attracted me most of all; in that happy state in which one does not yet know the limits of one’s gifts and thinks that all objects of love are attainable, I had written countless compositions and had acquired a more than

---

20 Middleton, 106.
21 HKB III, 235.
22 MN, 324-326.
amateurish knowledge of musical theory.”23 In July 1872, Nietzsche was forced to learn of the “limits of one’s gifts” and discovered that all objects of love were, in fact, not attainable. Simultaneously, Nietzsche was being condemned by the philology community (see p.139-141) and his future as a philology professor had come into some doubt. Just as door after door seemed to be closing in Nietzsche’s face however, another path began to reveal itself—a path that would lead him to many of his greatest victories.

Shortly after that fateful summer, Nietzsche’s friendship with Wagner started to show signs of strain as the younger man began to exert his own individuality. Although signs of Nietzsche’s differences with Wagner could be seen as early as their argument over vegetarianism (see p. 127), Nietzsche had largely viewed Wagner as a sort of prophet whose absolute authority was justified by his artistic genius. This began to change as the preparations for Wagner’s theater at Bayreuth progressed and ideological disagreements that had previously been glossed over in the midst of ecstatic aesthetic discussions began to take on practical significance. An example of this can be found in a series of promotional pamphlets Wagner wanted written to raise financial support for his troubled project. He approached Nietzsche to write the “Call to the German People,” but received an unenthusiastic response. After several requests, Nietzsche agreed, although with considerable grumbling when out of Wagner’s earshot.24 Upon submitting his pamphlet, the committee at Bayreuth promptly rejected it, choosing a different, less verbose appeal—a decision that netted them donations totaling all of twenty marks.

23 Middleton, 47.
24 He wrote to Rohde, “The request is also terrible… …Therefore I beg you, dear friend, with all urgency, to help me with this, in order to see if we can perhaps manage the monster together.” Middleton, 119.
When subsequently asked to submit a pamphlet entitled, “Call to the German Women,” Nietzsche flatly refused, causing some consternation in the Wagner household.

The situation surrounding Nietzsche’s rejection of the women’s pamphlet highlights a fundamental difference between him and Wagner that would grow through the next few years. Wagner’s womanizing is well known, and despite his glorification of female characters in his operas, he hardly believed in the equality of the sexes. Nietzsche is frequently placed in the same camp because of his oft-quoted attacks and derision of women, yet a significant difference between their views exists. While Wagner considered women as a wholly different group, with a separate set of abilities and weaknesses from those of men, Nietzsche felt that qualitative differences between the genders were created by society. In fact, Nietzsche was a vociferous supporter of women’s admittance to Basel’s doctoral programs, not only voting for their admittance, but insisting that his dissenting vote (the measure failed miserably) be recorded. To understand this apparent contradiction, it is important to realize that his many criticisms of women pertained to the women of nineteenth century Europe, not the gender itself. He felt European society encouraged women to be accommodating, compassionate, compromising and non-confrontational—traits Nietzsche viewed as weaknesses and that he associated with “slave morality.” Whereas Wagner did not conceive of the possibility of meeting a woman he considered his equal, Nietzsche did, and was repeatedly disappointed that he could not find one.

---

25 For example, “You are going to women? Do not forget the whip!” TSZ, 67: I, On the Little, Old and Young Women.
In a similar vein, Wagner’s anti-semitism, vitriolic nationalism and racism began to weigh more heavily on Nietzsche’s mind. Wagner’s refined and articulate aesthetic views only brought his absolute, categorical dismissal of whole races and cultures into even sharper contrast. As Bayreuth preparations progressed, more and more of these prejudices began to take on practical significance, and Nietzsche’s distaste for the whole affair continued to grow. In Nietzsche’s journals from this time, he groups together “Wagner” and “the false ‘German Spirit,’”26 in one of his ubiquitous lists. Wagner’s belief in German superiority clashed with Nietzsche’s ideal of the “good European”27 and his love for Voltaire and Bizet. Wagner’s hatred towards Jews offended Nietzsche’s dedication to treating humans as individuals. The Nietzsche presented by his sister, Elisabeth Förster Nietzsche, the one adopted by Hitler and the Nazis, is now understood to be a massive misrepresentation and oversimplification of a highly intricate philosophy.28 Hypocrisy and ignorance, throughout Nietzsche’s thought, is the victim of Nietzsche’s most vicious attacks, and racism, nationalism and sexism - as manifestations of ignorance - are amongst the most roundly criticized of all Nietzsche’s targets.

By 1874 Nietzsche began to address these differences even more directly. While attending a concert of the Basel Gesangsverein on 9 June, he heard Brahms’ *Triumphlied* for the first time. He was so taken by the piece he traveled to Romundt and Zurich to hear it again and subsequently purchased the piano reduction. Despite knowing of

---

28 Nietzsche’s early misrepresentation and his anti-racist beliefs have been extensively documented. See Walter Kaufmann’s preface to *The Portable Nietzsche*, Alan D.Schrift’s *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* or Rüdiger Safranski’s, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*. 
Wagner’s feelings toward Brahms and his music, Nietzsche decided to bring a copy of the *Triumphp lied* to Bayreuth (the Wagners’ new home as of April of that year) and surprised Wagner by following the composer’s own rendition of “Rheintöchter” with the Brahms song. Wagner, of course, ridiculed the piece as inadequate and laughed at the hypocrisy of constructing music around the concept of justice. Nietzsche refused to relent, and the conversation became heated. Only through Cosima’s diplomacy did the evening regain its equanimity, although Nietzsche later exacerbated the situation by proclaiming his conviction in Latin’s superiority over German.

Further evidence of the growing gulf between the two men can be found in Nietzsche’s voluminous notebooks from that same year. For the first time, lengthy critiques of Wagner the man and Wagner the artist appear, indicating Nietzsche’s first recorded deconstruction of the components comprising his friendship with Wagner. As for Wagner the man, he writes: “Wagner has a domineering character, only then is he in his element, only then is he secure, moderate, and stable: the inhibition of this drive makes him immoderate, eccentric, obstreperous,” and - in a monumental understatement - criticizes “…his tendency to arouse consternation.” 29 His evaluations of Wagner the artist are even more interesting. Perhaps after his own musical-rhetorical failings, Nietzsche had become keenly aware of the devices intended to affect the listener, for in these notebooks he began to view Wagner as a *manipulator* of affects.

Wagner wanted to create whatever had a powerful effect on him. He never understood anything about his models other than what he also was able to imitate. Character of the actor. … The music does not have much value, nor does the

29 UW, 319.
poetry, nor does the drama; the acting is often mere rhetoric—but everything forms a totality on a large scale and at the same level.\textsuperscript{30}

In reference to his “endless melody” he explains that “…it is an artistic trick, not the regular law Wagner would like to make it out to be. First we chase after them, seek out periods, constantly are deceived, and ultimately we throw ourselves into the waves.”\textsuperscript{31}

This foreshadows Nietzsche’s later criticisms that point out the unsustainability of Wagner’s musical revolution. Nietzsche had begun to see Wagner as hypocritical, as a musician who would use any weapon in his considerable arsenal to create any effect on the audience. His criticisms of a mnemonic music intended for “dull and wearied nerves” that appeared several years earlier while writing “On Words and Music” reappear in reference to Wagner. Nietzsche hid these notes away at the time, and begged Rohde, the only other person to see them, to help keep his secret.

Nietzsche’s final original work, \textit{Hymnus auf die Freundschaft},\textsuperscript{32} also dates from this period. The earliest sketches of the piece date from April 1873, although the final revisions and arrangements continued until December 1874. The first manuscript that, for all intents and purposes, represents the completed work, is dated Easter 1874, and as such coincides with his Wagner critiques. The most complete version is scored for solo piano, although large portions of a piano four-hands arrangement exist, as do fragments of a canon based loosely on the chorale theme. In the completed piano solo version, “Hymnus” consists of a prelude, three strophes and two interludes. Written in the key of D, the piece exhibits a tonal center far stronger and consistent than his meandering “Nachklang” or “Monodie.” The prelude and two interludes all conclude with cadences

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 315.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 325.
\textsuperscript{32} The indication of “original” alludes to later re-settings of the music with different texts.
on the dominant, with each leading convincingly to the subsequent chorale. The first two chorales are virtually identical (Nietzsche indicates two chords in the first chorale to be rolled while omitting the indication in the second) while the third deviates only slightly in its register, voicing changes, and the length of the closing.

As might be expected, the chorale melody is charming and memorable. Unexpectedly, Nietzsche maintains a balance between unexpected harmonies and structural continuity that convincingly holds the chorale together. The opening eight-bar phrase exhibits the counterpoint and long note values associated with the chorale and unfolds a striking harmonic progression (ex. 43). At phrase-end however, the expected authentic cadence is replaced with a plagal cadence on the major mediant. The delayed return to the tonic provides the impetus for the remainder of the section, ending with a condensed version of the opening phrase and a grandiose closing that reaffirms the tonic. The third strophe adds a momentous plagal cadence that grandly concludes the whole piece. The effectiveness of the stirring ending comes, in part, from the pacing Nietzsche follows up to that point. Unlike his more bombastic works that repeatedly indicate dynamic levels of $fff$ and $ffff$, Hymnus includes only two indications of $fff$: one at the end of the second interlude (immediately preceding the final chorale) and one during the concluding plagal cadence.

Admittedly, the work contains some questionable passages. The redundant and derivative use of rhythmic motives found in “Nachklang” occur in the more far-flung interludes and prelude. In the first interlude, for example, he writes a sequence containing a triplet pattern that is unappealing enough heard once, and far worse the fourth time. Overall, however, such passages are kept to a minimum and more
substantive, developmental material abounds. The non-chorale movements are based on
variation—a form well-suited to Nietzsche’s improvisational style—and frequently
incorporate segments of the chorale theme. The prelude is based on a descending line
with syncopated triplet figures derived from the descending line of the chorale.
Nietzsche makes the most of the line’s re-registration by setting the leap of a tenth with
the triplet figure (ex. 44). When the opening material recurs, Nietzsche avoids the
redundancy of his earlier works by altering the harmonies and melodic intervals to give
direction and character to the largely derivative material (ex. 45). The second interlude
contains a section marked “Blick in die Ferne” (Glance into the distance) that quietly
recalls (or foreshadows) the chorale theme in a more personal and lyrical setting. The
refreshing interlude in the midst of an interlude gradually increases in activity and lowers
its register to provide further variation on the chorale theme.

In its refinement and subtlety, *Hymnus* exhibits some of Nietzsche’s finest
writing and represents his only effective large-scale work. His own evaluation of the
work was extremely positive, as his frequent re-scorings of the piece would indicate.
Notable amongst these was an 1882 setting of one of Lou Salomè’s poems. Based
primarily on *Hymnus*’s chorale, *Gebet an das Leben* also utilizes aspects of the variation
material from the interludes. When one considers Nietzsche’s deep love for Lou Salomè,
the supposition that Nietzsche held the original *Hymnus* in high esteem is further
supported. Then in 1887, only a year before his collapse, Nietzsche collaborated with
composer Peter Gast to score *Gebet* for choir and orchestra, entitling the third re-scoring
*Hymnus an das Leben* in a confusing combination of the previous titles. While *Gebet* is a
somewhat awkward compromise between the poem and the music, and *Hymnus an das
Leben shows enough of Gast’s hand to preclude its inclusion in a discussion of Nietzsche’s compositions, the original *Hymnus an die Freundschaft* is a generally well-written and delightful work, worthy of inclusion in the piano repertoire.

Not only does Nietzsche’s final composition represent some of his best writing, it also reflects his distance from Wagner by way of its rejection of intense chromaticism and its stylistic similarities to the music of Brahms. Although Nietzsche no longer visited the Wagner’s at Bayreuth as frequently as he had at Tribschen, Nietzsche still sent a copy of his *Hymnus* to Wagner. Cosima recalled that its arrival at Bayreuth signaled the beginning of the end of the Wagners’ friendship with Nietzsche. Whether the Wagners recognized this at the time or, more likely, only upon reflection, they no doubt saw a shift in Nietzsche’s writing. Exhibiting uniquely Nietzschean characteristics, few if any references or similarities to the “music of the future” can be found in *Hymnus*. Unlike his *Manfred Meditation* that Bülow derided for its pathetic imitation of Wagner’s music, his last work could be more adequately compared to Brahms’ music, both in its harmonies and its counterpoint. Whereas Nietzsche felt obliged to hide his written critiques of Wagner, his musical output represented the separation Nietzsche was increasingly anxious to impose between Wagner and himself. *Hymnus an die Freundschaft* represents yet another example of Nietzsche turning to music to express what he is unready to put into words.

---

33 Love, 95-96.
Chapter 10

After Wagner

Over the next few years, Nietzsche would maintain friendly relations with Wagner, although the two men gradually saw each other less frequently. In late 1874, for example, the two were close enough that Nietzsche’s sister, Elisabeth, was entrusted to live in the Wagner’s house while they were touring. The rarity of Nietzsche’s Bayreuth appearances was partially due to his worsening health. The migraines and stomach problems steadily worsened and he would frequently be confined to bed for days at a time. His letters paint a miserable picture of these frequent bouts of illness. His sensitivity to light would keep him inside his shuttered bedroom for days, only able to eat bread and water. He was forced to restrict his reading to fifteen-minute sessions before his poor eyesight would bring on headaches and nausea. On one occasion, a planned trip to Bayreuth with Rohde, Overbeck and Gersdorff had to be cancelled because Nietzsche’s doctor ordered him to a spa in Sternabad. Other planned visits came to fruition, only to have Nietzsche take ill in Bayreuth, spending the vacation alone in a darkened room. Wagner’s solution to the problem was to get Nietzsche married, and when that failed he approached Nietzsche’s personal doctor, telling him Nietzsche’s headaches resulted from excessive masturbation. Nietzsche was enraged by Wagner’s indiscretion (or slander, depending on the truth of Wagner’s claims) and insensitivity, and the resulting stress only worsened his physical condition.

Even when relatively healthy, Nietzsche’s desire to visit the Wagners continued to lessen. Compounding Wagner’s infuriating insensitivity was Nietzsche’s moral
squeamishness. Wagner’s adulterous past and his and Cosima’s unusual living situation always bothered Nietzsche, the son of a pious Lutheran minister. Knowing of Nietzsche’s prudishness, Wagner would often make vulgar remarks about his relationship with Cosima, just to see Nietzsche’s uncomfortable reaction. Upon their arrival in Bayreuth, the Wagners took on an even more public stature and Nietzsche’s uneasiness grew. It was during these years (1875-76) that Nietzsche began working on his fourth Untimely Meditation—this one to focus on Wagner. His three previous Meditations addressed Schopenhauer, David Strauss, and “On the Use and Abuse of History,” and included severe social criticisms. Whereas the first three had been written relatively quickly, Nietzsche had considerable trouble writing the fourth one. Upon its publication, Nietzsche sent a copy to Wagner who was generally pleased with the book. Although the book was in no way an attack on Wagner, it takes an objective and distanced approach to its subject. He closes the work by placing Wagner’s significance to modernity in perspective, explaining it as, “…not the prophet of the future, as he would perhaps like to appear to us, but rather the interpreter and illuminator of the past.”

Indicative of the tension between the two, Nietzsche wrote to Rohde describing Wagner’s reaction: “On the book itself not a word, at most a sigh of relief.”

Throughout the following months a variety of small disagreements erupted between Nietzsche and Wagner. Richard and Cosima criticized Nietzsche for befriending Paul Reè, a Jew. Nietzsche traveled to Geneva and visited Voltaire’s house, raising Wagner’s anti-French ire. Nietzsche became enamored with the Mediterranean countries

---

2 HKB III, 275.
and drew unfavorable contrasts to German culture. Of all the instances of discord between them, most biographers point to *Parsifal* as the definitive break between Nietzsche and Wagner. In order to understand *Parsifal’s* significance, a short synopsis is in order. Parsifal is a young, orphaned simpleton who happens to meet several knights of the Holy Grail. Their leader, Amfortas, has been seduced by a woman (Kundry) and stabbed with the Holy Spear by his nemesis, Klingsor. He can only be healed by innocent youth made wise by compassion. Parsifal’s show of compassion towards Amfortas offends the other knights and he is driven away. Klingsor soon learns of the boy’s existence and, unlike the knights, realizes the role he is to play. He sends Kundry to seduce Parsifal, but at the last second Parsifal recoils from her, realizing his destiny and identifying the misery inherent in existence. The enraged Klingsor throws the spear at Parsifal, who catches it and vanquishes the evil king. Parsifal then returns victorious to Amfortas and redeems virtually everybody.

To quickly summarize the ideological nature of *Parsifal*, Wagner’s opera sets the Schopenhauerian idea of the will against a backdrop Catholicism. Parsifal must first acknowledge the misery and meaningless chaos of existence and then resign himself to its incomprehensibility. He achieves victory by denying the desires imposed upon him by existence (in this case, by denying Kundry) and approaching life with compassion (his quest to find Amfortas and heal him). Nietzsche was enraged by Wagner’s opera for two reasons. First, Wagner co-opted Christianity as a mere backdrop for his opera in spite of his atheism. While Nietzsche was vehemently opposed to Christianity, he was appalled at Wagner’s superficial treatment of it. A movement that played such a large role in shaping and, from Nietzsche’s perspective, perverting western culture deserved the
highest respect and seriousness. Wagner had treated a powerful and worthy adversary as if it were set dressing. Secondly, the strength and power advocated and idolized in his earlier operas was suddenly replaced with an apology for self-pity and decadence. Nietzsche’s suspicions of Wagner’s unethical and hypocritical use of the arts for mere effect had been suddenly and irreversibly confirmed.

In his scathing critique, Nietzsche contra Wagner, he describes the fateful day he received Parsifal in the mail.

…since Wagner had moved to Germany, he had condescended step by step to everything I despise—even to anti-Semitism . . . It was indeed high time to say farewell: soon after, I received the proof. Richard Wagner, apparently most triumphant, but in truth a decaying and despairing decadent, suddenly sank down, helpless and broken, before the Christian cross . . . Did no German have eyes in his head or pity in his conscience for this horrid spectacle? Was I the only one whom it pained?3

Much of Nietzsche’s pain came from a sense of betrayal. Their long talks about the regrettable cowardice of modernity, about the need for courage to question the status quo, and the great rewards resulting from an embrace of life’s absurdities and miseries had no analogy in Parsifal. Instead, unquestioning faith, simple obedience and compassion were glorified, all against the superficial backdrop of Christianity. Nietzsche’s outrage required several books for adequate expression, and in The Case of Wagner he cries:

Drink, O my friends, the philters of this art! Nowhere will you find a more agreeable way of enervating your spirit, of forgetting your manhood under a rosebush.—Ah, this old magician! This Klingsor of all Klingsors! How he thus wages war against us! us, the free spirits! How he indulges every cowardice of the modern soul with the tones of magic maidens. Never before has there been such a deadly hatred of the search for knowledge!4

3 Friedrich Nietzsche, Nietzsche Contra Wagner, in The Portable Nietzsche, transl. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1984); (NCW); 676; How I Broke Away from Wagner, 1.
4 CW, 184: Postscript.
His remarkable anger at the work was in part motivated by its beauty and genius. The effectiveness of the work to stir the soul only served to amplify the amount of damage the work could wreak.

Declarations that, “…Parsifal is a work of perfidy, of vindictiveness, of a secret attempt to poison the presuppositions of life—a *bad* work;”⁵ are followed by statements that *Parsifal* was, “*the stroke of genius* in seduction.—I admire this work; I wish I had written it myself…”⁶ By every account, Nietzsche realized the genius of the work, and when he finally saw it performed over ten years later, he was deeply moved. His objection was that such genius had been used to coddle the listener by covering up life’s sufferings and beating us into submission with wonderfully crafted deception. Beyond *Parsifal*, Nietzsche suddenly saw a recurring theme in all of Wagner’s operas: redemption. In *Tannhäuser*, “innocence prefers to redeem interesting sinners.” In *The Flying Dutchman*, “the Wandering Jew is redeemed, settles down, when he marries,” and *Die Meistersinger* teaches us, “…beautiful maidens like best to be redeemed by a knight who is a Wagnerian.” Redemption to Nietzsche was escapism, it was tantamount to attributing divine characteristics to another and then pledging allegiance to them.

To summarize all of Nietzsche’s criticisms of Wagner in one word, Nietzsche thought Wagner was a “romantic.” Romanticism, for Nietzsche, represented the celebration of life’s poverty. The popular topics of romantic art—unrequited love, longing for death, martyrdom—focus on life’s miseries and provide redemptive rewards for those who experience them. Take, for example, the scorned lover. He is filled with

---

⁵ NCW, 666.
⁶ CW, 184: Postscript.
sorrow because the one he loves does not love him. The adherent of romanticism asks the lover to describe his pain, to explain what it felt like and how it tortured him.

Nietzsche calls this *resentment*, a French term that literally means “feel again.” He describes it as the perverse joy in reliving miserable experiences and can be compared to picking at a scab. After visiting upon the poor man the indignities of *resentment*, the romantic adds insult to injury to depriving him of that experience by redeeming it. Now, the scorned lover becomes a martyr to the noble god of love. The heart-wrenching experience was not, as he originally thought, a terrible event, rather it was an act of nobility. The impetus for human growth originally supplied by his suffering has been removed by romantic apologist. The romantic then goes on to provide metaphysical justifications for anybody’s and everybody’s suffering under the auspices of compassion and kindness. The suffering masses embrace the romantic and seek, through his art, “…either rest, peace, a smooth sea, delivery from himself, or intoxication, paroxysm, stupefaction, madness.”

In contrast, Nietzsche champions the Dionysian. The Dionysian man, “…suffers from superabundance of life, who desires a Dionysian art and likewise a tragic view of and insight into life…” Nietzsche’s idealized man—his “Übermensch”—experiences suffering and realizes that it is part of life. He does not gloss over it, apologize for it, or wallow in it, rather he embraces all of life—the good and the bad—and takes an active role in it. “What is best about a great victory is that it liberates the victor from the fear of

---

7 It should not be confused with the English, “resentment.” Although the two words originally meant the same thing, the English word has evolved to indicate a much more specific emotion.
8 GS, 328: V, 370.
9 Ibid.
defeat. ‘Why not be defeated some time, too?’ he says to himself; ‘Now I am rich enough for that.’” In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he explains that the title’s very concepts are derived from a desire to explain away suffering. If these two polar opposites exist, then suffering can be reduced to the currency traded between the two. Suffering becomes a fee paid to attain metaphysical rewards or a price paid by those who do evil. The organic unity of experience is partitioned and man’s growth is stunted. The early Greeks possessed this “superabundance of life” and bravely faced all facets of their existence. Ever since then, explains Nietzsche in *Genealogy of Morals*, the romantic ideology gained more and more followers until the concepts of good and evil and the apologetic stance towards suffering became accepted as fact. It was Nietzsche’s job to lead man away from its weakness and toward its idealized form—the “Übermensch” (translated as “Overman” or “Superman”). “Man is a rope stretched between the animal and the Superman--a rope over an abyss.” Nietzsche had thought Wagner was his partner in this, “…dangerous crossing, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous trembling and halting.” only to realize Wagner had been seducing society into the bowels of romantic escapism.

The vehemence and unrestrained hostility found in these critiques begs the question of whether something more than mere philosophical disagreement could have rankled Nietzsche to such an extent. To use Nietzsche the philosopher to deconstruct Nietzsche the Wagnerian critic, it may be fruitful to refer to a distinction he makes in *The Gay Science*. In this 1882 work, Nietzsche describes two modes of criticism: one

---

10 GS, 199, III: 163.
11 TSZ, Prologue: 4.
stemming from “…an overflowing energy that is pregnant with the future…” and the other “…a tyrannic will of one who suffers deeply.” The former is characterized by immense creative energy that must destroy in order to build anew. Nietzsche associates this with the übermensch, the power of whose will is so great that it must exert itself through action—in this case destructive action, but only as a precursor to subsequent creation. The latter mode of criticism, however, is provoked not by overflowing strength, but by powerlessness, weakness, and ultimately, revenge. Considering the wounds to his pride Nietzsche received from Wagner, the latter explanation may play a larger role in Nietzsche’s criticisms of Wagner than he admitted. Nietzsche’s description of the “tyrannic will” is filled with such vivid description, that an autobiographical interpretation of it seems unavoidable.

But it can also be the tyrannic will of one who suffers deeply, is tormented, and would like to turn what is most personal, singular, and narrow, the real idiosyncrasy of his suffering, into a binding law and compulsion—one who, as it were, revenges himself on all things by forcing his own image, the image of his torture, on them, branding them with it.13

Ironically, he concludes the paragraph by linking the “tyrannic will” with Wagner’s music. To be fair, Nietzsche’s motivation was most likely motivated largely by purer motives, but his claims of a sharp distinction between the “tyrannic will” and the qualities of the übermensch are, in practice, not so clear.

Despite the possible motivational impurity of his Wagnerian critiques, they proved to be a catalyst for further intellectual development. True to his famous motto, “That which does not destroy me makes me stronger,” his break with Wagner triggered

13 Ibid.
an incredible outburst of creative work. In the next twelve years he would write some of the most influential works in European history, including *Thus Spoke Zarathustra, On the Genealogy of Morals, Human, All too Human, Beyond Good and Evil, The Gay Science*. Finally freed from any shame or inferiority complexes inherent in his friendship with Wagner, Nietzsche obtained the self-confidence necessary for such groundbreaking works. His emotional and intellectual pruning went even further then Wagner, extending to a revaluation of all things that were important to him.

Lonely henceforth and badly mistrustful of myself, I then took sides, not without indignation, against myself and for everything that hurt and was hard just for me: thus I found the way again to that courageous pessimism which is the opposite of an idealistic mendaciousness, and also, it seems to me, the way to myself, to my task.14

This revaluation also extended to composition, and he never again wrote any new music.

Despite his lack of musical output, music continued to play an immense role throughout the rest of his life. He became an even more avid patron of the theater and concert hall and developed a deep affinity for the music of Bizet. In particular, he fell in love with *Carmen*, seeing it performed over twenty times. He believed it reflected the true Dionysian spirit and repeatedly contrasted it with Wagner’s works. He described it as, “approach(ing) lightly, supplely, politely. It is pleasant, it does not sweat. ‘What is good is light; whatever is divine moves on tender feet’: first principle of my aesthetics.”15 Associating Bizet’s music with the warm, healthy climes of the south, he described Wagner’s music as cold, dreary, damp, and just as liable to infect the listener with a spiritual illness as Germany’s weather was to create a physical one. His musical

---

14 NCW, 676: How I Broke Away from Wagner, 1.
15 CW, 157: 1.
migration southward was reflected in a physical one, as Nietzsche spent much of his later years near Turin in Italy.

As his musical output stopped, his literary output continued to increase. In 1888 for example, he wrote *The Wagner Case, Twilight of the Idols, The Antichrist, Ecce Homo*, and *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*. These last works show Nietzsche at his most wrathful, heaping criticisms and condemnations on virtually all components of German and European culture. Almost as if to maintain an equilibrium, the praise he reserved for himself increased dramatically through this same period. *Ecce Homo*, for example, is comprised of four chapters entitled, “Why I am So Wise,” “Why I am so Clever,” “Why I Write Such Good Books,” and “Why I am a Destiny.” Many commentators have pointed to this growing megalomania and the contemporaneous strange fixations as an indication of his decent into insanity. Examples of his fixations include his almost manic attachment to *Carmen*, an intense interest in all things dietary, and his rhapsodic feelings toward Turin. In his last year of apparent sanity, Nietzsche’s emotions and judgements became increasingly polarized and everything he encountered was regarded as either wonderful and perfect, or evil and corrupt. Despite these changes however, the works he completed in 1888 are still considered by most Nietzsche scholars to be among his most important.

In January 1889, Nietzsche observed a cab driver beating his horse in the streets of Turin. After rushing to the horse’s aid and throwing his arms around the animal’s neck to protect it, Nietzsche collapsed. Overbeck, a friend and former colleague, brought him back to Basel and he was subsequently committed to an asylum in Jena. He never regained his sanity and spent the rest of his life under the care of his mother and sister.
Although his critical faculties were forever obscured, his love for music and abilities at the piano remained with him until his death in 1900. He spent most afternoons at Jena improvising at the piano, and after his release to his mother’s home in Naumburg, she utilized the family’s piano to monitor her invalid son. As long as she heard music coming from the other room she knew Nietzsche was in good spirits. No written record of these post-1889 improvisations exist.
Chapter 11

Conclusion

Not every end is the goal. The end of a melody is not its goal; and yet: if a melody has not reached its end, it has not reached its goal. A parable.¹

Nietzsche’s prominent position in modern society creates significant difficulties for any attempt at an objective evaluation of his music. Because his contributions to contemporary thought overshadow all else he created it becomes difficult to interpret his music in isolation. Upon beginning an evaluation of Nietzsche’s music, critics may appreciate certain aspects of his music, but inevitably his enormous literary and philosophical impact is mentioned. After recognizing the huge scope of these latter accomplishments, his music cannot help but fade in the harsh light of comparison. The inevitable failure of regarding Nietzsche’s music objectively does not, however, leave the critic without alternatives. Objectivity’s failure sends the seeker of truth into the arms of subjectivity, and consequently into the post-modern world Nietzsche himself helped invent. If Nietzsche advises humanity to abandon objectivity and dialectics—those Socratic inventions by which humanity’s “noble tastes is thus vanquished”²—should not a conscientious investigator of Nietzsche’s music follow the same advice? In the previous chapters there are numerous examples of Nietzsche expressing himself both musically and philosophically while internalizing new ideas. Especially in his early years, any alteration or refinement of his outlook was reflected in music and text.

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Wanderer and his Shadow, transl. R.J. Hollingdale. with Assorted Opinions and Maxims and Human, All-too-human (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986); 204.
² TI, 475: The Problem of Socrates, 5.
As for the validity of addressing Nietzsche as a whole instead of examining his output on a discipline by discipline basis, the fragmentary appearance of his works in general—both philosophical and musical—seems to call out for a wider interpretation. In particular, the paradoxes and contradictions in his philosophical writings are mirrored in the correspondingly contradictory interpretations of his interlocutors; interpretations that varyingly label Nietzsche a Nazi, a humanist, a philologist, an anthropologist, a psychologist, or even a poet. Much of this divergence of opinion concerning Nietzsche’s philosophy could, however, be avoided if only adequate attention was paid his musical works. Ironically, examinations of his musical works suffer from a similar fate. In comparison to the music of his friend, Richard Wagner, or his musical hero, Beethoven, Nietzsche’s compositions appear awkward and eccentric. Yet when taken as part of a larger project—a project that transcends philosophy and music—Nietzsche’s music assumes a new significance.

Nietzsche’s fundamental project must be seen as encompassing more than just his prose, poetry and music. Nietzsche sought out the purpose and meaning of life in a world stripped of a metaphysical baseline. When God is dead and a priori truths perish with Him, how must one live and why? Having undermined his own authority along with everyone else’s, Nietzsche could not undertake a traditional philosophical investigation into life’s meaning and purpose. Deprived of one method, he utilized his keen observational and expressive skills to invent another, choosing to exemplify, rather than demonstrate. After deconstructing modernity’s faulty paradigm, he narrates his own
wanderings through the resulting void. In a certain sense, his wanderings consist of thought experiments undertaken in this newly created world—free of outside references and host to an entirely different set of human possibilities. Because perspective is impossible without inherited fixed reference points, his writings therefore take on a fragmentary appearance. It is precisely this illusory fragmentation that has lead to the wide divergence of interpretation amongst Nietzsche scholars. Therefore, in a striking reversal of literary method, it is the process that contributes the continuity to Nietzsche’s works, not the material. As Walter Kaufmann pointed out, Nietzsche’s experiments are unified by his “intellectual integrity.” Each investigation is “…a possible corrective for any inadvertent previous mistakes. No break, discontinuity, or inconsistency occurs.”

Furthermore, the ultimate subject of his experiments is Friedrich Nietzsche himself. At this point a hermeneutic paradox occurs in which the absurdity of one entity simultaneously existing as observer and observed threatens to destroy the entire project. In this light, it becomes apparent that the Nietzsche-persona expressed through his works must be an experiment as well. The literary “Nietzsche” is an invention perpetrated by the historical Nietzsche, and as such is the philosopher-Nietzsche’s archetype of the new world’s ideal inhabitant.

A recurring theme in Nietzsche’s literary works is that this ideal inhabitant justifies his existence aesthetically. It is through his style that he distinguishes himself from his fellow wanderers.

Giving style to one’s character—a great and rare art! It is exercised by those who see all the strengths and weaknesses of their own natures and then comprehend

---

3 The title of his book, *The Wanderer and his Shadow*, further reinforces this metaphor.  
them in an artistic plan until everything appears as art and reason and even weakness delights the eye."

With this in mind, an integral component of Nietzsche’s fundamental project is to create a style for his literary persona. Through studying and integrating all of Nietzsche’s works—philosophical and musical—one internalizes the persona in a way as much emotional and intuitive as it is intellectual. Once the style is understood, one is able to go beyond the texts and extrapolate how “Nietzsche” would behave in any given situation.

Of pertinence to the idea of an organic, process-centered approach is the following excerpt from *Genealogy of Morals*.

> We have no right to isolated acts of any kind: we may not make isolated errors or hit upon isolated truths. Rather do our ideas, our values, our yeas and nays, our ifs and buts, grow out of us with the necessity with which a tree bears fruit—related and each with an affinity to each, and evidence of one will, one health, one soil, one sun.

Considering the grand scope of Nietzsche’s fundamental project, his music necessarily takes on added importance. Music, as the most abstract of art forms, owes the greatest debt to style. After considering Nietzsche’s condemnation of programmatic music (see the discussion of “On Words and Music” in Chapter 8), the importance of stylistic elements increases within his preferred realm of absolute music. If a proper understanding of Nietzsche’s project requires a proper understanding of his unique style, or even more to the point, if Nietzsche’s fundamental project is his style, then it is in his music that we find the purest form. From this perspective his music’s wide diversity is less indicative of musical discontinuity than it is of an intentionally wide application of his own musical style. His oratorios, lieder and symphonic poems are analogous to his

---

5 GS, 232: IV, 290.
6 GM, 16: Pref., 2
literary aphorisms, polemics, novels and poetry in that their variety better illustrates Nietzsche’s project by exhibiting it in multiple contexts. Therefore, not only is his music an important resource for understanding his written works, but familiarity with his written works becomes an integral part in understanding and appreciating his music. Understanding this relationship sheds light on perhaps the most important relic Nietzsche left for posterity: his perspective.

Postulating the necessity of having read Nietzsche (his literary works) before one can properly hear Nietzsche (his musical works) inevitably stirs up controversy. Must not music be self-contained? If some music needs external validation, does that not make it inferior to self-subsisting musical works? These questions stem from the fallacy that music must either be proven great or relegated to oblivion. While no one—not even Nietzsche at his most megalomaniacal—would describe his music as “great,” it hardly follows that his music is not worth study and performance. While the music of J.S. Bach is undeniably great, even within the vacuum of hypothetically complete objectivity, Nietzsche’s does not fare so well when removed from his personal halo of historical signifigance. In fact, Nietzsche’s music would not likely have survived if it had not been for his philosophical fame. Yet it has survived, largely because of the pseudo-mystical quality modernity attaches to all things related to the strange little man. The extraordinary character of Nietzsche’s influence forces the critical scholar to remove himself from the sealed chambers of academic divisions and evaluate Nietzsche’s entire body of work. And if his music is to accurately and thoroughly understood, it must be carried out by those who are best qualified: musicians.
It may then come as a surprise that, after wading through the weighty and lugubrious philosophical backwash that inevitably follows in his wake, the musician discovers Nietzsche’s music to be striking in its optimism and vitality. Despite being written in his school years, one can easily see the man who would go on to flesh out these ideas in more depth through his dazzling prose. The very fact that they were written early in his life, before his health declined and his personal relationships faltered, enable them to encapsulate the Superman’s “overflowing, superabundance of life” in a way not possible in his written works. They reflect the mind of a young man who realized his own great power and was anxious to exert that power in any field he could. Nietzsche himself reflected that, he wrote:

I revised the compositions of my youth and put them in order. It remains perpetually strange tome how through music the unchangeable aspects of character are revealed; what a boy says through it is so clearly the language of the essence of his whole nature that the mature man does not want it changed - except, naturally, imperfections of technique and such like.7

The many faults in his music represent the missteps of a child who does not know his own strength. His ideas spilled out through a medium that required more grace and restraint then he possessed at that time. That he frequently stumbled when setting out on his musical journeys is readily seen. However, it would be a great mistake to make too much of the blunders and throw out the wheat with the chaff. Very rarely does a thinker of Nietzsche’s magnitude leave us such an immediate souvenir of his personality. If anything can be said of Nietzsche’s music, it is that it was a strictly personal expression. Unlike his books, his music was not written to boldly lead mankind to its true potential.

7 HKB III, 325; January 1875 to Malwida von Meysenbug.
His music was written in response to Nietzsche’s own “superabundance of life” and gave him a necessary creative outlet. Nietzsche’s musical output can be seen as an afterimage of his personality, existing long after the original light has faded. It gives us a unique view of genius—not by way of his mastery, but instead through the lens of his passion. Finally, his music allows us to encounter the person behind the “Superman,” the “Will to Power,” and the “Slave Morality” in a very personal and intimate way. The music is worthy of study and performance, and through both its successes and its failures, paints a complete picture that exists “Beyond Good and Evil.”
# Appendix A

## Completed Musical Works

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
<th>Date of Completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mein Platz vor der Tür</td>
<td>Voice/Piano</td>
<td>Fall 1861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heldenklage</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>Easter 1862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Édes titok</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>July 1862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aus der Jugendzeit</td>
<td>Voice/Piano</td>
<td>July 1862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So lach doch mal</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>August 1862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da geht ein Bach</td>
<td>Piano or Voice/Piano</td>
<td>September 1862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Mondschein auf der Puszta</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>September 1862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ermanarich</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>September 1862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unserer Altvordern eingedenk 1862</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Zwei polnische Tänze</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Mazurka</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Aus der Czarda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Das zerbrochene Ringlein</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>May 1863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albumblatt (arrangement of Ringlein)</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>August 1863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wie sich Rebenranken schwingen</td>
<td>Voice/Piano</td>
<td>Summer 1863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eine Sylvesternacht</td>
<td>Violin/Piano</td>
<td>2 January 1864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twelve Lieder (of which 9 survive)</td>
<td>Voice/Piano</td>
<td>December 13, 1864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Beschwörung</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Nachspiel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Ständchen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Unendlich</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Verwelkt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Ungewitter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Gern und gerner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Das Kind an die erloschene Kerze</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Es winkt und neigt sich</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junge Fischerin</td>
<td>Voice/Piano</td>
<td>June 1865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbstlich sonnige Tage</td>
<td>Piano/Vocal Quartet</td>
<td>April 1867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ade! Ich muss nun gehen</td>
<td>Vocal Quartet</td>
<td>August 1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nachklang einer Sylvesterennacht</td>
<td>Piano 4-hands</td>
<td>7 November 1871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirchengeschichtliches Responsorium</td>
<td>Choir/Piano</td>
<td>November 1871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manfred – Meditation</td>
<td>Piano 4-hands</td>
<td>April 1872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monodie a deux</td>
<td>Piano 4-hands</td>
<td>February 1873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymnus auf die Freundschaft</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>29 December 1874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Vorspiel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Erstes Zwischenspiel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Zweites Zwischenspiel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Hymnus – Dritte Strophe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gebet an das Leben</td>
<td>Voice/Piano</td>
<td>August 1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Arrangement of Hymnus auf die Freundschaft)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymnus an das Leben</td>
<td>Choir and Orchestra</td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Arrangement of Hymnus auf die Freundschaft)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix B**

**Undated Complete Works**

* denotes uncertainty of completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overture for Strings*</td>
<td>String Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maestoso adagio</td>
<td>Piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegro*</td>
<td>Piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aus der Tiefe ruf ich*</td>
<td>Voice/Piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String Quartet Piece*</td>
<td>String Quartet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Einleitung</td>
<td>Piano 4-hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phantasie</td>
<td>Piano 4-hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schmerz ist der Grundton der Natur*</td>
<td>Piano 4-hands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Musical Examples

Example 1  Sonate D-dur (mm. 69-75)

Example 2  Allegro con brio (mm. 1-8)

Ex. 2 cont.,  (mm. 17-22)  (mm. 31-38)
Example 3  Weihnachtsoratorium I. (mm. 41-64)

Example 4  Weihnachtsoratorium IV. (mm. 1-7)

Example 5  Weihnachtsoratorium IV (alternate) (mm. 1-20)
Ex. 5 cont., (mm. 37-45)

Example 6  Weihnachtsoratorium IV. (alternate) (mm. 48-59)
Example 7  Weihnachtsoratorium III. (Gebendeit) (mm. 22-28)

Example 8  Reduction from *Tristan und Isolde*

Example 9  Weihnachtsoratorium VI (mm. 22-25)

Example 10  Schmerz ist der Grundton der Natur (mm. 23-25)
Example 11  Mein Platz vor der Tür (mm. 1-8)

Example 12  Mein Platz vor der Tür (mm. 31-36)
Example 13  So lach doch mal (mm. 1-4)

Ex. 13 cont.,  (mm. 17-20)

Ex. 13 cont.,  Mein Platz vor der Tür (mm. 13-16)
Example 14  Heldenklage (Entire piece with phrase structure noted)
Example 15  Édes titok (mm. 1-10)

Example 16  Ermanarich – Wedding March (mm. 25-31)

Example 17  Ermanarich – Randwe Motive (mm. 12-15)

Example 18  Ermanarich – Swanhild Motive (mm. 62-65)
Example 19  Mazurka (mm. 17-32)

Example 20  Mazurka (mm. 49-58)
Example 21  Aus der Czarda – B’, B and A material (measures indicated)

Example 22  Das Kind an die erloschene Kerze (mm. 14-18)
Example 23  Verwelkt (mm. 13-16)

Example 24  Sonne des Schlaflosen (mm. 10-12)

Ex. 24 cont.,  Ständchen (mm. 1-6)

Example 25  O weint um sie (mm. 17-22)
Example 26  Nachklang einer Sylvesternacht (mm. 45-51)

Example 27  Nachklang einer Sylvesternacht (mm. 103-107)

Example 28  Nachklang einer Sylvesternacht (mm. 188-193)
Example 29  Nachklang einer Sylvesternacht (mm. 291-299)

Example 30  Manfred Meditation (mm. 120-129)

Example 31  Hymnus auf die Freundschaft – First Strophe (mm. 64-72)
Example 32  Hymnus auf die Freundschaft – Prelude (mm. 1-3)

Example 33  Hymnus auf die Freundschaft – Prelude (mm. 9-12)
Appendix D

Discography


Works Consulted


